



The Alpha's Bound Mate

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Category: Fantasy

Description: Naomi harbors a secret love for Reese, the next Alpha in her pack, but her lower status makes their romance seem impossible. However, when Reese returns from years abroad with a new Luna, claiming her as his mate, fate takes an unexpected turn. Despite Reese's choice, an inexplicable attraction ignites between him and Naomi, leaving them both puzzled as their wolves refuse to claim each other. Accusations of witchcraft fly until Naomi's innocence is proven, forcing them to spend time together to unravel the mysterious bond between them. As their connection deepens, they grapple with the question: why won't their wolves accept each other even as they fall deeper in love?

This book contains mature scenes and is therefore rated 18+

This book is a standalone and can be enjoyed right away.

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Chapter 1

-Naomi-

The noises in the kitchen were loud as everyone bustled around, preparing for the Alpha's return with his new mate. She was a Luna from a former enemy pack, but peace had finally been restored, making it everlasting. So there was much to prepare. I was placed on baking duty, having been told what the Luna's favorite sweets and cakes were. I was excited to do this, yet I couldn't help but feel a slight sting in my chest.

Alpha Reese had been gone for a long time, leaving control to his Beta and father. First, he went off to explore the world, much to his parents' disagreement. He only returned shortly to overtake the Alpha position, but I didn't even get a chance to see him. Then he took off again. He hadn't been much of an Alpha, but that was about to change as he settled down with his true mate.

I knew everyone felt thrilled about it, but I couldn't quite say how I felt. I knew it was going to be hard seeing him with someone else, but I tried my hardest to be happy for him and his Luna. That's why I made sure to decorate the sweets to perfection and make her feel at home. After finishing, I plated them before another pack member burst into the kitchen.

"They are here!" Cara shouted.

I was almost knocked over as the others hurried outside wanting to catch a glimpse of our new Luna. I remained in place, wiping my sweaty hands off on my apron and

trying not to let the sour feeling get to me. I was acting ridiculous, yet I couldn't help but feel apprehensive regarding this new Luna. I knew it was mere jealousy, an ugly feeling I should dispel. However, I refused to move from the kitchen, instead finishing what I was doing. The others would be back regardless.

So I remained, fixing the platter and making sure the cake was neatly placed and then put in the fridge for later. The others slowly began coming back, talking happily about the new Luna.

"She is so beautiful!" Cara exclaimed.

"I know. I would die for a dress like that," Nora said.

"I think you mean body. That dress only looks good because of her form," Cara chuckled.

The other women followed suit, and I shook my head, trying my best not to make it obvious how I was rolling my eyes. As we returned to work, I grabbed the little platter with sweets, ready to bring it to the living room. I carefully navigated through the group before I walked through the house and to the place I knew they would all gather. I placed down the silver platter, turning it slightly.

Sometimes I had a need to make sure things were placed correctly, or it would drive me insane. As I noticed the other things on the table weren't placed in the correct order either, I began turning them slightly, tipping them to one side or the other, or aligning them. I walked around the coffee table that had been set up for the Alpha to spend his afternoon with his Luna and his family. I knew they most likely had lots to talk about.

I pushed a strand of my hair back as I reached for a little fork, pushing it forward. However, the boring brown color kept getting in my way, and I realized my braid had

come undone. I sighed, pushing up and then grabbing the end, only to realize that the hair tie had broken. It hung in my hair, but it was caught in a knot.

I began fixing it, pulling slightly and hissing at the action. When it was free, I put it in my pocket and began undoing the braid. Luckily, I had made a ponytail higher up and knew I could use that tie. I pulled it down, brushing my fingers through my hair and shaking it a little before I began braiding the hair down one side.

I hummed a little, knowing it would be a while before the Alpha and his family came. They were most likely busy with greetings and hearing the tales of the Alpha's long travel and how he ended up being mates with an enemy pack's Luna. I couldn't wait until I could hear the story as well, though I wasn't sure I was very interested in hearing how they had gazed into each other's eyes and realized they were mates.

"Let it go, Nomi," I sighed.

I finished tying the braid, ready to get back to work, but when I turned, I found someone in the doorway of the living room, staring at me.

"A-Alpha," I stammered, stumbling back a step and hitting the back of my calf on the coffee table.

I hissed, trying to keep it down how much it hurt, so as not to embarrass myself any further. Yet his presence had taken me by surprise. Why wasn't he with his Luna? He tilted his head slightly, his gray eyes running over the room as if he were searching for something, then they landed on me. The sight of him still quickened my heartbeat, making me feel nervous, and I wiped my hands off on my apron, feeling that same attraction rise to incredible heights.

Yet I noticed something felt out of place. My wolf began moving uncomfortably inside me, murmuring something I couldn't quite catch. What was the matter with

her? I tried calling out to her, but something seemed stuck in her throat, and she was writhing in pain.

Reese began sniffing the air strangely, and I wondered if maybe the smells from the kitchen clung to me. I tilted my head to the side, trying to take a little whiff of myself, but I didn't smell anything unpleasant. Just a little home cooking.

"Um, welcome home," I greeted.

His eyes scrutinized me and with my wolf's strange behavior, it was making me very uncomfortable.

"Well, I should get back to work," I stated.

"What is that smell?" he inquired.

I had merely taken a step forward when he asked me, and I froze in my spot. What smell was he talking about? I had already smelled my clothes subtly, and not found anything disturbing.

"Smell, Alpha?" I questioned.

"Yes, smell. What is that?"

"What is what?" I asked.

He seemed to grow angry and came closer to me with long strides. He towered over me, which was not uncommon for an Alpha, and I wasn't exactly small myself. Suddenly, he reached out, grasping the braid I had lying over my shoulder. I let out a little shocked squeal, not expecting him to suddenly try to scent me. But in mere seconds, he had pressed my braid to his nose, inhaling it before his eyes shone a little

yellow. He turned those angry orbs to me, and I gulped, feeling my body turning warmer from that powerful expression. Why did I react so strongly? I knew he had always influenced me, but this seemed to have reached new heights. It didn't help he had grown even more mature at 27.

Reese suddenly reached for me, wrapping an arm around my waist and then burying his nose in my neck, close to where the marking spot was, the place that emanated the sweetest scent. He inhaled deeply, and it made a whoosh of warmth go through me, while his warm breath tickled my skin. My eyes fluttered closed in delight, and I pressed my legs together, feeling a throbbing between them. That reaction was very new.

No one had made me react in such a way. He inhaled once more, making me whimper, and his grip tightened around me, pressing me to him. He was so hard beneath my touch, though I knew I had no right to let my hands slide over his body, I couldn't help myself. He growled pleased before nuzzling the place that he seemed very interested in investigating. I didn't tell him to stop. I enjoyed this too much. Yet my wolf seemed to struggle again as if she wanted to tell me something, but couldn't.

"Why do you smell so good?" he whispered.

"Um..." I didn't know what to say. I was uncertain what he was even smelling. I couldn't scent it myself. However, suddenly, he shoved me back, holding me by the shoulder and looking accusatorily at me.

"Have you been near my mate's belongings?"

"W-What?" I stammered.

"I asked if you have touched any of my mate's belongings."

“No,” I replied. “I-I have been in the kitchen all day. That’s my workplace.”

He glanced at me up and down, not seeming to believe me. Did he even remember me? I had always been a bit by myself, but I knew he loved the food I made. Yet now he looked at me as if he were gazing at a stranger.

“Stay away from my mate’s stuff.”

“But I haven’t...” I didn’t get to finish my sentence because Reese took off, leaving me bewildered in the middle of the room.

I couldn’t make sense of his reaction. He was the one who had been acting strangely with me, and yet I seemed to have been made the villain. My wolf came crawling forward, whimpering and lying down in a submissive gesture.

“What is wrong with you?” I whispered.

I-I don’t know.

This was concerning. Something was happening to my wolf, and she didn’t even know herself. I sighed, shaking my head gently before I forced myself to move past it and return to the kitchen.

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Chapter 2

-Reese-

A midst the light and pleasant chatter swirling around me, my parents engaged in conversation with Rosa, a vision of beauty and the epitome of the Luna I had longed for. She was my true mate, a match blessed by the Goddess herself. Yet, despite her presence, my attention wandered, ensnared by the intoxicating aroma permeating the room. It had lured me from the entrance to the living room, rendering me unable to focus on anything else.

This scent puzzled me. It wasn't Rosa's. Hers was a delicate, sweeter rose fragrance, a perfect complement to her name. But what now enveloped me was the irresistible aroma of strawberries, fresh and invigorating, hanging in the air like an enchanting veil. Even Rosa's scent, exquisite as it was, couldn't rival the allure of this mysterious fragrance.

Why her? I wondered, perplexed by the effect this seemingly ordinary pack member had on me. Had she adorned herself with a special perfume? But why would it affect me so profoundly?

In a moment of impulse, I had found myself burying my nose in the mystery wolf's neck, further immersing myself in the overpowering scent. It was a gesture reserved for mates, yet I couldn't shake the need to confirm that the sweet fragrance emanated from her. And thus, a new mystery unfolded: why did she smell so captivatingly good?

Why does it matter? We have our mate. Focus on her, my wolf instructed.

He was right. I shouldn't be dwelling on this. Everything I desired was right beside me, yet the allure of the scent persisted, drowning out the surrounding conversation.

"So, how did your family react when you told them about Reese?" my mother's voice cut through the haze, drawing my attention.

Her inquiry brought a brief respite from my thoughts, but the lingering fragrance continued to tantalize my senses, reminding me of the unanswered questions swirling in my mind.

"Oh, they were naturally a bit concerned, but Reese stayed with us for a while. They've come to know him, and they adore him," Rosa replied warmly.

"That's heartening to hear. Rest assured, we'll spare no effort in making you feel at home," my mother assured her sincerely.

"I truly appreciate it," Rosa responded gratefully.

Turning to my father, who had been as quiet as me, I sensed his lingering uncertainty about our union. Despite the current peace between our packs, the shadow of past conflicts loomed large. As the old saying goes, 'An Alpha never forgets'. My mother nudged him gently, prompting a response.

"Eric, won't we ensure our son's mate feels comfortable?" she prodded, her voice laced with determination.

"Yes," my father replied, his tone strained. Catching his gaze, I silently conveyed my disapproval of his behavior. He cleared his throat, attempting to regain his composure. "We will, of course, do our utmost."

I nodded in agreement, wrapping my arm around Rosa, who leaned into me with a smile. Yet, as I inhaled her rose-scented fragrance, it seemed oddly subdued, leaving me bewildered. I shouldn't be detecting any scent stronger than hers, so why was my attention drawn to this other aroma?

Struggling to push aside my confusion, we continued our conversation, eventually agreeing to talk more at dinner after completing some unpacking. Taking Rosa's hand, I led her to my bedroom, a space I hadn't visited in quite some time.

"That went smoothly," she chuckled.

"Were they really that bad?" I asked.

"You know how my parents can be," she replied, casting a glance around the room. It had undergone a few changes since my last visit. The bed was larger, a subtle reminder from my mother to find a mate. Fortunately, I had, and I eagerly anticipated sharing my days with Rosa.

"He did make some threats last time," I reminded her, and we shared a laugh.

"I'm his only daughter, can you blame him?" she teased.

"Not at all. I'll probably be just as protective of our daughter," I said, earning a cheeky smile from Rosa.

"Really?" she asked, stepping closer.

I nodded, and she gently pushed me back until I sat at the edge of the bed. Straddling me, she lifted her dress, and I wrapped my arms around her, drawing her close. As she leaned in to kiss me, I noticed a subtle shift—the usual intensity was lacking. She pulled back, concern evident in her eyes.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

“Just feeling a bit worn out from the journey,” I admitted.

“Or maybe it’s overwhelming to be back home?” she suggested.

I shook my head. “No, for once, my parents seem to agree with me. They’re happy I’ve decided to settle down.”

“Then maybe we should start working on our little family?” she teased.

“You’re not in heat yet.”

“It won’t be long,” she countered. “Maybe we should just practice.”

“I do like the sound of that,” I admitted with a smile.

She leaned in for another kiss, but once again, I found myself distracted. My mind drifted downstairs, to the room filled with the enticing scent of strawberries. Rosa pulled back, puzzled by my distant demeanor.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“Nothing,” I replied, though she wasn’t convinced.

“Normally my clothes would be in shreds by now,” she remarked.

“You’re right, they would,” I conceded, then tore the back of her dress with my hands.

She gasped in surprise, then burst into laughter. I turned us, determined to shake off

my distraction as I removed the torn material, revealing her stunning figure. With a hand tracing her curves, I kissed her passionately, momentarily forgetting about everything else.

I stood in front of the closet, buttoning up a shirt, but an unsettling emptiness gnawed at me after mating with Rosa. It was disconcerting. Ordinarily, I would feel spent in the best possible way, but now, there was an odd sense of dissatisfaction lingering within me. Rosa was still in the shower, preparing for the upcoming dinner, but I found myself drifting off, unable to grasp what was troubling me.

This wasn't how I was supposed to feel after mating with my true mate. The bond was meant to be powerful, unyielding. Or did its intensity diminish over time? Uncertainty gnawed at me, compounded by the memory of my parents, who remained as passionate as ever, even after years together. Something didn't add up.

The sound of the water shutting off pulled me from my thoughts, and soon, the gentle padding of feet approached. Rosa emerged, clad in a towel, and we exchanged smiles. As she dressed, slipping into fresh underwear and a sleek dark dress, I couldn't help but admire her.

"Don't stare," she chuckled, turning her back to me to adjust the zipper. "Can you?"

Reaching up, I pulled the zipper into place, and she turned to face me, wrapping her arms around my neck. I reciprocated, holding her close.

"Are you sure you're okay? You seem a bit distant," she observed.

"I'm fine," I assured her.

"Really?"

I nodded.

“Good, because otherwise, we could just stay up here,” she teased, but the excitement I would have felt at her suggestion mere hours ago was absent now.

“No, let’s go downstairs. I’m sure you’re hungry,” I suggested.

“I’m famished,” she admitted.

“Then let’s not stay here. There are a lot of people eager to meet you,” I said, leading her out of the room.

“Terrifying,” she joked.

I laughed, shaking my head before planting a kiss on her forehead. “Don’t worry, they’ll embrace you as family.”

“Right, not scary at all,” she teased.

“You’ll do brilliantly,” I reassured her.

Though she still seemed a bit nervous, I took her hand and escorted her downstairs. We entered the dining room, already bustling with pack members. Not everyone dined with us. Those closest to the Alpha sat at his table, while others would enter later.

I guided Rosa toward my parents, intending to sit beside her, but my mother gestured toward the vacant seat at the head of the table. I had momentarily forgotten my new role as the leading Alpha. Adjusting, I moved us to the left, finding myself at the head of the table. It felt surreal to occupy my father’s usual place, but he seemed proud, a rare expression on his face. Conversation flowed around us as dinner began.

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Chapter 3

-Naomi-

Restless, I used the chair I was sitting on beside the kitchen island to spin around, grappling with the unsettling encounter with Reese earlier. He seemed to accuse me of rolling around his mate's belongings like some kind of creep. It was ludicrous. Who would even entertain such a notion?

I contemplated tracking Reese down to clarify that I hadn't acted so erratically. Yet, it was evident that the Alpha desired privacy with his new mate, and disrupting them was out of the question. While I hadn't ventured upstairs to offer assistance with unpacking, others had, and their laughter and comments suggested that the Alpha and his mate were quite... enthusiastic in their enjoyment of each other's company.

My wolf whimpered in my mind as I dwelled on the situation. She continued to behave strangely, prompting me to consider visiting the pack doctor tomorrow. Could I be ill? But wolves didn't suffer from human ailments like the common cold. We might sustain injuries or experience slower healing from scratches inflicted by other wolves, but we didn't catch colds. So what was afflicting me?

"Naomi!" Fran's voice cut through my thoughts. She was the head cook, renowned for her culinary prowess but also for her no-nonsense approach.

I gripped the edge of the kitchen island and turned to face her. "Yes?"

"Could you stop spinning? I'm getting dizzy just watching you," she scolded.

“Sorry,” I murmured, lowering my hands, puzzled by my own restlessness.

Reaching for some napkins in a holder, I began rearranging them, seeking to occupy my hands as we awaited further instructions. Meanwhile, the others lounged by the table, enjoying a brief respite with cups of coffee. I felt uncertain about what to do with myself.

The earlier meeting continued to plague my thoughts, refusing to fade despite my efforts to push it aside. The more I dwelled on it, the less sense it made. What had truly transpired back then?

Naomi, I don't feel good , my wolf confessed.

I sensed her distress. It was like a peculiar ache, foreign yet unmistakable. While it didn't manifest as physical discomfort for me, my wolf was undoubtedly experiencing some form of pain. Despite being on blockers to suppress heats, there was an underlying issue at play. But what could it be?

Do you want to go see the doctor now? I asked, hoping for some clarity.

My wolf's response was hesitant, as if she yearned for something else but couldn't articulate it.

Well? I pressed gently.

Yes, please, she finally replied.

I nodded, preparing to leave my seat, but before I could move, Fran's voice halted me.

“Where are you going?” she inquired.

“Um, my wolf is acting strange. I just wanted to go for a quick checkup to ensure everything is all right,” I explained hastily.

“That will have to wait. The others might still need us, and we have an important guest,” Fran countered firmly.

“But...” I attempted to protest, only to be met with Fran’s raised eyebrow.

“Is it serious?” she queried, her gaze steady.

Unable to provide a definitive answer, I shook my head.

“Then take a seat,” she directed, her tone leaving no room for argument.

I sighed, resigning myself to the situation. Returning to my seat, I felt a surge of unease wash over me, a strange anxiety tightening its grip. Whatever was happening to me, it was escalating in intensity, and I couldn’t shake the feeling of impending turmoil.

-Reese-

Dinner proceeded smoothly. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming as everyone eagerly greeted Rosa. Despite lingering tensions between our packs, the unity among us remained unshaken. Rosa effortlessly charmed the pack with her openness and warmth, and their acceptance of her grew with each passing moment. Witnessing her effortlessly integrate herself into our pack filled me with immense joy, a feeling mirrored by the smile on my mother’s lips as I glanced at her.

After the main course, dessert was brought out, served by lower-ranking members. Yet as the cake was placed before me, it triggered a sudden recollection.

It was a rainy day as I nursed an injury sustained during a confrontation with elder fighters from our pack. While it was customary for a young Alpha to face challenges from pack members to prove their readiness for leadership, the ambush by seasoned fighters was unexpected. Despite emerging victorious, my arm bore the brunt of the encounter. Soaked in mud and rain, I had sought refuge in the kitchen, frustration simmering within me.

The increasing frequency of such confrontations left me feeling isolated, as if my leadership capabilities were constantly being questioned. Despite my understanding of our pack's traditions, the persistent challenges cast a shadow of doubt over my authority, fueling a sense of unease within me.

Lost in my thoughts, I didn't notice someone approaching until the door creaked open, revealing a young teenage girl. Recognition dawned on me as she entered. She possessed an extraordinary talent for baking, earning her a place in the pack at a remarkably young age.

She appeared taken aback by my presence, but I offered her a reassuring smile, urging her not to worry. With cautious steps, she resumed her task, her gaze holding a curious intensity that unexpectedly brought me a sense of calm.

"Sorry, I-I can leave if you want," she whispered.

"No, it's fine. You probably needed something from here," I replied, gesturing around the room.

She nodded and pointed toward the fridge. "Just thirsty."

"Go ahead, Naomi," I encouraged, nodding toward the fridge.

To my surprise, she gasped slightly, looking startled.

“What?”

“Y-You know my name?” she stammered.

“Yeah, you’re the mastermind behind those delectable desserts,” I teased lightly.

“How could I forget?”

A nervous smile tugged at her lips as she approached the fridge, retrieving a bottle of water. Suddenly, she seemed to have an idea. Setting down her own bottle, she placed another one beside me.

“Thank you,” I acknowledged gratefully.

“Are you all right?” she inquired, her eyes drifting to the ice bag.

“It’s fine, just some training.”

“You’ve been training a lot lately,” she observed, leaning against the counter as she took a sip of her water.

I was taken aback by her keen observation. Had she noticed my injuries?

“Nothing I can’t handle,” I replied, trying to sound confident.

“Right. You’re an Alpha, after all,” she remarked, her tone tinged with a hint of melancholy.

“Yeah... Alpha,” I murmured.

“Oh, I didn’t mean to doubt your abilities,” she hurriedly clarified. “I just meant... well, it would be strange if you couldn’t handle it, being an Alpha and all.”

“I understood what you meant,” I reassured her, sensing her embarrassment. She was clearly a shy individual.

A comfortable silence descended between us, surprising me with its ease. Despite not knowing Naomi well, I found myself feeling more at peace in her presence than with anyone else.

“Does it hurt a lot?” she asked softly.

“No, it’s manageable,” I replied honestly.

“Um, you know when I hurt myself when I was younger, my mother said it was a free pass to eat sweets,” she explained with a hint of nostalgia.

“Is that why you’re the best at making cakes?” I teased, noting the blush that crept onto her cheeks.

She shrugged modestly. “I don’t know, but do you want me to make you something now?”

“Now? It’s almost the middle of the night,” I pointed out, surprised by her offer.

Again, she shrugged, her uncertainty obvious. “I don’t mind.”

“Um, sure,” I agreed, touched by her willingness to spend her time baking. She neatly stowed away her water and donned an apron before gathering the necessary ingredients.

“Strawberry cake?” she proposed, glancing over her shoulder, and I was taken aback by her knowledge of my preferences.

“Sure,” I replied with a grateful smile, and she returned the gesture before immersing herself in the task at hand.

Suddenly, I found myself losing interest in the dessert before me as my mind was preoccupied with an unsettling realization. Could the woman in the living room be... Naomi?

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Chapter 4

-Naomi-

The dinner concluded, and while others migrated to the main room, I veered toward the hospital wing within the pack house, hopeful that our pack doctor was still available. As if anticipating my arrival, she greeted me with a smile upon my entry.

“Naomi? Need more blockers?”

“No, I’m stocked. I was wondering if you might have a moment. Something seems to be wrong,” I expressed.

Her attentive gaze scanned me before she tilted her head slightly. “You seem perfectly fine to me.”

“Well, I...” I hesitated.

“What?”

“I think something is wrong with my wolf,” I confessed.

“Your wolf? Having problems shifting?” she inquired.

“No, I don’t think so. I haven’t tried, but she seems to be in pain,” I clarified.

“In pain?” Her interest piqued, she suggested we adjourn to one of the examination

rooms. I followed suit, settling onto the table before her. She took a seat opposite me, her expression filled with curiosity.

“So, explain a little more about what you’re feeling,” she prompted.

“I don’t know how to describe it. She just doesn’t seem like herself,” I admitted.

“Are you in pain?”

“No, I don’t feel any. But she keeps whimpering and saying she doesn’t feel good,” I elaborated.

“Hmm, that is perplexing. You’re too young for Moon Sickness. It shouldn’t manifest unless you’re in your thirties,” she mused.

“Moon Sickness?” I echoed, seeking clarification.

“You know, when wolves become desperate for a mate. It typically arises in your thirties if you haven’t found a partner.”

“Oh, right,” I acknowledged, absorbing this new information.

I hadn’t even considered the possibility. What if I were an anomaly? What if it manifested earlier in my case? While true mates could be discovered as early as eighteen, perhaps I was an exception to the norm.

“Could it still happen?” I pressed.

“I mean, nothing is impossible, but I haven’t heard of it, and you’re only 23,” she reiterated.

“But you said it’s not impossible,” I persisted.

“I wouldn’t jump to conclusions.”

“But—” I started again.

“Naomi, no conclusions. It would be very strange if that were the case,” she emphasized.

“But if it is, should I just pick a mate?”

“Let’s wait a little with that,” she urged. “First, I think it would be a good idea if you let your wolf out to run. When was the last time you did so?”

“Um...” I felt a sudden wave of embarrassment as I realized it had been a long time since I allowed her that freedom.

“Then I think it is safe to say she only feels confined. Give her some freedom, and you will feel better,” she advised.

“But what if it is Moon Sickness?”

“Then we take it from there,” she reassured before patting my knee. “Go for a run, but eat a little first too. It should keep you going.”

I nodded, though I wasn’t entirely convinced that a quick run in the woods behind the house would magically fix everything. However, I couldn’t go against the doctor’s orders. When she concluded the session, I decided to grab some food quickly before heading out for a run. Making my way to the kitchen, I ate alone before leaving the pack house.

Not everyone resided there. My mother had her own house where I was staying as well. Walking through the woods, not far from the main house, I called out to my mother as I entered the little house. She responded from her room, but I knew she wouldn't be joining me. Since my dad passed away, she rarely left the house, clinging to it as the last connection to him.

Therefore, I respected her need for solitude. Instead, I retreated to change into my running attire before embarking on my jog. It didn't take me long to locate a secluded spot where I could transition into my other form comfortably. The metamorphosis still caused discomfort, albeit less so with each occurrence.

Dark brown fur sprouted across my body, my hands morphing into paws, and my face shifting. Soon, I stood on all fours, panting slightly from the exertion, yet I relinquished control, allowing my inner wolf to surface. However, as minutes elapsed without the expected shift in control, a sense of unease crept in, prompting me to reach out to her.

No! she protested.

What do you mean, no?

No!

Perplexed, I couldn't fathom her resistance. I always granted her the freedom to roam during our outings, which she typically relished. Yet, this time, she resisted without explanation.

Come on. The doctor assured us it would help you feel better, I reasoned.

No!

Can you offer any other response? I pressed.

She shook her head, obstinate in her refusal. It grew increasingly baffling. She seemed confused, unable to articulate her turmoil.

Attempting to coax her, I reached out, urging her to take control. In response, she snapped at me, coercing our reversion to human form. I sighed, collapsing naked onto the ground, perplexed by the unfolding events.

“Why did you do that?” I asked, but she remained silent. “I’m growing weary of this! You’re supposed to love these runs!”

She shook her head once more, retreating deeper into the back of my mind, beyond my reach.

“You’re being unreasonable! Running is something you adore,” I tried to persuade her. However, only silence came from her.

“Hey!” I called out, but received no reply.

I lingered on the ground, hoping for an answer, but she remained elusive, concealed within the depths of my consciousness. Growing weary of waiting, I began to dress again. Despite my disappointment, I decided to go for a brief run, though it failed to provide the solace I sought. Returning home, a sense of foolishness washed over me.

I should have anticipated the futility of my efforts, but I had adhered to the doctor’s instructions, feeling devoid of alternatives. Yet, apprehensions about the Moon Sickness loomed large. What if that was truly afflicting me? What course of action would I then pursue?

Attempting to dispel these troubling thoughts, I turned toward my mother’s room,

finding her curled up on the bed, burying her face in one of my father's shirts. Though his scent had long faded, it remained a powerful reminder of him.

"Mom?" I gently called out as I knocked on her partially open door.

She raised her head slightly, her expression vacant. "Yes?"

"Are you hungry?" I inquired.

"I ate," she stated.

I knew it wasn't true, but I opted not to challenge her.

"How about I whip up some pasta for you?" I suggested. "You've always had a soft spot for it."

"That was your dad's favorite. I simply grew accustomed to it," she replied.

Exhaling deeply, I lowered my head slightly.

"Then how about some ice cream?" I proposed. While I preferred to ensure she had a proper meal, I was prepared to indulge her in anything she desired if it brought her comfort.

"Chocolate," she specified.

"Of course, I'll get that for you."

A fleeting smile graced her lips as she settled back down. My heart ached for her. The years without her true mate had left her in this desolate state, and no medical intervention could mend her brokenness. Only a second chance at love could offer

solace, but such opportunities were rare.

Navigating to the kitchen, I located some leftover ice cream and a spoon. Returning to her room, I assisted her in sitting up before handing her the sweet treat. I waited until I saw her take a few bites before retreating to the bathroom.

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Chapter 5

-Reese-

Last night's sleep was dreadful. While cuddling with Rosa usually brought me comfort, there was an unsettling vibe about it this time. I couldn't quite pinpoint what it was, leaving me tossing and turning all night.

Come morning, I gently extricated myself from her embrace and decided to go for a run. The sun had barely risen as I made my way through the woods, hoping the exercise would ease the suffocating feeling in my chest. Unfortunately, it persisted, refusing to dissipate.

Even my inner wolf seemed unsettled since last night's dinner. He paced restlessly within me, yet he couldn't communicate his needs. Despite our run, his agitation only intensified, leaving me at a loss.

"Your pacing is distracting," I growled as I slowed to a walk, trying to regain my focus.

Sorry , he murmured.

"I thought we agreed to focus on our mate, not this strange feeling. Why the sudden change?" I pressed.

I... don't know. Something feels... off.

“Off?” I prodded, hoping for clarity.

That’s the best I can describe it. Something feels... out of place , he confessed.

I wished he could articulate his feelings more clearly. Without a proper explanation, I could only speculate, and it left me feeling irritable. We were on the verge of preparing for the official ceremony, and I was striving to assume my role as Alpha. This should have been a time of joy and anticipation, not confusion and frustration.

Instead, a discomfort settled in my body, an unease I hadn’t felt since before I left. There was a reason I had fled this place, and it wasn’t because I felt at home here. Why were these old feelings resurfacing now? I had anticipated the possibility, but this time I returned with a different purpose and a mate by my side to anchor me.

Despite the uncertainty lingering in my mind, I decided to head back to the house. The air was alive with the stirrings of awakening, voices gradually filling the rooms. Feeling parched, I ventured into the kitchen, intending to quench my thirst and fetch something for Rosa. However, as I approached, a sweet giggle reached my ears, the kind that quickens the heartbeat.

Pushing the door open, I was met with the sight of the female wolf from yesterday—who I was certain was the wolf from my past—already busy preparing breakfast, with a male wolf seated nearby, eliciting smiles and laughter from her. Yet, as they noticed my presence, they fell silent, their attention turning toward me.

The situation unsettled me in a way I couldn’t quite articulate. I glanced between them, noting the resemblance between the female wolf and the young girl from my memories. Her large green eyes held a question, but I couldn’t shake the feeling that she might also harbor a hint of fear from our previous encounter. I disliked the thought, yet I wondered why she would fear me when she was the one who had bewildered me with her scent.

“Alpha, can we assist you?” she inquired politely.

“No,” I curtly replied, striding into the kitchen and past her. However, as I hurried by, a familiar whiff of her scent reached me, halting me in my tracks. I turned my head to look at her, but she appeared oblivious to my pause.

She continued frying eggs, and I couldn’t help but wonder if the breakfast was intended solely for the two of them, given the early hour. It unsettled me to see her catering to this man, whose evident attraction toward her fueled a strange anger within me, growing with each passing moment.

“Is that breakfast for the entire pack, Naomi?” I questioned. She seemed surprised by my inquiry, but her reaction to hearing her name confirmed fully who she was.

“Um, no, Fran handles that. I just came in a bit early,” she replied, turning to face me.

“So did someone else,” I muttered irritably, glancing pointedly at the male pack member who still had his eyes fixed on Naomi, a gesture that irked me to no end. He had no right to look at her like that!

Naomi caught the way I looked at the other wolf, and her sudden blush did not escape my notice. Did she have feelings for this male wolf? Were they involved romantically? Why did I even care? I reminded myself that I had a true mate, shaking my head in an attempt to dispel these intrusive thoughts.

Grabbing two water bottles from the fridge, I turned around, only to find Naomi placing food on two plates. So she was indeed making him breakfast?

No, it is not my concern, I scolded myself inwardly, preparing to move past her. However, Naomi needed something from my side, and as she turned just as I was about to leave, we collided. She emitted a small sound of pain, taking the brunt of the

impact due to her smaller stature. Despite her discomfort, she quickly regained her composure, retreating until she bumped into the counter.

“I-I’m so sorry,” she stammered, avoiding my gaze as she gestured for me to go ahead.

I felt a pang of disappointment. I longed for her to look at me, to meet my eyes with that familiar gaze that reminded me of the forest. But she kept her head down, and I knew better than to vocalize my desires. They were perplexing and best left unspoken.

“Next time, watch where you’re going,” I scolded Naomi, though my frustration wasn’t aimed at her.

She nodded obediently, and I hastened out of the kitchen before I succumbed to an utterly insane impulse—an inexplicable urge to grab Naomi and take her right there in the kitchen, a disturbing image that filled my mind the moment I stepped away from her.

I froze in my tracks, bewildered by the sudden flood of sexual thoughts about her. Why were these inappropriate desires surfacing? Glancing over my shoulder, I heard murmured voices on the other side of the room. Tempted to eavesdrop, I resisted the urge. I shouldn’t concern myself with their conversation. Hastily, I departed before I acted on my unsettling impulses.

-Naomi-

On my way to the pack house, I ran into Thomas, an early riser like myself. Despite my shy nature, Thomas and I shared a strong friendship. They say opposites attract, and it seemed true in our case.

I offered to make us some food, but the unexpected presence of the Alpha had caught us off guard. I had expected him to spend the morning in bed with his mate, not out on a run. Yet, as he moved around me, it only intensified the allure of his scent.

I tried to focus on preparing food, ignoring the temptation his proximity posed. But when our paths crossed... Oh, his smooth skin... I even touched it! I knew I was disappointing the Goddess, but it wasn't my fault the Alpha worked out shirtless! Though I doubted this would earn me a place in her divine realm later.

"He seemed tense, didn't he?" Thomas remarked, breaking the silence.

"Um, I'm not sure," I replied with uncertainty.

"You didn't notice how angry he looked?"

I couldn't discern his mood amidst the overpowering scent that filled the room, causing my head to spin.

"Perhaps he just had a rough night's sleep," I suggested.

"Or maybe he's already clashing with his mate," Thomas speculated as I brought the plates over to him and settled beside him.

"No, that can't be. They're true mates."

"True mates can still have disagreements," he reminded me.

"I know, but it seems too soon. They've only been together for three months," I reasoned.

"But she's also the enemy's daughter."

“We’re no longer enemies. The former Alpha established peace with their pack. Now our packs will be united through our new Alpha and their Luna,” I countered.

“But it’s understandable if there’s still tension between them,” Thomas insisted.

I rolled my eyes, prompting Thomas to nudge me playfully.

“Hey!” I chuckled, nudging him back, eliciting a smile from him.

“Don’t dismiss my theory so easily. It holds weight.”

“I just think we shouldn’t rush to conclusions. They’ve only just returned, and we’re about to enter a stressful period,” I reasoned.

“A stressful time?”

“We’re going to be busy with the ceremony where they’ll mark each other. Don’t you think we’ll be working tirelessly on that?”

“True, if they make it that far,” he teased, and I chuckled, shaking my head.

“Have a little faith.”

“Not when the Alpha seems so irritated in the morning. Shouldn’t he be over the moon? I know I would be if I had a mate,” Thomas pointed out.

“Perhaps he’s just a bit stressed,” I suggested.

“But he’s got the most desirable thing in his bed.”

I rolled my eyes in response.

“Are you jealous?” Thomas teased, causing my heart to race with unease.

“What? No, why would I be jealous?” I laughed awkwardly.

“You know I was just kidding, right?”

“Yeah, exactly,” I replied, trying to ease the tension, which made Thomas chuckle.

He shook his head gently as he began eating, but I found my appetite lacking. I kept glancing at Thomas, pondering if I truly had Moon Sickness, would he be willing to support me?

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Chapter 6

-Reese-

I felt on edge throughout the day. Even the morning spent in bed with Rosa didn't bring me much solace. I struggled to reach climax, my thoughts consumed by those two wolves together.

Why did it bother me? They were a couple, so why did it pose a problem for me? I had a mate, someone I deeply desired, yet I couldn't shake off the discomfort I felt witnessing the camaraderie between them. Especially the way the male wolf seemed to devour Naomi with his eyes when she wasn't looking. He wanted her, I was certain, if he hadn't already had her.

Tapping my finger against the armrest of my chair, I found myself unable to focus on the work before me. My mind kept conjuring up images of Naomi in front of me.

"Reese?" my dad's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"What?" I snapped out of my trance.

"The tapping is very distracting," he scolded, gesturing to my finger.

I sighed, halting the motion. "Sorry."

"What's going on with you? I know there's a lot to catch up on, but you're meant to be the Alpha, and you need to take that seriously now," he reminded me.

I nodded, glancing at my Beta, Zack, beside my father. He looked a little concerned as well, probably wondering if I was ready to take off again. I knew the time apart hadn't strengthened our friendship, but I hoped now that I was back, it might change. I gave him a small smile before returning to the work in front of me. However, I could only focus for 10 minutes before the suffocating feeling returned.

"I need a moment," I sighed, abruptly standing up, surprising them both.

"Reese!" my dad called after me, but I didn't listen.

I couldn't stay in that room any longer, feeling as if I could barely breathe. I needed some time to gather myself before I lost my mind. Descending the stairs, the sweet scent of Naomi drew me in again.

She's close, my wolf commented.

Yes, Naomi had to be close if her scent was so strong. However, the front door was right ahead, and the voice of reason told me to go outside. But it wasn't the outdoors that beckoned me. Instead, something triggered my Alpha instincts, an urge to hunt. But the only person I should want to hunt should be my mate. Yet I couldn't ignore the call. I began following the scent, hearing voices as I approached.

Once again, I found myself in the living room. My mother, my mate, and a few other females were gathered around the coffee table with snacks and magazines, while lower-ranking wolves attended to their needs.

Among them was Naomi, placing decorated tiny cakes down. When she stood up, our eyes met, and she blushed deeply before looking away. Despite the room being filled with people, all I could see and smell was her. A growl threatened to escape my throat, but before it could, my mother noticed me.

“Reese?” she called, and I turned to face her.

“Mom,” I greeted.

“What are you doing here?” she inquired, drawing everyone’s attention to me.

“Just needed a break.”

As the lower-ranking wolves began to leave the room after completing their tasks, my gaze remained fixed on Naomi as she followed the stream, her sweet scent lingering in the air around me. This couldn’t continue. I needed to put a stop to it.

“Won’t you join us?” Rosa asked me. “We’re preparing for our ceremony.”

“Sounds wonderful,” I murmured absentmindedly, not really paying attention to her, but keeping my eyes on Naomi.

“Reese?” my mom called, pulling my attention away.

“What?”

The women chuckled around me.

“Your mate asked you something,” my mom explained, gesturing toward Rosa, who smiled at me.

“Sorry, what was that?” I asked.

“Would you like to join us?” Rosa offered, but I shook my head.

“Thank you, but I’m not finished with my work. I’ll come find you later, and we can

plan together,” I replied.

She appeared content with my suggestion, but my intention wasn't to return to work. I had a different agenda in mind. Spinning on my heel, I pursued Naomi. She hadn't returned to the kitchen but was assisting other wolves with cleaning in a room further down.

Observing her climb onto a table to reach a high shelf, I approached, prepared to have a conversation about the distracting scent she was enveloped in. As I drew nearer, I noticed the black skirt she wore. Though not particularly short, it reached below mid-thigh.

However, standing on the table offered an unobstructed view underneath. Aware that other men were present in the room, assisting with cleaning, I positioned myself behind her, shielding her as she tidied the shelf.

Initially oblivious to my presence, she eventually turned her head, encountering me, emitting a surprised squeal that startled the room's occupants. Previously engrossed in their tasks, they only seemed to notice me now.

“Can we assist you, Alpha?” one of them inquired.

I shook my head. “No, but this room is sufficiently clean. You may leave,” I instructed.

They appeared puzzled by my directive but complied, dispersing. However, as Naomi prepared to descend from the table, I stepped forward, positioning myself directly in front of her. Gazing up at me with apprehension, she failed to comprehend my proximity, but I required an explanation. Placing my hands on either side of her, I surprised her with the gesture.

“All right, little wolf, I want the truth,” I insisted.

“The truth?” she echoed, bewildered.

“What are you doing to emanate that scent?”

“Scent?” she whispered, perplexed.

“I’m not in the mood for games!” I snapped, reaching out to grasp her hair, pulling her head back to ensure her green eyes met mine.

She emitted a soft hiss, feeling the tight grip of my hand, but I couldn’t afford to be gentle. She was playing with my mind, and I couldn’t allow it to persist. She needed to realize I was promised to someone else, someone who had consumed my thoughts entirely for months. Yet, one encounter with Naomi, and suddenly, my focus shifted elsewhere.

“Tell me what you’re doing to yourself to smell so enticing!” I growled.

“I-I’m not doing anything,” she stammered.

“Don’t lie to me! Are you entering your heat?”

“I-I’m on blockers,” she assured me, calming my nerves. Knowing she was on blockers reassured me that her heat wouldn’t suddenly appear to attract someone. Yet, why did the thought of someone else entering her heat with her bother me? Something felt out of place here.

“Then what is it?” I demanded.

“What is what?” she asked, fear evident in her voice.

“You smell like the most irresistible thing I’ve ever encountered. It makes me want to...” I trailed off, my thoughts racing. What did it make me want to do? To mate with her right on this table. The skirt she wore wouldn’t present a hindrance, and her legs were already slightly parted. I could easily reach beneath and...

What was I doing? I had a mate. I wasn’t supposed to desire to claim a random female wolf from the pack right here. But a voice inside reminded me, she wasn’t just any female wolf. While my interactions with Naomi had been limited, memories of our encounters flooded my mind, strangely quelling my anger.

“Alpha, please, your grip is hurting me,” she whispered, her hands resting on my wrist, attempting to pry me off, yet not daring to do so.

“Then tell me the truth.”

“B-But I don’t know what truth you’re referring to,” she stammered.

“Yes, you do. You smell too good. It’s all I can focus on!” I hissed, moving closer, only to realize my mistake. Her scent grew more intoxicating, enveloping me and clouding my senses. I could lose myself in that scent and die content, I realized. My possessiveness surged, and before I could stop myself, I buried my nose in her neck, brushing aside her shirt to reach the spot that emitted the most potent aroma—her marking spot.

She whimpered at my touch, her scent mixing with arousal, driving me even more crazy for her. She wanted me, and a deep rumble escaped me as I realized it. Grasping her naked thigh, I pulled her closer, widening her legs as I continued to scent her. Pressing us together, I sought to eliminate any space between us, consumed by her sweetness.

More, more , my wolf murmured in my mind, as if under a trance.

Naomi was a dangerous temptation, but in that moment, I had forgotten why her scent had unsettled me. It was intoxicating, and I desired it entirely for myself.

“A-Alpha, please stop,” she pleaded softly, as I leaned over her, leaving no room for escape, pressing her into the table beneath her.

I couldn't restrain myself. Nothing in the world could tear me away, for it felt more right than words could convey.

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Chapter 7

-Naomi-

Reese's behavior was incredibly perplexing. Not only had he accused me of being immersed in his mate's scent, but now he was insinuating that I was attempting to seduce him? I couldn't quite comprehend his accusations. He seemed unwilling to articulate his thoughts fully, yet he clearly believed I was scheming against him.

His anger manifested in every gesture, yet there was a noticeable shift from fury to intense arousal as he buried his face in my neck. The sensation sent shivers down my spine, igniting a fire within me, but I knew it was inappropriate. He shouldn't be inhaling my scent or pressing himself between my legs while we were exposed on the table in the open room. The door stood wide open, leaving us vulnerable to anyone's gaze, and it was the only thing preventing me from losing control completely, despite my desire to have him close.

My body seemed to react on its own accord, my hips instinctively moving against him, eliciting a pleased response from him. Even my wolf, who had been consumed by pain and agony for days, now purred with a different emotion. But none of this made sense. Reese was the Alpha with a mate. Why were we entangled in this compromising situation?

I attempted to push him away, but he appeared oblivious, lost in the moment. The situation was incredibly bewildering, and despite knowing it was wrong, the longer I remained beneath him, the more reluctant I became to break away.

Struggling against his tight grip, I managed to turn my head slightly and buried my nose in his neck. His scent was fresh, as if he had just showered, and I couldn't help but moan with pleasure. My reaction seemed to drive him wild, prompting his free hand to roam down my body, sending shivers down my spine.

As his hand slipped between us, delving between my legs, I realized my skirt had been pushed up, leaving me exposed. There was no barrier as he explored me, his fingers grazing over my panties, undoubtedly feeling how soaked they were. My body responded intensely to his touch, as if it were calling out for him.

He seemed pleased by my reaction, pressing harder and finding my swollen clit beneath the fabric, eliciting a shocked gasp from me. Despite knowing I shouldn't, I couldn't resist rocking against his hand, unleashing a deep growl from him that mirrored his own desires.

But this was all wrong. He was promised to someone else. He shouldn't be touching me. I pushed against his chest, attempting to create some distance between us.

"A-Alpha, this isn't like you. You have a mate," I reminded him, feeling the weight of my words settle between us, like a sudden downpour.

He withdrew abruptly, his grip tightening momentarily, eliciting a whimper from me. But as he peered down at our entanglement, it wasn't disgust that flickered in his eyes. Instead, there was a glint of yellow in them, a hint that his primal instincts were at play. I swallowed hard, feeling exposed beneath him, especially with his hand lingering between my legs, now still. I reached for the hem of my skirt, attempting to restore some semblance of modesty, but with my thighs parted, it was futile.

"Can't you see it?" he demanded, his voice heavy with accusation as I continued to struggle beneath him.

“See what?” I whispered.

“What you’re doing.”

“I... I don’t know what you mean.”

“Don’t pretend you don’t know,” he snapped.

“But I genuinely don’t understand. I don’t know what’s happening,” I confessed, but he seemed skeptical. He continued to examine me as if I held all the answers, but the truth was, I was just as bewildered as he was. “I swear.”

“Then why do you smell so intoxicating?” he growled, pulling us closer as his finger traced the outline of my underwear, igniting tantalizing sensations. “It’s even stronger now.”

“T-That’s because you’re touching me!” I snapped.

“Yes, but you’re enjoying it.”

“A-Am I not supposed to? You’re touching a sensitive area.”

“If you didn’t desire me, you wouldn’t smell so enticing,” he accused.

I swallowed hard. I couldn’t deny my attraction to him. I had always felt drawn to him, but it was more than physical.

“I-I...”

“So, tell me what’s happening,” he demanded. “Is it some kind of potion?”

“Potion?”

“From a witch,” he clarified.

“A witch? We’re warned to stay away from them.”

“Just because you’re warned doesn’t mean you didn’t seek one out. Are you deliberately messing with my mind? Trying to sabotage my bond?” I growled.

“No, I swear!”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Then why are you still touching me?” I retorted, but as soon as the words left my lips, he pulled away, abruptly cutting off the building climax. It left me feeling frustrated and unfulfilled. Reese finally withdrew his hand, allowing me to hastily adjust my skirt to cover myself.

“You’re up to something, Naomi. I can feel it, because I shouldn’t be reacting like this,” he snarled.

“But I’m not doing anything!”

“You are, and I’m going to find out what it is,” he declared.

“Find out?” I echoed.

“Exactly. And if you don’t want the consequences to be severe, I suggest you confess,” he warned.

I wanted to protest, to defend myself, but what could I possibly say? I wasn’t doing

anything, yet he refused to believe me. With a rough shove, he pushed me away, leaving me feeling dizzy and hurt. I watched him storm off, aching in my chest and overwhelmed by a sense of betrayal. It wasn't fair, and I struggled to hold back tears as they welled up in my eyes, silently streaming down my cheeks.

-Reese-

I returned to Rosa's side, consumed by a potent mix of shame and confusion. How could I do this to her? How could I be drawn to someone else when she was my true mate? True mates were supposed to only desire each other, everyone else becoming insignificant, yet I couldn't shake the pull toward Naomi.

Rosa glanced up as I entered the living room, catching the intensity in my gaze. With a knowing smile, she found a reason to step away from her work. We slipped out together, and I wasted no time in pressing her against the wall for a passionate kiss. She chuckled.

"Right now?" she teased.

"Yes, right now," I affirmed.

"But I'm in the middle of something with the others."

"We'll be quick," I promised, guiding her to a private room away from the main area. Once inside, I lifted her onto a small couch. As I leaned in to continue, the overpowering desire that had consumed me earlier seemed to fade in Rosa's presence. Nonetheless, I persisted, kissing her and beginning to undress her. However, she hesitated, sniffing the air around me.

"Why do you smell like someone else?" she asked.

I should have anticipated that Naomi's scent would linger and that Rosa would notice. But how could I explain it when I didn't understand it myself?

"Reese?" she prompted.

I sighed, resting my head against her chest as she embraced me, sensing my inner turmoil.

"I don't know what's happening to me," I confessed.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I'm not sure."

"Reese, you're worrying me," she admitted.

"I know. I'm worried too."

"Then what's going on with you? You can talk to me," she reassured.

I wanted to, but the words eluded me. I shook my head against her.

"Reese, come on, we're mates," she reminded me.

"But I feel... strange."

"You're not making any sense," she observed.

"Because I don't understand it," I groaned.

"Understand what?"

“I... I want... someone else.”

“What did you just say?”

“I want someone else,” I repeated, knowing how painful my words must be for her to hear.

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Chapter 8

-Reese-

My confession didn't spark a passionate encounter between us. Instead, we both fell silent, lost in our own thoughts as we sat on the couch. But could I blame her? This wasn't the kind of revelation one wanted to hear from their mate.

"I'm sorry," I whispered.

"I'm not sure what to say," she admitted.

"No, me neither."

"What do you even mean by that?"

"I don't know," I confessed, leaning forward and burying my face in my hands, still carrying the sweet scent of Naomi on my fingers.

"Then why would you say that?" she questioned.

"Because you asked me!" I exclaimed, turning to her and seeing her draw back slightly. "Sorry, I didn't mean to raise my voice."

"Reese, your behavior is extremely confusing."

"Then how do you think I feel?" I challenged. "I don't know what's happening to

me.”

Rosa sighed, nodding a little, both of us finding this situation incredibly perplexing. We both lapsed into silence, contemplating my predicament before she closed her eyes briefly, as if reaching a conclusion.

“What?” I asked.

“Some people have two mates,” she murmured.

“That is incredibly rare,” I reminded her.

“But not impossible,” she pointed out, meeting my eyes.

“Rosa, she is not my second mate. I don’t have and don’t want two mates.”

“Are you certain?” she asked.

“Yes. I haven’t heard my wolf claim her. She just...”

“Just what?” she inquired.

“She just confuses me a little.”

“A little? You seem on the verge of snapping,” she countered.

“I’m not. I’m fine. I think it’s just coming back here and... everything,” I murmured, but it was a feeble excuse. My mind shouldn’t be consumed by Naomi when I had Rosa as my true mate. My wolf had claimed her, the word echoing in my head, leaving no doubt about our connection. I had not experienced the same with Naomi. It was only her scent, her sweet, intoxicating aroma... No, I needed to stop letting it

affect me. It was time to purge her from my thoughts.

I drew closer to Rosa, who gave me a small smile, surprisingly not as upset as I had anticipated.

“I will make it stop,” I assured her.

“Oh? Do you have the power to do that?” she asked a little teasingly.

“She is not my second mate.”

“You don’t know that,” she countered.

“I do, or my wolf would have told me. I know I can handle this,” I promised.

“Who is she even?”

I was about to say Naomi’s name, but for some reason, I hesitated. Why? What harm would it do to say her name?

“No one,” I replied. “She is no one.”

“And yet you desire her,” Rosa remarked.

“I will... stop it.”

“How?” she asked.

“I will just avoid her completely,” I promised.

“Is that possible when you are in the same pack?”

“As I said, she is no one,” I assured her.

Rosa sighed, looking away from me, so I leaned closer, kissing her shoulder.

“I’m sorry. I will figure out what’s wrong with me,” I vowed.

“Maybe the pack doctor can help you?” she suggested.

“I’ll check,” I said.

“I just don’t want anything to ruin our bond,” she whispered, reaching up to caress my cheek, and suddenly her warmth enveloped me, bringing a rush of emotions. I smiled, feeling more like myself again.

“Trust me, I don’t either.”

“Then you need to do everything you can to stop this,” she insisted.

“Don’t worry. I will.”

She leaned in closer, kissing me with more intensity, and I responded eagerly. This time, I felt different. Her touch seemed enticing again, and I felt my cock grow hard. Perhaps I had finally rid myself of this longing for Naomi after opening up about my struggles. I pushed Rosa down onto the couch once more, her hands eagerly exploring me in return.

“You seem perfectly healthy,” the pack doctor told me as I put on my shirt again, sitting on the examination table.

“How can that be?” I asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Doc, I told you. I desire two different women, and one of them isn’t even my mate. That shouldn’t be possible,” I pointed out.

“Are you certain she isn’t a second mate?” the doctor asked.

“Rosa asked the same thing yesterday, but no, she is not,” I replied.

“And yet you feel incredibly attracted to her?”

“Yes.”

“That certainly shouldn’t happen,” she mused aloud.

“No, exactly. Naomi is—”

“Hold on, what did you say?” the doctor interjected.

“What?” I asked.

“Naomi is the second woman?” she questioned.

“Yes, why?”

“Interesting,” she murmured, tapping a pen against her bottom lip as she sat by the counter where my medical file was lying. I waited for her to continue her train of thought, but she remained lost in contemplation.

“Doc, why is it interesting?” I inquired.

“Well, because Naomi came here the day you arrived,” she revealed.

“And?”

“Like you, she is perfectly healthy, but she explained strange symptoms regarding her wolf.”

“Such as?” I pressed.

“I can’t disclose that,” she explained.

I groaned, rolling my head around in frustration. It seemed I wasn’t the only one struggling. Something was going on with Naomi too. Then, was she truly the culprit behind my strange behavior?

“When did she arrive?” I asked.

“Later in the day, around dinner,” she replied.

That meant it had been after our encounter in the living room. This was becoming more perplexing.

“Alpha, are you certain she isn’t a second mate?” she asked.

“No, my wolf would have said something. Besides, she isn’t even a Luna, and a second bond is incredibly rare. I can’t even remember the last time that happened to anyone,” I pointed out.

“About 50 years ago. It was another Alpha, but it was his Luna who had two Alphas, and they shared her,” she explained.

“See? So rare,” I countered.

She nodded. “But what is your wolf saying? Is he behaving strangely?”

I contemplated her question, then nodded. “Sort of.”

“Sort of?”

“He is... restless, but that is not uncommon if you haven’t found your mate. But I have!” I exclaimed.

“Is he still restless?”

I nodded, feeling my wolf pace around inside me. Though we had reconnected with Rosa, the calmness she brought had only lasted for a short period, the restless feeling returning with new power. That was why I needed to figure out what was happening to me.

“It is very confusing,” she concluded.

“Could it be magical?” I questioned.

“You mean involving a witch?”

I nodded.

“You do realize their help isn’t cheap to acquire, right?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“You think a low-ranking wolf like Naomi with a deceased father could ever afford

such help?" she pointed out.

I sighed, lowering my head. I had pondered the same, yet my mind clung to something else the doc said.

"What do you mean, deceased father?" I questioned.

"You didn't know?" she inquired.

I shook my head.

"Oh, right, you were out traveling. It was an attack. He died protecting the pack. He wasn't the best fighter, but he held importance. However, that sadly didn't help him," she revealed.

"I see."

I suddenly felt an unexplainable urge to go find Naomi, to comfort her, even though it was a long time ago. Yet I remained in my place.

"I have no other explanation but witchcraft," I said.

"Well, there is a way we can check it," she pointed out.

"How?"

"By hiring a witch," she said. "You can afford that."

"Maybe I should," I sighed.

"I think that might be best."

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Chapter 9

-Naomi-

I was quietly enjoying a brief respite when Thomas appeared, joining me in the kitchen for a coffee break. Unexpectedly, two imposing figures barged in, fixating their gaze on me. Without a word, they swiftly seized me by the arms, hoisting me from my seat and whisking me away.

“Wait, what’s going on?” I protested, bewildered.

Thomas rose to intervene, but he lacked the prowess to challenge them, left only to witness my forced departure.

“Naomi!” he called out, his expression fraught with confusion as I glanced back before being led away.

Struggling against their firm grip proved futile as they guided me upstairs to the office. There, I found myself confronted by the former Alpha and Reese, the current leader, alongside other pack members, all regarding me with accusing stares. Perplexed, I couldn’t comprehend the gravity of the situation. I hadn’t committed any wrongdoing, yet I was treated as if I were a criminal. Even the former Alpha appeared displeased, adding to my confusion.

“What’s happening?” I murmured, my voice trembling with uncertainty.

The Alpha motioned toward a chair positioned in the room’s center, and the fighters

escorted me to it, exerting a forceful pressure as they pushed me down. A sharp gasp escaped me at the rough handling, but they eventually released their grip, allowing me to massage my arms.

“A matter of concern has been brought to my attention,” the former Alpha initiated.

“What?” I uttered, bewildered.

“It appears my son has been influenced by your presence since his return home a few days ago. Do you have anything to say about that?” he inquired sternly.

“Um... no?” I responded uncertainly.

“Naomi, now is not the time for falsehoods. We must ascertain if you’ve been involved in any illegal affairs,” he pressed.

“But I genuinely don’t understand what’s happening. I haven’t done anything,” I confessed earnestly.

The former Alpha sighed, shifting his gaze to his son, who appeared tense yet not as enraged as his father. Perhaps he had been given time to process the situation, unlike me, who remained utterly clueless.

Amidst the confrontation, I noticed a woman lurking in the background, her dark red hair a striking contrast against the room’s dark decor. I had never seen her before, but when our eyes met, I detected a faint glimmer in hers, indicating her status as a witch. She offered a subtle smile in my direction, leaving me uncertain of her intentions.

“Are you certain you’ll stick to that explanation?” the elder Alpha probed.

“What explanation? I’m completely lost,” I admitted, my confusion deepening.

“Have you resorted to magic to manipulate my son’s mind?”

“M-Magic? We’re explicitly instructed to steer clear of such practices,” I protested.

“Yes, but I’m asking if you’ve defied that instruction,” he pressed.

“T-To what end?”

“To enchant my son,” he snapped, his patience waning as I struggled to keep pace. Fear gripped me tightly in the presence of these powerful men, leaving me utterly intimidated.

“I-I haven’t done anything,” I confessed in a barely audible whisper.

“I want to believe you, Naomi, but I’m finding it difficult,” the former Alpha remarked, causing me to lower my gaze in shame. I felt utterly helpless, as if the entire world had turned against me, with no one willing to lend credence to my words. How had everything spiraled so swiftly into darkness? Clutching the fabric of my dark trousers, I fought back tears, feeling utterly isolated.

“You may start,” the elder Alpha declared, signaling the beginning of... what?

Raising my gaze, I watched as the witch approached, a sense of unease creeping over me. Instinctively, I shifted in my seat, a futile attempt to distance myself from her, though I knew fleeing would only fuel suspicions of guilt. Resigned, I remained motionless as she drew nearer.

My heart raced as she reached for a knife at her hip, terror flooding my senses. I attempted to retreat again, but her grip on my arm halted any escape. A surge of her power coursed through me, rendering me immobile. Helpless, I could only watch as she twisted my hand, the blade slicing into my palm with agonizing slowness,

accompanied by incantations muttered under her breath. She swiftly collected my blood in a vial before applying a bandage to stem the flow.

Confusion clouded my thoughts as I wondered why they needed my blood. Just when I thought the ordeal was over, she placed her hand on my lower arm, murmuring incomprehensible words. A searing pain erupted, consuming me from within. Tears welled in my eyes, cascading down my cheeks, yet I remained mute, held captive by her control.

Yet as I glanced around the room, I saw the rest allow her to inflict harm upon me while passively observing. Relief flooded over me when, at last, she released her hold, granting me control over my body once more. Collapsing back into the chair, I wept, my gaze fixated on my arm where a swirling symbol now seared into my flesh. Its meaning eluded me, but the pain radiating from the branded mark was unmistakable.

“The branding will prevent her from accepting magical aid. While she may seek assistance to cast spells on others, her own body will reject such help. Only the witch who branded her can undo it,” the witch elucidated, earning a nod of approval from the elder Alpha.

“So if she’s tampered with her scent?”

“It will dissipate soon, ensuring the Alpha remains unaffected. However, it may take a few hours. I suggest keeping them apart.”

“Understood,” the elder Alpha acknowledged.

“Her blood will reveal any substances she might have ingested, excluding those derived from magic. I might even be able to render him immune to her influence,” the witch elaborated.

“Excellent. Let’s proceed. Take her to the old stable,” the elder Alpha commanded.

I recognized the destination all too well. Despite being referred to as “the stable”, it had been repurposed into a makeshift prison. The fighters seized me, and despite my resistance, I found myself powerless to stop the unfolding events. Desperately, I sought reassurance from Reese, only to be met with his avoiding gaze. How could he believe I would resort to magic? I couldn’t afford such assistance, yet he remained convinced I had manipulated him.

Tears streamed down my cheeks as the fighters escorted me outside, thrusting me into the dense woods. The journey was brief, but each tug on my injured arm sent waves of agony coursing through me. Exhaustion weighed heavily upon me as we finally arrived at the dark stable.

With each step, they dragged me closer to my cell, my body protesting against the rough treatment. The cell’s door slammed shut behind me, leaving me alone in the dimly lit enclosure. Peering through the bars, I watched as the fighters disappeared, indifferent to my plight, especially now with the branding on my skin.

I struggled to rise, the persistent pain pulsating through my body as I shuffled toward the nearest wall. Leaning heavily against it, I allowed the anguish to wash over me, succumbing to uncontrollable sobs.

“I don’t understand,” I whispered.

After days of silence, my wolf emerged, offering me solace with gentle whimpers in my mind.

“I-I didn’t do anything,” I whispered.

I know , she reassured.

“Then why is this happening?” I cried out.

I don’t know , she admitted.

“It burns!”

I feel it too , she empathized.

“They believe we’ve harmed Reese. Everyone does!” I exclaimed.

But we haven’t , she affirmed.

“Why does everyone think so? None of it makes sense!”

My wolf remained silent, unable to provide answers. It seemed I had been unjustly branded a traitor to the pack, and I gazed down at the inflamed skin, now blistering. Why must I endure such agony? Such unjust treatment?

Chapter 10

-Reese-

The atmosphere in the office was tense, our confusion clear as the witch delivered her findings.

“Are you certain?” my father inquired, his voice laden with concern as we sat facing the witch.

“There are no indications of potion ingestion in her blood,” she reiterated.

“And what about spells?”

“Even spells leave discernible traces on the body. However, if she had directly enchanted you, that would require a separate examination for magical residue,” the witch clarified. “But Naomi herself shows no signs of magical interference. She isn’t ingesting potions or buying magical services.”

“Then perform the same analysis on Reese,” my father directed.

“The thing is, it wouldn’t make sense,” she continued.

“What do you mean?” I asked. “You just said if she has used the magic directly on me, then it wouldn’t leave a trace on her.”

“Yes, but your symptoms don’t make sense, not if the spell is directed at you.”

“How so?” I questioned.

“You say it’s her scent that attracts you, correct?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“If the magic was directed at you, it wouldn’t be her scent that would enhance. It would be everything about her. The sort of spell she would need to use would not only be incredibly expensive, but it wouldn’t make you attracted to her scent alone. That’s not enough to deter you from your mate’s fragrance. When trying to toy with a true bond, that sort of magic requires a full-on obsession. A scent alone is not enough to distract you, and if she was enhancing her smell, she needs it to be done on her, not you.”

“So, you’re suggesting Naomi couldn’t have orchestrated anything against me?” I surmised.

“Precisely. With true bonds, such interference is almost impossible,” the witch affirmed.

“Then perhaps the spell only partially succeeded?”

“Even so, her scent wouldn’t be the only aspect affected. Moreover, you mentioned anomalies with her wolf,” the witch countered.

“I’ve been informed her wolf has been acting strangely,” I confirmed.

“A spell aimed at you wouldn’t concurrently affect her.”

“But I’m unaware of the specifics of her symptoms,” I admitted.

“I will speak to her to ascertain the truth,” the witch declared resolutely.

Though I nodded in agreement, the outcome left much to be desired. I had hoped for clarity with the witch’s assistance, yet the situation only grew more confusing.

-Naomi-

Alone in the cold cell, I was startled by the sound of the front door creaking open. Expecting the return of the fighters, I was surprised to see Thomas standing there instead, a warm smile on his face as he held out a bag with food.

“Thomas?” I whispered, confusion evident in my tone as he approached and slid the food through the bars. I accepted it tentatively, but his unexpected presence left me bewildered. “What are you doing here?”

Resting against the bars, he knelt down before me. “We all heard about what happened, you being dragged out of the house. What’s going on, Nomi?”

“I-I don’t know,” I confessed. “They... They think I’m harming the Alpha.”

“Why?” he inquired, his concern evident.

“Because... I...” I faltered. “I don’t know.”

“Then why are you out there?” he pressed gently.

“I don’t know,” I replied, tears welling up once more. The physical pain may have subsided, but the anguish in my heart remained raw.

Thomas reached out, his touch gentle as he brushed his fingers against my cheek. Though his gesture offered comfort, the presence of the bars between us only

intensified my sense of despair. His attempt at a reassuring smile fell flat, leaving me feeling adrift and isolated.

“You’ll be okay,” he assured me.

“Thomas, they think I’ve used magic,” I confessed in a hushed tone.

“Magic?” he echoed, his brow furrowing in confusion.

“Yes.”

“But why would they think that?” he questioned, genuine perplexity etched on his features, mirroring my own uncertainty.

“I... the Alpha has been behaving strangely,” I explained.

“I told you they were having a spat,” he teased, attempting to lighten the mood. I looked at him, surprised by his attempt at levity, yet finding solace in his efforts. A small chuckle escaped me, his smile widening in response.

“Perhaps you were onto something,” I conceded, the tension between us easing as laughter filled the air.

As we shared a moment of respite, I couldn’t shake the looming uncertainty of my fate. Would I be killed or cast out from the pack? The thought weighed heavily on my mind, overshadowing the temporary relief brought by Thomas’s presence.

“How’s my mom? Has she heard about this?”

“Not yet. News doesn’t reach her easily,” he reminded me.

I sighed, feeling a pang of guilt for leaving my mother in the dark about my ordeal. Thomas gently lifted my chin, encouraging me to meet his gaze.

“I’ll check on her,” he promised.

“Thank you. I don’t know when I’ll be back home, and she tends to forget to eat without me,” I confessed.

“I know. I’ll make sure she’s taken care of.”

“Thomas, maybe they’ll—” I began, but he interrupted me.

“Let’s not dwell on the worst-case scenarios. We don’t know what’s going to happen yet,” he urged, his voice soothing.

“But what if—” I started again, but he silenced me with a shake of his head and a gentle caress of my chin. Though his touch lacked the intensity of the Alpha’s, I found comfort in his presence. It was a reassurance amidst the uncertainty surrounding me.

“Thank you for coming,” I whispered gratefully.

“Of course, I wouldn’t—” Thomas began, but our exchange was interrupted.

“And what do we have here?” the witch’s voice rang out, causing us both to turn toward her sudden appearance.

In an instant, she used her magic to wrench Thomas away from me, ensnaring him with invisible bonds. Panic surged within me as I gripped the bars.

“No! Let him go! He’s done nothing wrong!” I pleaded.

Ignoring my protests, the witch focused her powers on Thomas, though to my relief, he didn't cry out in pain. Instead, he appeared uncomfortable, squirming under her control.

"Nothing," she muttered, puzzled by her lack of findings. Then her attention shifted to me.

"Have you been dabbling in magic?" she questioned.

"N-No," I stammered, my heart racing.

"Never?"

"I've never even come close to it," I asserted.

"Do you have feelings for this wolf? Is he your mate?" she prodded.

"We're just friends," I replied.

"Friends who have seen each other naked?" she pressed, a blush creeping onto my cheeks as I shook my head.

"No."

"Yet he sneaks in here without permission?" she continued.

"He's just being a good friend," I defended, watching as she released Thomas, causing him to fall to the ground before her. She ignored him as she stepped closer to me.

"Don't harm her. She's innocent," Thomas intervened.

The witch glanced back at him with a smirk before turning her attention back to me.
“Are you?” she challenged.

“W-What?”

“Innocent. The Alpha seems convinced otherwise,” she persisted.

“I-I’ve never done anything to him.”

“No? But do you desire to?” she prodded further.

“What?” I exclaimed, stunned by her implication. “I don’t understand.”

“I’m asking you, wolf, do you want to do anything to the Alpha?” she clarified, her gaze unwavering.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, do you want to fuck him?”

Chapter 11

-Naomi-

I stared at the witch in disbelief as she posed such a direct question. Heat rushed to my cheeks, and I struggled to form coherent words. A part of me did want to share such intimacy with the Alpha, but I knew such thoughts were not only impossible but also strictly forbidden. The witch observed my flustered state with amusement, leaning in closer and resting her hands above mine on the bars.

“You have feelings for the Alpha,” she asserted, and I couldn’t meet her gaze, overwhelmed by shame.

“I would never do anything to harm him,” I murmured.

“I’m beginning to believe that,” she conceded. “Are you in love with him?”

I hesitated, uncertain how to respond. I hadn’t taken the time to dissect my emotions, but there was undoubtedly a profound fascination with him.

“Interesting,” she remarked, her tone thoughtful.

“I swear I’ve never harmed him or used magic. I couldn’t.”

“You do seem genuinely innocent,” she remarked, her scrutiny intensifying as she met my gaze.

“Please. I just want to be released.”

“That decision lies entirely with me, so I advise you to answer my questions truthfully,” she stated firmly.

“I-I’ve been nothing but honest.”

“Good. Then this should be straightforward,” she remarked. “The Alpha mentioned you’ve been experiencing some issues yourself. Your wolf’s behavior has been peculiar.”

“Yes,” I confirmed.

“Did you consult a doctor?”

“Yes.”

“And what did they say?”

“A run might help,” I explained.

“And did it?” she asked.

“My wolf refused to come out.”

“What do you mean?” she pressed, a hint of confusion in her expression.

“She resisted shifting. She seemed... reluctant,” I confessed.

“Interesting. Holding back your wolf is often the issue with you animals,” she retorted, revealing her old disdain for the wolves, yet peace persisted now. “But she

didn't want to come out?"

"No, she didn't."

"Why do you think that is?" she probed.

"I'm not sure. She appears to be in pain, yet she can't explain why," I revealed.

"Even more perplexing," she mused, crossing her arms and studying me intently.

"And yet, there's no magical residue on you."

"I've told you, I haven't used—" I began, but she interrupted.

"I understand, but it's possible something has been used on you," she interjected.

"And has there?"

"No. As I said, there's no magical trace on you, which confused your Alpha as well. He was convinced you were using," she explained.

"I would never—" I started, but she cut me off.

"You're clearly devoted to him, and yet you're not second mates."

"Second mates?" I echoed, taken aback by the term.

"In rare cases, someone is blessed with two mates. The reasons remain a mystery. Some view it as a blessing, others as a trial," she elaborated.

"Does the Alpha believe we...?"

“No, he’s quite certain you aren’t, and his wolf hasn’t claimed you, but what does your wolf say?” the witch inquired, prompting me to ponder her question. For the first time, I felt a shift, as if something were falling into place.

My wolf stepped forward as I reached out to her, and she appeared to be deep in thought.

Could he be? I asked her.

My wolf seemed uncertain, as if struggling to articulate her response, yet a subtle inclination toward affirmation lingered within her.

“She sees a mate in him, doesn’t she?” the witch challenged.

“I... I’m not sure. She seems inclined to say yes, but... maybe it’s just because I...”

“Have feelings for him?” the witch finished for me.

I sighed, lowering my gaze once more. “Yes.”

“Hmm, something is certainly at play here. Your wolf feels a pull toward him, yet can’t claim him, and his own wolf doesn’t claim you either,” she concluded.

“Then perhaps we aren’t mates,” I suggested. “Perhaps it’s just a misunderstanding.”

The witch chuckled wryly, causing a flush of embarrassment to rise within me.

“No, mates aren’t a mere misunderstanding,” she stated firmly. “There is nothing more certain or powerful than true mates. But something is hindering your bond.”

“But I’m a low-ranking wolf,” I interjected.

“Sometimes an unusual pairing occurs if the emotional bond is strong enough to overcome the difference in rank,” she reminded me.

“But how could I withstand his strength?”

“It does seem perplexing, given your status,” she remarked, her words cutting.

“Then we aren’t mates.”

“And yet he is undeniably drawn to your scent. I wonder if he still is with the mark on your arm,” she mused, directing my attention to the branded scar. Only she could remove it.

“Does he still smell appealing to you?” she inquired.

“Um... yes,” I admitted softly.

“Do you enjoy his proximity?” she pressed.

“Yes, but—”

“That’s something you’ve always enjoyed, I know,” she interrupted, scrutinizing me once more. “I believe I know how to address this.”

I looked up, meeting her gaze, but she simply smiled before turning on her heel.

“W-What are you going to do? Hey!” I called after her, but she offered no response, and slowly Thomas took her place as she vanished.

I could barely meet his gaze. Revealing my feelings in front of him and the witch left me feeling exposed.

“You like the Alpha?” he ventured.

“Please don’t tease me. I know it sounds foolish,” I replied, feeling a surge of embarrassment.

“I wasn’t teasing you.”

I met his gaze, surprised by his sincerity.

“It just makes sense,” he whispered.

“What?” I asked, taken aback by his statement.

“Well,” he began, appearing slightly flustered, “while you’ve been looking at the Alpha, I’ve been looking at you.”

I recoiled slightly, caught off guard by his admission. I had always considered him a friend, and his confession left me reeling.

“W-What do you mean?” I stuttered.

His smile widened, and he reached into the cell, drawing me closer. His lips brushed against mine, leaving me utterly stunned.

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Chapter 12

-Reese-

“ Y ou want me to... do what?” I asked incredulously as the witch returned, facing my father, my Beta, and me, the only people in the office. The witch stood confidently in the middle, outlining the course of action she proposed. To me, it seemed utterly absurd. “How would that even help?”

“It would provide you with answers,” she replied calmly.

“Answers? No! She’s clearly doing something to me!”

“There are no magical traces, and based on what she’s told me, I suspect there’s something preventing you from fully connecting,” she explained.

“Connecting?” I scoffed. “You think we’re a second pairing?”

“Yes, I do.”

“That’s utterly insane!” I protested.

“It’s not unheard of. It happens,” she maintained.

“She’s not a Luna!” my dad interjected.

“She doesn’t necessarily have to be. If the Goddess believes the wolf can offer

enough emotional support and physical satisfaction to the Alpha, then she doesn't need to be a Luna," the witch countered.

I squirmed uncomfortably at the thought. What if she was right? When I had been with Naomi, I hadn't felt dissatisfied. In fact, I craved more of her. My wolf yearned for her deeply, so physical satisfaction didn't seem out of reach. But what about the emotional aspect? Memories of her finding me in the kitchen years ago resurfaced, hinting at the possibility that she could fulfill that role too.

"But what about the difference in power dynamic? You know as well as us that Alphas and Lunas are paired to prevent power abuse. A Luna can withstand my power. That little wolf might not," I pointed out.

"There's only one way to find out," she countered.

"No, I'm not going to spend my time with her. I have a mate. What would it say if I were with another woman?" I challenged.

"Nothing, if she's your second mate," she replied.

"But what if she isn't?" I pressed.

"Then you'll find out why you're drawn to her. Perhaps you two shared a deep bond before your travels?" she suggested.

"No," I responded firmly.

"So far, I have no other suggestion for you. There's no magical trace on her, and she seems to be grappling with the same issues as you," she disclosed.

"She said that?" I queried, intrigued, and the witch noticed, a smile playing on her

lips.

“You seem to relish hearing that.”

I glanced at my dad, clearing my throat. “No,” I denied.

“Yes, you do, and yet you’re hesitant to entertain the idea of having a second mate,” she chuckled.

I sighed. “A second mate who is low-ranking. It might be seen as an insult to Rosa’s family,” I pointed out.

“Yes, that could pose a problem, which is why you should probably keep it under wraps while you sort out your feelings for what you call the ‘little wolf’. Cute nickname,” the witch added, and I felt a pang of awkwardness. I hadn’t realized I had used it as an endearing term. It was meant as more of an insult, but it hadn’t come across that way.

“Isn’t that risky if magic is at play?” my father interjected. “Spending time with Naomi.”

“If you’re very concerned, have him watched. But since I can’t find any magic at work, it shouldn’t be dangerous,” the witch reassured.

“How would we even manage that? Our lives are completely different,” I remarked.

“Why don’t you start by spending your evenings with her? She should be off the clock, and so should you. But Alphas, I don’t work here in your pack. You’ll know how to sort out your schedules. Now, I’ll take my leave. If you need me again, you know where to find me,” she said, making her way toward the office door. However, her departure didn’t alleviate our concerns. We were all still troubled by my

condition, as it made no sense why Naomi remained an object of attraction to me.

“What am I going to do?” I muttered, leaning forward and covering my face.

“It seems we have no choice,” my father responded.

“What?” I turned to him in surprise.

“You’ll be spending time with Naomi.”

“No!” I exclaimed. “I have a mate.”

“You might have two, and we need to figure out if that’s true to prevent any sudden... incidents that could make you seem like a cheater. Then we’ll certainly have problems,” he reminded me.

I understood the potential complications, but it felt like I was already betraying my mate by spending time with Naomi. Yet it seemed I had little say in the matter, and my father began planning immediately.

-Naomi-

The kiss wasn’t demanding, just a fleeting connection between our lips, but when Thomas pulled back, he wore a persistent smile.

“I’ve been wanting to do that for a while,” he confessed.

“Oh, um, I...” I faltered, uncertain how to respond, and he chuckled softly as he brushed his fingers against my cheek.

“You don’t have to answer right now. I understand your situation is quite perplexing

at the moment.”

“A bit...” I admitted.

“But I want you to know, if you find out you’re not mates with the Alpha, there are other options,” he reassured me.

“I-I see,” I murmured, another chuckle escaping him before he released me, maintaining his warm smile.

“How long do you think you’ll be here?” he asked, shifting the conversation away from the kiss to dispel the lingering awkwardness.

“I suppose that depends on what the witch said.”

“Well, then,” he said, settling onto the ground and smiling up at me. He gestured for me to join him, and so I did, reaching for the food.

As I unwrapped it, I shot him a grateful smile. He continued to talk as I ate, his presence comforting even though his confession had caught me off guard. Yet, I didn’t want him to leave, and so he remained with me until darkness settled in.

As the sun began to dip below the horizon, casting a dim glow through the room, we heard footsteps approaching. I wondered if it was the execution party or if I was fortunate enough to receive a trial first. However, when the door swung open, it wasn’t guards. It was the Alpha. He froze at the sight of us sitting on the ground, and we quickly rose, recognizing it was impolite not to stand when he entered.

His gaze flicked between us, a displeased expression clouding his features.

“Go,” I whispered to Thomas, sensing his reluctance. He nodded, bowing his head

respectfully to the Alpha as he passed by. Reese watched him leave, a fleeting look of anger crossing his face before he dismissed it.

“What is that wolf to you?” Reese inquired, turning his attention to me.

“To me?”

“Yes, to you. What significance does he hold?”

“Um, he’s a friend,” I replied.

“Friend?” Reese questioned, skepticism evident in his tone.

“Yes, just a friend.”

His narrowed eyes betrayed his disbelief as he drew closer, crossing his broad arms over his chest as he halted in front of me. I swallowed nervously, uncertain of his intentions. For the first time, a slight fear ran through me as I looked at Reese.

“Is he a friend who’s seen you naked?” he probed, and I sighed, growing weary of the interrogation.

“No...”

“I’m not convinced,” he countered sharply.

“Well, that’s not my problem!” I snapped, my patience wearing thin as I met his steely gaze.

He appeared taken aback by my outburst, but I was exhausted, still nursing some pain, and tired of being interrogated. All I desired was my freedom.

“What do you intend to do with me?” I whispered, attempting to steer the conversation away from my heated response.

Reese sighed, his anger dissipating.

“I don’t know,” he admitted.

“So, am I to remain here?”

He shook his head. “No,” he replied, retrieving a key from his pocket and holding it up. “You’re going home.”

“I’m... being released?” I questioned, disbelief coloring my words.

“Yes, but don’t think I’ve dismissed my suspicions about your involvement in this. However, as of now, I lack evidence,” he grumbled before unlocking my cell.

Even as the door swung open, uncertainty lingered within me. I hesitated, casting a lingering gaze at the Alpha. He gestured for me to leave, his expression urging me forward.

“I’m... truly free?”

“Yes. You’re free,” he affirmed.

Feeling a mix of apprehension and relief, I took tentative steps forward, passing him as he closed the cell door behind me. The proximity forced an intense moment of connection as our eyes met, his scent enveloping me, simultaneously dizzying and intimidating. We both seemed to experience a whirlwind of emotions—confusion, attraction, and perhaps a hint of anger.

“You may go,” he directed, gesturing ahead.

“O-Okay,” I stammered, starting to walk away. Glancing back over my shoulder, I ensured he made no sudden movements to detain me, finding him still rooted in place, watching me intently. With a racing heart, I hurried toward the opening of the old stable, breaking into a run, praying that no one would come to apprehend me once more.

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Chapter 13

-Naomi-

I spent the night in restless anticipation, dreading the moment when someone might come for me. But the morning arrived without any such intrusion, signaling it was time to resume my duties in the pack house. With a heavy heart, I rose from bed, checked on my unchanged mother, and began preparing for the day.

Dressing in my usual dark, boring attire, designed to render me invisible as the low-ranking wolf I was, I grabbed a quick bite—a nut bar, my appetite diminished by anxiety—before donning my jacket and calling out to my mother, receiving no response. With a resigned sigh, I left the house and made my way back to the pack house.

Entering the kitchen, my heart nearly leapt out of my chest at the unexpected sight of Reese seated at the kitchen island. His gaze immediately fixed on me as I stepped inside.

“M-Morning,” I managed to stammer out.

“Morning,” he replied evenly.

I hesitated, uncertain of his presence, until he gestured toward the fridge.

“You’re making breakfast for me this morning.”

“Um... okay,” I acquiesced, seeing no reason to refuse. He was the Alpha, after all, and it was my duty to serve him. Setting aside my jacket, I went to gather ingredients.

“Any special requests?” I inquired as I worked.

“No, you decide.”

Nodding, I set about preparing a classic breakfast consisting of eggs, bacon, and pancakes, adding chocolate chips and strawberries to cater to his sweet tooth. I could feel his eyes on me as I cooked, a nervous tremor coursing through me, but I focused on the task at hand.

“How’s your arm?” he suddenly asked, catching me off guard.

“Better,” I responded.

“I hope you understand the branding needs to stay,” he asserted, and I nodded silently, the memory of the pain still fresh in my mind as I cracked eggs into the frying pan.

“Yet it doesn’t seem to have changed much,” he murmured, drawing my attention as I worked in the kitchen. I glanced over my shoulder, curious about his remark.

“Sorry?”

“The branding was supposed to diminish your power over me, yet it doesn’t seem to have helped,” he admitted, meeting my gaze.

“Oh, um, maybe that’s because I haven’t done anything,” I replied, sensing his skepticism at my response.

“I have yet to decide if you have,” he countered, his tone firm, causing me to sigh in frustration. It seemed futile to argue my innocence when his perception of me remained clouded by suspicion.

Resuming my task, I focused on preparing the food, making sure to portion out a generous amount knowing Alphas required substantial energy to maintain their strength. As I placed the plate before him, I withdrew quickly, wary of any sudden movements that might provoke him. His observant gaze caught my nervousness, and he seemed to soften slightly.

“Do I scare you?” he asked, his voice carrying a hint of remorse.

“You did... brand me,” I whispered, unable to hide the fear lingering in my voice.

“Sorry, I... I don’t know what’s happening to me. It was the only explanation,” he offered, his admission tinged with regret. He began to eat, but his enjoyment of the meal was interrupted by a momentary pause.

“What? Does it not taste good?” I asked anxiously.

“It’s... very good,” he admitted, meeting my eyes, and I breathed a sigh of relief at his approval.

“Were you scared I was going to do something if I didn’t like it?”

“Well, I’m innocent and you still hurt me, so... yes,” I confessed, unable to suppress the bitterness in my tone.

“I have yet to decide if you’re innocent,” he reminded me. I turned away, feeling a pang of hurt at his doubt, but chose to remain silent as he continued to eat.

“Why does this taste so good?” he murmured, breaking the silence, and I turned to meet his gaze, intrigued by his question.

“Have you made me breakfast before?” he asked, his eyes searching mine for an answer.

Shaking my head, I replied, “No, only cake.”

“Yes, those were exceptional too,” he whispered, his words sending a flutter through my heart. As he finished his meal, a sense of calm seemed to settle over him, and his eyes met mine once more, leaving me wondering about the purpose behind this private breakfast.

“So, the witch came with a suggestion,” he began, catching my attention.

“Oh?”

“She seems to believe we are, in fact, mates, yet something is holding back our wolves from claiming one another,” he explained.

“She... said something similar to me,” I admitted.

“Good, then you’re up to date.”

“But what is stopping them? If it is even possible?”

“That she couldn’t say, but she believes it will help if we spend time together,” he elaborated, and a chill ran down my spine at the thought of being in Reese’s company. While a part of me longed for it, another part was filled with apprehension. He still saw me as a criminal, and I couldn’t shake off the fear of what spending time with him might entail.

“Um, what?” I stuttered, struggling to comprehend his suggestion.

“Spending time together. That was her suggestion,” he reiterated, his words sinking in slowly.

“But... you have a mate,” I pointed out, hoping to find a way out of the uncomfortable situation.

“I do, but we need to figure out if you’re my second one, and the best way to do that is if we... give the bond a chance to grow. Should there be one.”

“And when would we even have the time to do that?”

“In the evenings,” he proposed.

“I go home after dinner. My mom...” I began, but halted, hesitant to share personal details with him given our strained relationship. “I am busy in the evening.”

“You will have to make some room,” he insisted, his tone leaving no room for argument.

“I can’t.”

“You have to, Naomi, or we won’t be able to figure out if something might pull us toward each other.”

“Can’t we just... reject each other?” I suggested tentatively, surprised by my own words but unwilling to retract them.

“Reject each other?” he echoed, his tone tinged with disgust.

I nodded, my gaze fixed on the ground. "I mean, you have a mate, and I'm low-ranking as well. It... doesn't really make sense if we are... I thought maybe..."

"Have you not been taught the dangers of rejecting a true bond?" he retorted sharply.

"I have!" I exclaimed, meeting his eyes. "But our wolves haven't even claimed each other. Maybe it won't hurt us."

"I don't want to take that risk. It might make us both go insane."

"But it might free us too."

"You wish to be free of me?" he asked, his disbelief evident in his tone.

"Well, you aren't exactly happy about me either," I murmured.

"That doesn't mean I want to take the chance of losing my mind. No, we will not reject each other," he stated firmly. "And you will find time for me."

I sighed, feeling utterly lost. Reese's demeanor was a stark departure from his usual gentleness. He had always seemed compassionate to me, a trait some in the pack questioned as a weakness in a leader. But I believed it made him just and fair.

"Fine, I will... find time," I whispered.

"Don't say it so reluctantly. We might be true mates."

"And if we are, what would that say about me?" I asked, lifting my eyes to meet his.

"That you're a low-ranking wolf who was lucky enough to be paired with an Alpha?" he suggested.

I shook my head. “That I’m a social climber. Besides, you wouldn’t solely be mine.”

He seemed taken aback by my response, his gaze softening as he considered my words.

“I would... share you,” I admitted. “I know it’s special to be paired with an Alpha, but I guess I thought, hoped, if I found my mate, he would be just mine.”

Reese’s demeanor relaxed further, and he nodded, as if comprehending my hesitance. He reached up, rubbing his eyes wearily, taking a moment to contemplate.

“Yes, I hadn’t really wished for two mates either,” he confessed.

I nodded in understanding, though the admission stung. I knew who he truly desired.

Chapter 14

-Reese-

Naomi hadn't exactly seemed thrilled by the prospect of a bond between us or having to spend time with me. Both reactions had been deeply displeasing, enough to fuel my fury. I longed for her to desire my company. When she mentioned the idea of rejecting each other, it ignited my anger. It wasn't solely due to the fear of insanity. Rather, it was the thought of it that made me feel disgusted. Despite my resistance to our connection, a part of me yearned for it, making rejection unacceptable. We would simply have to see where this journey led us.

However, displeasure with our situation extended beyond just my family. When I explained the problem and the potential solution to Rosa, it had hurt her deeply. She hadn't spoken to me all night, keeping her distance. The next day, she continued to avoid me, and I couldn't blame her. Fortunately, we both found solace in our work, momentarily escaping the strain our complicated situation placed on our bond.

As night fell, a new responsibility beckoned, one I surprisingly didn't feel entirely reluctant about. Standing up from my chair, I felt the weight of everyone's gaze.

"I will be going," I stated, feeling the discomfort in the room. "We can continue the work later."

Silence followed, and the thumping of my heart reverberated in my ears. As I turned to leave, it felt like everyone knew about an affair no one dared to address. I sighed, exiting the office, steeling myself for what lay ahead.

Pushing aside my nerves, I searched for Naomi, but she seemed to have vanished. The more I looked, the more frustrated I became. Could she truly be avoiding me? She had been very reluctant to even spend time with me.

You did throw her into prison and accuse her of trying to seduce you , my wolf pointed out.

“You think I did that with a happy feeling? I didn’t desire to throw her into prison, but you must see that this situation is odd,” I countered.

I didn’t say I didn’t see it, but the little thing is obviously hiding.

“You don’t hide from an Alpha,” I growled, my frustration mounting. I resolved to wait in the living room, hoping she would emerge eventually.

Settling into a chair, I crossed one leg over the other, drumming my fingers on my knee.

You should have decided on a place to meet , my wolf chastised.

“I didn’t anticipate having to search. I am the Alpha!” I retorted.

She doesn’t seem impressed by your status. Remember what she said? She’ll be seen as a social climber. It’s a dangerous situation to dive into headfirst , my wolf reasoned.

He had a point. Perhaps Naomi was weighing her options. But what alternative did we have? She had proposed rejection, but the thought left a bitter taste in my mouth. In that moment, I realized that rejecting Naomi was simply inconceivable in my current state.

“Stupid instincts,” I muttered.

What do you mean? my wolf inquired.

“Alphas typically form deep attachments to their mates. I can’t even entertain the idea of rejecting Naomi without feeling a pang of bitterness.”

But we don’t know if it would even work , my wolf reminded me.

“True, but her avoidance won’t solve anything.”

She does seem rather timid, doesn’t she? my wolf observed, his tone softening.

“It’s not uncommon for lower-ranking wolves,” I remarked.

Yet she makes it seem endearing.

“Let’s not rush into anything. We still need to understand why we feel this way about her,” I cautioned.

Perhaps I’m just adjusting more quickly , my wolf suggested.

“That’s not necessarily a positive thing. Have you lost interest in Rosa?” I asked pointedly.

My wolf fell silent, leaving me puzzled. His response should have been straightforward, but instead, his silence left me uneasy.

“Well?” I pressed.

Just find Naomi! he growled at me.

“Don’t snap at me,” I hissed back.

I rolled my eyes, knowing this waiting was starting to get ridiculous. You didn’t make an Alpha wait, and once I got my hands on Naomi, I was certainly going to have a word with her. I pushed up from the couch and began searching once more before wondering if she might have gone home. Where did she even live?

But as I was walking down one of the hallways, I heard a strange thud. I looked around, seeing no one there but me. However, a door caught my attention. There was nothing special about it, except, as I came closer, I noticed someone had broken the handle. It hung loosely down the side, obviously not usable anymore.

I reached out, breaking it off before ripping the door open. The moment I did, someone tumbled out, and I caught the person before they hit the ground.

As I helped steady them, I noticed a slight tingle in my body from where we were touching, and when I looked down, I saw who it was. Careful, with a bit of a shy look, Naomi stared up at me, her eyes blinking fast, and she seemed a little tearful. I gazed into the room she had been in, seeing there was no window.

“How long have you been in there?” I inquired, as she took a step back, yet my hands didn’t leave her arms.

She sniffled a little.

“W-What time is it?” she asked.

“It’s five in the evening.”

“Then most of the midday,” she admitted in a low voice.

“Why didn’t you call for help?”

“I... did.”

I began seeing a clearer picture here, and I shook my head. It seemed Naomi had already been branded, and I did not enjoy it. Out of instinct, I reached up, wiping her wet cheek, but she seemed even more reluctant to be near me, obviously because of what she had just endured.

“It won’t happen again,” I stated.

“Of course it will,” she whispered, looking at the ground.

Do something. She is upset.

I didn’t know what to do, so I ignored my wolf’s words.

“I will make sure it doesn’t.”

“Please, Alpha Reese, it’s already starting,” she murmured before she tried walking away, but I seized her below her elbow, keeping her back. She turned, gazing at me with a confused expression.

“You’re mine for the evening,” I reminded her, her eyes growing wide as if she had forgotten.

“I-I think we should wait,” she stammered.

“No waiting. You’re mine for the evening,” I repeated, relishing saying those words more than I should.

She sighed, letting her shoulders slump. She certainly wasn't interested in being around me for a few hours, but we needed to. I couldn't figure out these confusing feelings if we didn't.

"C-Can I eat something first?" she murmured.

"Yeah, let's get you something to eat."

"Y-You're coming with me?"

"If we are to spend time together, then it might be a good idea to eat a little as well," I suggested.

She nodded, understanding the significance of eating together for wolves. I let her arm go, and we walked side by side, Naomi subtly drying her wet cheeks and trying to seem more composed. But the sight of her upset cut me deep, deeper than I had ever been cut by anything, and I had been stabbed before. I sighed, wanting to do something for her, but I still felt rather afraid of this strange connection between us.

I ended up being quiet instead, following her into the kitchen. She went directly to the fridge, starting to make herself something to eat. Others were in the room, soon going to get started on dinner. I noticed the way they watched her with disdain in their eyes, thinking she relished this situation. A dark rumble left me, akin to a low growl, and they all snapped their eyes to me before lowering them in submission.

I moved in behind Naomi in a shielding manner, and when she felt me, she turned around, gazing up at me, confused.

"Continue," I urged.

"D-Do you have to stand so close?"

Chapter 15

-Naomi-

Alpha Reese's behavior struck me as peculiar. He lingered close behind me, almost brushing against me. Despite my confusion, he encouraged me to continue, positioning himself as a shield at my back. Though I couldn't fathom his motives, my hunger took precedence. I hastily prepared a sandwich—something light and easy to carry. As I worked, I stole a glance at Alpha Reese, finding his intense gaze fixed on my hands.

“Shall I make one for you too?” I whispered.

His surprise was evident, yet I had cooked for this pack countless times, him included. With a nod, he accepted my offer, clearly famished. So, I made an extra sandwich, making his larger, knowing his Alpha metabolism craved the extra sustenance. Wrapping them in paper, we departed the room, eager to escape the lingering tension and enjoy our meal elsewhere. Yet, I couldn't shake the feeling of eyes upon me.

As we walked, Alpha Reese's expression turned perplexed upon taking a bite.

“What's wrong? Don't you like it?” I asked.

“I love it,” he declared earnestly, catching me off guard with the sincerity in his voice.

“It’s just food,” I murmured. However, his next words gave me pause.

“Yes, but somehow you knew I don’t like cheese on mine,” he mumbled, a detail I had indeed remembered. I knew too much about him, more than a mere pack member should.

“I also know you have a sweet tooth,” I admitted, realizing there was no point in hiding what I had observed. He regarded me with suspicion, but he refrained from saying anything as we found a secluded room to eat.

I closed the door as he moved to sit down, yet I became acutely aware of the intensity of the moment with just the two of us. Almost instinctively, I discreetly nudged the door ajar, letting it rest slightly open.

“Why did you reopen it?” he asked, his sharp alpha instincts catching even the slightest change, like the crack in the door.

“Um, just to let the room air out,” I offered lamely, cobbling together a feeble excuse.

“Close it. The house should turn livelier as dinner approaches,” he insisted, his tone firm and commanding. While I knew he was right, the thought of shutting the door again seemed daunting.

“I think we should keep it open.”

“Why? Afraid I might pounce on you?” he teased, and a peculiar sensation rippled through me at his playful remark—a strange mix of heat and discomfort. It was absurd to feel even remotely aroused by the notion, especially considering I had no desire for any such encounter, and his tone didn’t suggest any genuine interest either.

“No,” I replied softly, avoiding his gaze.

“Then close it.”

With a resigned sigh, I obeyed his directive, the click of the latch amplifying the tension in the room. Suddenly, my appetite vanished. Slowly, I turned to Reese, observing as he continued to eat, seemingly unaffected by the atmosphere. He extended his hand, motioning for me to join him, and I complied, making my way over to where he sat.

As I settled into a chair, I couldn't shake the feeling of self-consciousness, fussing over my skirt despite its modest length. Taking small, distracted bites of my food, I avoided his gaze, uncertain of what to say or how to navigate this unexpected situation. We had rarely spent time alone together, and now, here we were, forced into an awkward intimacy.

“So,” he began, breaking the uneasy silence. “We should probably treat this like a date.”

“A-A date?” I stammered, meeting his intense gaze. He nodded, casually crumpling the paper wrapper in his hand. With practiced ease, he tossed it toward a distant trash can, the sound of its landing echoing softly in the room. I blinked in astonishment at his effortless accuracy before turning back to him, finding a small smile playing on his lips as he gestured toward my untouched food.

“I thought you said you were hungry,” he remarked.

“Um, maybe not as much as I thought,” I mumbled, avoiding his gaze.

“If you've been trapped for most of the afternoon, you must be,” he pointed out, but I shrugged, feeling the weight of his scrutiny.

“Do I make you nervous?”

“Um, a-a little,” I admitted, feeling the tension building within me.

How could he not? He threw us in jail! my wolf interjected, echoing my own sentiments. However, I struggled to stay still under his penetrating stare.

“What can I do to make you feel calmer?” he asked sincerely.

“I-I don’t think that’s your job. You’re the Alpha,” I replied, trying to dismiss his concern.

“Yes, but if we are mates, then I shouldn’t make you feel uncomfortable.”

“I’m fine,” I reassured him, though the lie tasted bitter on my tongue.

“You’d only be fine if you were able to eat in my presence. If I take away your appetite, then I must be making you feel unpleasant,” he pressed gently.

“Not unpleasant,” I murmured, grappling with conflicting emotions.

“Are you sure?”

“I just... never thought I would find myself here,” I confessed softly. “And I still think we shouldn’t... I don’t think we should be spending time together.”

“Then provide me with a solution,” he urged.

“A solution?”

“Yes, a solution.”

“I told you,” I reminded him.

“Other than rejecting each other. We can’t even be certain it would work when our wolves haven’t claimed each other,” he reasoned.

“Maybe it won’t, but it might be worth—”

“No, I don’t even want you to bring it up again. It will not happen,” he asserted firmly.

I released a long exhale, realizing that broaching the topic wouldn’t yield positive results.

“Hm, perhaps we should schedule a time for our wolves to get acquainted,” he pondered aloud.

I lifted my gaze slowly, observing him lost in thought.

“Our wolves? As in running together?” I inquired.

His eyes locked with mine. “Yes, our wolves dictate our bond. If they spend time together, it might help determine if they connect on the level of mates.”

“I-I’m not sure. Running together is a deeply personal experience,” I hesitated.

“I understand, but it could provide the clarity we need,” he persisted.

“I really think—”

“Naomi, we will schedule a time,” he declared firmly.

“What if I don’t want to?” I challenged, feeling a surge of annoyance at his unilateral decision-making. Didn’t I have a say in this?

Reese appeared taken aback by the defiance in my tone, and I was equally surprised by my own assertiveness. It was unlike me to speak so boldly.

“Why wouldn’t you want to?” he countered. “Don’t you want to resolve this too?”

I nodded hesitantly.

“Then running together is the logical step,” he insisted.

“Running entails shifting,” I reminded him.

“I’m aware,” he acknowledged.

“Sometimes when mates run together as wolves...” I trailed off, leaving the implication unspoken. But Reese understood the potential consequences, shifting uncomfortably in his seat as he contemplated the scenario of being alone and secluded. If our wolves were interested in each other, there might be no stopping them...

You really think I have such little self-control? my wolf challenged within me.

You really believe you wouldn’t be interested? We’ve harbored feelings for him since we were young , I countered.

I don’t think I like him anymore , she huffed, but her emotions were mine, betraying her.

“Yes, that’s a possibility,” Reese muttered to himself, briefly averting his gaze before meeting mine again, a hint of embarrassment coloring his expression. “But we can plan for it in the future. Besides, there’s no guarantee our wolves will even be compatible.”

Chapter 16

-Reese-

Naomi had made an excellent point about mates running together—the rush of blood, the connection to nature, the sheer joy of letting go. It was like a drug, and Naomi was already getting into my head, leaving me uncertain about everything. However, my wolf began panting in an odd way, as if excited at the prospect of running with Naomi's. I told him to stop drooling, but he only denied the obvious need he showed for a quick run with Naomi's wolf. I rolled my eyes at his obvious interest before turning my gaze back to the woman before me.

She barely met my eyes, a faint pink showing on her cheeks, and suddenly, the idea of a run in the near future didn't seem so bad. I could chase after her, working for it, and once I caught her... I shook my head, quickly looking away before my thoughts revealed too much.

Goddess, I groaned internally, feeling my blood rush so fast it made me slightly lightheaded. I needed to focus on something unpleasant, but it was difficult with Naomi sitting in front of me, looking so ready to be devoured.

"I really think we should wait," Naomi's voice broke through my reverie.

"Wait for what?" I inquired.

"Running together. We haven't had much opportunity to talk."

“You seem to know me quite well already,” I countered, a hint of accusation lacing my tone.

She shrugged. “You’re the next Alpha.”

“But that’s not the reason you know me so well, is it?” I pressed.

“I...”

“You seem to know even simple things, like my sandwich preferences, without me telling you,” I reminded her.

“The staff knows what you like.”

“Yeah? Then what’s my favorite color?” I challenged, fixing her with a steady gaze. “And remember, I can tell if you’re lying.”

She swallowed nervously, a telltale sign of her discomfort. “G-Green,” she replied tentatively.

“Yes, green,” I confirmed, feeling oddly touched by her attention to detail.

“But not just any green, like the shade of pine trees,” she added quickly.

I blinked in surprise, then nodded. “Exactly,” I murmured, feeling a sense of connection rather than intrusion.

“Now it’s your turn,” I prompted, clearing my throat.

“Orange, like the fruit,” she answered with a small smile.

“It’s a lovely color.”

“It makes me feel warm, and I adore the scent of oranges,” she explained.

“They also taste fantastic on cakes,” I interjected, noticing her smile widening as our conversation flowed effortlessly.

“But you prefer strawberries.”

“I do. They’re the superior fruit or nut, as they’re now classified,” I agreed with a chuckle, relishing the easy banter between us.

“They do taste delicious,” she agreed, meeting my gaze with a serene energy that felt comforting.

“See?” I remarked. “We’re doing quite well for our first date.”

“I suppose it could have gone worse,” she conceded with a slight shrug.

“Then finish your food.”

She looked down at the half-eaten sandwich and quietly finished it. I allowed her to eat in peace, finding a strange comfort in the simple act of seeing her nourished... Typical Alpha behavior, I couldn’t help but acknowledge internally, a realization that unsettled me.

As Naomi completed her meal, she crumpled the paper wrapper and turned toward the trash can. Sensing her determination, I encouraged her to try, observing the slight hint of effort in her eyes. However, her toss only managed to reach halfway, eliciting a shared chuckle as it fell to the ground.

“I guess I won’t be joining a professional basketball team anytime soon,” she quipped, surprising me with her humor.

Shaking my head with a smile, I moved ahead of her, reaching for the discarded paper.

“You don’t have to do that,” she protested, hurrying after me, but it was a simple task.

I effortlessly tossed the paper into the trash, just as she reached my side, attempting to dissuade me from cleaning up after her.

“It was no trouble,” I assured her, turning to face her. Her eyes met mine, appearing larger, perhaps slightly swollen from crying earlier in the day. The thought of her being confined indoors all day was disheartening, and I felt an overwhelming urge to reach out to her, to offer comfort in the form of a gentle touch or a reassuring gesture.

Her gaze seemed to implore me to do just that, but in the absence of clear guidance from my wolf, I hesitated, uncertain if I was interpreting her signals correctly. So, instead, I took a step back, granting her some space. She seemed to notice the shift in energy, and the atmosphere in the room subtly changed.

Wrong move , my wolf remarked.

Shut up , I retorted inwardly.

He huffed in disapproval, clearly not pleased with my cautious approach. Merely being in the same room as Naomi felt like a betrayal to Rosa, yet I found myself reluctant to leave.

“How long are we supposed to spend time together?” she asked tentatively.

“I was thinking most of the evening,” I replied casually.

“Most of the evening?” she repeated, a note of fear creeping into her voice.

“Yes, why not?”

“Won’t you have to dine with the others?”

“I’ll hold off on that for a while. Eating together might... strengthen... something,” I hesitated, struggling to articulate my thoughts.

“Or perhaps it’s best not to strengthen anything.”

“Naomi, this is the only way we can understand what’s happening to us. If we don’t spend time together, we’ll remain in the dark.”

“Then maybe it’s better to leave it as a mystery?” she proposed.

“Why?”

“It complicates things,” she argued.

“Or perhaps you have someone waiting for you too?” I accused, recalling her strong bond with the other male wolf.

“No,” she stated firmly.

“Are you certain?”

“Do you smell someone else on me?” she challenged.

“A shower could erase any traces if you’re not marked,” I countered.

She crossed her arms defensively, clearly displeased with being accused of sleeping around. Yet, if we were indeed mates, as her Alpha, I felt a sense of possessiveness over her. She shouldn’t be involved with anyone else.

You’re being a bit hypocritical , my wolf interjected.

How? Do you want someone else writhing and grinding on top of— I started before he cut me off with a growl, refocusing my thoughts.

I meant she must feel conflicted about sharing us as well , he clarified.

I could see his point, and Naomi glared at me, her arms still crossed. I sighed deeply, realizing I had little grounds to accuse her of anything.

“I’m not involved with anyone,” she declared firmly.

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Chapter 17

-Reese-

I couldn't determine if our meeting was progressing positively or not, but an undeniable anger seemed to grip Naomi.

"Perhaps this is enough for our first date," she suggested, intending to pull away from me. However, I caught hold of her arm, halting her movement.

"We've barely spent 20 minutes together," I pointed out.

"And it's not exactly going smoothly, is it?" she countered.

I sighed, shaking my head. "If I've made you uncomfortable, I apologize. But we need to spend more time together. 20 minutes won't suffice."

"I'm not sure hours will be enough to understand what's going on!" she stated. "I mean, I'm sure mates don't even wait hours before mating. Maybe that should be our solution to figuring it out."

I drew back, shocked by her suggestion, but she quickly began shaking her head.

"N-No, that was a joke," she quickly added. Yet, my hand was still grasping her arm, and my head began filling with thoughts of having Naomi beneath me or on top of me, riding me until she cried out in release.

A dark rumble left me, causing her to stumble back a little, but I brought her closer, ensuring she couldn't take off. She didn't seem frightened as I drew her near, leaving only inches between us. The tension rose, leaving us slightly panting. This was very akin to being mates. The proximity was enough to make us want to lose ourselves in each other.

But there were no words being shouted in my head. I felt undeniably aroused by her presence, and yet neither of us reached for the other. We just stood there, gazing at each other, feeling the moment stretch on, yet no awkwardness arose. It was filled with electric energy that seemed on the verge of exploding.

"Maybe we should," I murmured, momentarily lost in a flurry of images—teasing Naomi until she begged for more. I pondered what she might taste like before shaking my head, reminding myself that rushing into bed with her wouldn't solve anything.

Slowly, I released her, feeling a chill creep over me in the absence of her warmth. Her eyes blinked rapidly, mirroring the bewildering sensation, and our gazes locked.

"Do you feel that?" I inquired.

She nodded slowly. "It's... cold," she murmured, her voice barely above a whisper.

"Very cold," I agreed, observing my hand, which seemed almost numb from the icy sensation that enveloped it. Without hesitation, I extended it toward her.

She regarded it with confusion before meeting my eyes. "Try holding it," I suggested.

"Hold... your hand?" she repeated, uncertainty lacing her tone.

"Yes, just try. I want to see what happens."

She hesitated, but eventually, she reached out with both hands. They were much smaller than mine, and she enveloped my hand from top to bottom. A shiver coursed through my body, so intense that it prompted her to step back, releasing me.

“Did I hurt you?” she asked, concern evident in her voice.

“Do it again,” I commanded, ignoring her question.

“Are you sure?”

“It didn’t hurt,” I reassured her, though uncertainty lingered in her expression. Nonetheless, she drew closer, encircling both of her hands around mine. Another shiver rippled through me, but this time, I was prepared. She held on tightly, and gradually, warmth seeped into my skin, banishing the cold and quickening my heartbeat.

The sensation was almost dizzying, yet I found myself reluctant to let go. Slowly, I curled my fingers around hers, eliciting a gasp from her. We remained intertwined, enchanted by the simple yet profound connection between us. Our eyes met, searching for answers, but beyond an intense sensation coursing through me, nothing stood out. Still, I had no desire to release her.

“This feels...” she began, her words trailing off as she struggled to articulate her thoughts. Yet, a hint of fear crept into her expression, and she attempted to withdraw her hand. Instinctively, I tightened my grip, refusing to let her go.

“Don’t let go,” I implored.

“I don’t think this will give us any answers.”

“It seems to,” I acknowledged.

“Yeah? What does it tell you?”

“It tells me... It tells me that I enjoy your touch,” I confessed, recognizing the necessity of transparency if we were to unravel the mysteries between us.

“I-I...”

“I like it, and I know you do too,” I asserted with confidence.

“Maybe a little,” she offered weakly.

“No, a lot,” I insisted, sensing her undeniable response as her sweet scent filled the room.

“I...”

Drawing her closer, I saw her stumble slightly, as if hesitating to embrace the proximity. My free hand gently cradled her jaw, and the moment our skin met, we both gasped. The intensity of the connection was growing, igniting a newfound desire within me—a craving to kiss her. I began to stroke her jaw, watching as her eyelids fluttered closed, her expression awash with bliss. The realization that I could evoke such a profound reaction from her filled me with a sense of power. Yet, despite the allure of her lips, I hesitated, unsure of how to proceed. A primal growl escaped me, snapping her out of our trance-like state as she pulled away, creating distance between us.

“It seems something is happening,” I murmured.

“I haven’t poisoned you,” she muttered, avoiding my gaze.

“No, I know,” I assured her, but her continued avoidance hinted at lingering hurt

from my previous accusations. I empathized with her anger. Being falsely accused always left a bitter taste.

“Listen, little mate,” I began, seeking to bridge the growing divide between us.

“W-What?” she stammered, her brow furrowing in confusion.

“What?” I echoed, perplexed by her sudden bewilderment.

“You called me ‘mate’,” she pointed out.

Had I? I hadn’t even realized. I shrugged nonchalantly. “You might be.”

“But until we confirm it, maybe you shouldn’t call me that,” she suggested, her arms folding defensively.

“I think it suits you well. Or shall I call you ‘little wolf’ instead?” I teased, attempting to lighten the mood.

“I think I prefer my name:”

I nodded, respecting her preference, yet I couldn’t shake the desire to address her with something endearing, something that captured her essence. As our interaction progressed, I found myself growing more eager to delve deeper into our connection. Yet outside the room, the house began to buzz with activity, drawing our attention.

We exchanged a glance before she spoke, “I think you should join them. I have my duties anyway.”

“You can postpone them for a while,” I insisted, sensing her reluctance.

“I can’t. It’s my job,” she reminded me firmly.

“Then just prepare food for the two of us. You’ll still be serving the Alpha of the house,” I proposed, hoping to prolong our time together.

“I really can’t, Alpha Reese,” she maintained. “This is my responsibility. It would complicate matters if people thought you favored me.”

“I need more time with you,” I admitted, the desperation evident in my voice. I hadn’t intended to sound so needy, but the thought of having only 30 minutes with her felt insufficient. What could we discern from such a short interaction?

“I have my duties,” she repeated, her gaze downcast. I felt a pang of disappointment, wishing she would prioritize our connection more. Yet she turned away, signaling the premature end of our date.

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Chapter 18

-Naomi-

While I sensed there was something intriguing about Alpha Reese, I felt reluctant to explore it. The sensations were overwhelming yet alluring. However, I couldn't ignore the treatment I had already endured, nor the stares fueled by rumors spreading through the pack. Nothing stayed secret for long, and I didn't want a target on my back. So I returned to work, but the room was thick with tension, and people seemed determined to make my job harder, bumping into me at every turn.

As it happened for the fifth time, I stood with a hot bowl of soup, and its contents spilled as I poured. I hissed, dropping the bowl, which shattered on the ground. No one offered to help. They merely laughed at my misfortune. I hurried to cool the burn with cold water, but burns were difficult to heal, akin to being touched by fire. Despite my efforts to rinse it, a vivid red color spread, causing my hand to shake with pain. Was this to be my life now? Constant reminders of my place because I dared to reach too high? But I wasn't reaching!

I sighed, shaking my head and trying to hold back tears as I forced myself to ignore the pain and clean up. Most had left me alone by then, and when I finally retired for the night, it was with a heavy heart. Thankfully, on my way home, someone called out to me. I turned to see Thomas approaching with a smile.

"Hey, heading home too?" he questioned.

"Yeah, you?" I inquired.

“Yes, want to walk together?”

I nodded, and we walked beside each other. However, as we strolled, Thomas noticed my wrapped-up hand.

“What’s that?” he questioned.

“Oh, I spilled hot soup all over myself. Clumsy,” I commented, though he didn’t seem convinced.

“They’re giving you a hard time, aren’t they?” he asked.

I sighed, lowering my head, trying to hold back tears. “I… didn’t ask for this.”

“No, I know, but what do you think is happening?”

“I don’t know, but I would very much like for it to stop,” I whispered, my eyes fixed on the ground.

Thomas reached out, placing a soothing hand on my back. I turned to him with a grateful smile, thankful for the support.

“Maybe it will disappear on its own?” he suggested.

I appreciated his optimism. It gave me a glimmer of hope, but I couldn’t confess to him how drawn I had been to Alpha Reese, and how every touch and moment we spent together seemed to intensify everything.

“Maybe,” I murmured.

“You just need to hold out.”

“Yeah,” I agreed, and we continued walking together, enjoying the sun’s gentle descent as he escorted me home.

“Do you need help in there?” he questioned, aware of the state of my little place.

“No, strangers make her more confused and sadder,” I explained.

“I see.”

“But thank you for bringing me here,” I said.

“We’re still friends even if you’re our second Luna,” he teased, making me roll my eyes.

“Oh, please.”

“What? You might be,” he pointed out.

“I wouldn’t know anything about being Luna.”

“Sometimes Alphas do find their mates in lower-ranking wolves.”

“That’s so rare!” I exclaimed.

“I know, but sometimes it’s because the lower-ranking one is able to bring something to the table that is an aid to the Alpha, something he needs.”

“Oh, and I bring that?” I teased.

“I could see it.”

“Please, enlighten me with your wisdom,” I chuckled.

He continued to smile, then shrugged a bit. “Maybe it’s not just for the Alpha, but for the pack too. You’re kind, respectful, and open.”

“I think you can find that in many people.”

“But maybe it needs to be you,” he suggested.

“I don’t really see myself as a leader.”

“Then maybe you should start to,” he said.

I felt a bit confused by his behavior. Why was he suddenly pushing me in that direction? But maybe he hoped to help in any way he could. I felt grateful for that. Wanting to show him my gratitude, I wrapped my arms around him and brought him closer, hugging him tightly.

“Thank you,” I whispered.

“Don’t thank me. Just survive this whole ordeal.”

I chuckled. “I will try.”

We bid each other goodnight before I entered the house. Out of habit, I called my mother’s name before ensuring she ate a little. Her condition remained unchanged, as expected. As I went to shower, my thoughts drifted back to my day with Alpha Reese. I had always longed for a longer moment with him, a chance for a real conversation, but now I found myself questioning if my dream had been more perilous than I realized. It seemed to bring little good with it. However, as I replayed the meeting in my mind, I recalled the arousing sensation from merely touching him,

and a throbbing began in my legs. I tried to ignore it, but it only intensified as I attempted to dispel the memory of Alpha Reese.

“What’s happening?” I murmured.

Perhaps I was experiencing a form of Moon Sickness, but it appeared to be triggered solely by Alpha Reese. Or was this how my fascinations worked? Did they lead me to this state of agony? I couldn’t ignore the sensation and brought my hand between my legs, touching myself and feeling how wet I had become with my own warm slick.

I groaned, placing my other hand over my mouth as images of Alpha Reese filled my head. I hadn’t anticipated how quickly the feeling within me would rise. It wasn’t the first time he dominated my thoughts, but this time I tumbled over the edge with such speed that I simply dropped my hand, letting a tiny scream fill the room. I pressed harder, shaking and convulsing as I thought of him, feeling my entire body release in the most powerful orgasm I had ever drawn from my body.

However, as I slowly came down and rinsed myself clean, I didn’t feel satisfied. I felt hungrier. How was that possible? A quick release often dispelled the need, but this time it grew fiercer. I groaned, not wanting to entertain the feeling again if it wasn’t going to help.

“This is too weird,” I murmured.

I agree , my wolf said.

“And you!” I called out.

What? she asked.

“Could you make a decision regarding the Alpha?” I snapped.

But I don't know what's happening!

"Do you not feel any need to claim or reject?"

I feel... confused.

"That's not helping!" I stated.

You think I enjoy this situation. His wolf is even trying to connect with me!

"And what is he doing?" I questioned.

Just trying to reach out to me. He seemed to enjoy the idea of us running together.

"And do you want to?"

Um...

"You said you had enough self-control!" I accused.

I do!

"Do you? So you wouldn't enjoy it if we ran together and he caught you before getting on top of you and... doing things."

She opened her mouth to answer, only for me to feel her own desire rise.

"Oh, you filthy wolf," I snapped.

I didn't say anything! she shot back.

“I felt it!”

I don't know what's happening!

“Then start figuring it out!” I replied angrily, turning off the water and hating every bit of this day.

Chapter 19

-Reese-

A tapping filled the office as I used my other hand to sip the coffee. I felt exhausted from not having slept at all. Rosa had tried to engage with me, talking and even a little bit of touching, attempting to reconnect with me. I could kiss her, touch her back, but a full-on mating, I didn't feel inclined to. My head wasn't filled with images of her. Instead, I found myself thinking of Naomi. That felt like a bigger betrayal. Yet, even though I had refrained from mating with Rosa, I couldn't sleep. I felt restless, as if I were a young teenage Alpha again, with a rising need for intimacy.

The tapping grew louder as my frustration mounted and the caffeine spread through my blood. Unbeknownst to me, people in the office turned their attention toward me, annoyed by the sound of my pen knocking against the desk repeatedly. Eventually, my Beta reached over, grasping the pen and putting an end to the tapping.

"I was using that," I protested as he pulled it away.

"Yeah, and it was driving us all crazy," he retorted.

Surveying the eyes on me, I shook my head before lowering my cup and groaning. I covered my face, letting out my frustration.

"Are you all right, son?" my dad asked, sitting beside my Beta with his most trusted men around him, many of whom still worked closely with me to keep everything running.

I lifted my head, knowing my exhausted expression was evident. “Do I look all right?”

He raised a brow, not appreciating my attitude. I leaned back in my seat, sighing. “Sorry, I’m on edge. I didn’t sleep last night.”

“How come?”

“Because whatever is happening to me, it’s getting stronger,” I confessed.

“So, your time together with Naomi went... well?” my Beta asked, clearly unsure how to phrase the question.

“Well?” I echoed, mulling over the word. “I don’t know, but something is definitely happening to us the more time we spend together.”

“If you are mates, then you need to figure out your ranking order,” my dad explained.

“Our what?”

“You have two mates, Reese. That means two wolves you must divide your attention between, while also determining their roles in leading the pack. You’re not an ordinary pack member. You’re the Alpha, and it’s crucial to ensure clarity in their roles to prevent chaos,” my dad explained.

I groaned, sliding further down my seat, and I knew my dad could see how lost I felt. “How the hell do I do that?”

“Well, Rosa is obviously trained for the position,” my Beta reminded me.

“And what about Naomi? Is she just supposed to sit around, waiting, and warming

my bed at night?" I snapped, turning my gaze toward him. He didn't appreciate my tone either.

"I'm sure with some training, she could take on a specific domain," my dad suggested, attempting to ease the tension.

"A domain?"

"Yes, you need to clarify which domain belongs to each mate to avoid conflicts. You're going to have a tough time leading this pack if your two mates get into a conflict over their roles," he explained.

"Goddess!" I exclaimed. "But technically, they are both Lunas if Naomi is my second mate."

"I'm well aware," he agreed. "And as such, they both have every right to be fully involved in pack affairs. But it's your responsibility to ensure they each have tasks that won't interfere or create more chaos. You have your work cut out for you."

I let my head hang, feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work ahead of me. Why was this happening to me? Rosa and I hadn't even had our official ceremony yet, and now I might have to consider being bound to two women. While it might sound like a dream to some, I preferred having one mate, one person I could shower my attention on, rather than having to divide that affection fairly. It all felt too complicated, and I concluded the conversation by sliding lower in my seat as the others resumed working.

I accomplished nothing throughout the day. I barely heard my father speaking to me. I just continued to gaze into nothingness, sipping my coffee until I noticed the time. In an instant, I felt more awake, jumping from my seat to inform everyone that my work was done for the day. I rushed out of the office, feeling a powerful need to go

find Naomi. Maybe today was the day my wolf made a decision.

I descended the stairs, scanning through the rooms and kitchen until I discovered Naomi in the dining room, meticulously setting the table. When I called her name, she startled, her demeanor betraying a hint of fear as I approached. Despite her strong reaction, she didn't flee, simply continuing her task.

"Okay, little wolf, you're mine now," I declared, noticing her slight tension and the peculiar sound she made in response. Uncertain of its meaning, I paused, but before I could delve further, I spotted the redness on one of her hands.

"What's this?" I inquired, reaching for her hand, only for her to drop the fork she held at my touch. "Goodness, what happened?"

As I lifted her hand gently, careful not to cause further discomfort, she hesitated before responding. "Um, I accidentally spilled something hot," she muttered, though her avoidance of eye contact hinted otherwise.

"Did you spill it or was it spilled on you?" I pressed, my tone tinged with concern and a hint of frustration, to which she merely shrugged, seemingly indifferent to the distinction.

"I need to clarify some things," I murmured, my hands on my hips, but Naomi shook her head.

"That'll only make things worse."

"How so?" I inquired, baffled.

"You'd be making a statement. By protecting me, you're essentially claiming me, and our pack might not acknowledge that we're mated," she clarified.

“If I’m protecting you, I’m simply fulfilling my role as Alpha,” I asserted, taking a step closer. “This treatment of you should be unacceptable.”

“Please, I don’t want any more trouble.”

“Which is precisely why I must address this,” I insisted.

“I’d rather you didn’t,” she interjected, and I felt a twinge of frustration at her reluctance to accept my aid, fearing it might backfire on her.

“If you truly oppose it—”

“I do,” she interrupted.

“Very well, for now, I won’t say anything. But you won’t continue working while you’re mine,” I declared, noticing her blush.

“C-Could you not phrase it like that?” she stuttered, her cheeks reddening further.

I understood why she resisted being called ‘mine’, but it felt appropriate to assert it, so I leaned in closer to her with a slight smile on my lips.

“But I like calling you that,” I insisted.

“Please, it’s... not right,” she murmured.

“But it is, because, for now, you are mine,” I countered, sensing her resignation.

“Come, let’s go for a walk.”

“Now?” she questioned, casting a hesitant glance at her unfinished task.

“Yes, right now.”

She seemed torn, reluctant to leave the task incomplete.

“Naomi?” I prompted.

“Um, can I finish this first?” she asked tentatively.

“Why? Let someone else take care of it,” I suggested.

She began to fidget nervously, clearly uncomfortable with the idea of someone else completing the task.

“Okay, you can finish it,” I relented. “Need any help?”

“I’d prefer to do it myself,” she replied, resuming her work.

“You don’t think I know how to set a table?”

“It’s not that,” she responded, her attention focused on ensuring everything was perfectly aligned, down to the smallest detail.

As I observed her meticulousness, a theory began to form in my mind. When she moved to the next chair, I reached out and subtly nudged the plate she had just placed down. It was a minor adjustment, but the sound of the sliding plate caught her attention, causing her to react with almost wild intensity. She struggled to maintain her composure, and to test her reaction further, I adjusted the position of a fork. This time, my mate couldn’t contain her agitation, promptly readjusting everything. It became evident that it wasn’t about questioning my abilities but rather a compulsive need for things to be arranged a certain way.

You referred to her as your mate again , my wolf pointed out, but I chose not to respond.

I continued to observe Naomi, noting this significant detail about her behavior. I wondered if everything needed to be in order, so I nudged an unlit candlestick further into the table. Her reaction was immediate. Her eyes conveyed a silent plea to restore it to its original position. I raised an eyebrow challengingly, expecting her to assert herself, as a Luna should. Despite her attempts to focus on her task, her hands trembled slightly. So, I pushed a salt shaker further from its original spot.

“All right, Alpha-jerk, listen up!” she began, before paling, realizing her choice of words.

Chapter 20

-Naomi-

I hadn't intended to lose my temper, but each time he moved something or disrupted the order of the plates I meticulously arranged, it felt like a gnawing frustration in my mind. I had a specific way of doing things, and his interruptions forced me to repeat the process endlessly, leaving me feeling dizzy. However, labeling my Alpha as a jerk was undoubtedly a risky move.

"I'm a what?" Reese's voice cut through the tension.

I gulped, attempting to backtrack, but my words came out as a jumbled stammer. Yet, to my surprise, Reese's expression softened into a smile, lacking the expected anger.

"S-Sorry," I managed to mumble, my embarrassment clear.

He chuckled, catching me off guard. I had expected him to be more offended. After all, Alphas typically held their pride in high regard.

"You have a preference for things to be in a certain way, don't you?" he observed.

I nodded silently.

"But as my mate, you have every right to ask me to stop," he reassured me, circling around the table, his behavior feeling predatory. I glanced at the items he had displaced, torn between focusing on rectifying the arrangement or addressing the

looming figure behind me.

In the end, my compulsion for order prevailed, and I leaned forward, swiftly restoring the salt shaker and candlestick to their rightful places. A wave of relief washed over me as I straightened up, momentarily forgetting about Reese's proximity. When I turned to face him, I found him standing beside me, his gaze fixed on my pushed-out rear. Heat rushed to my cheeks as I hastily retreated, only to find his eyes glinting with a faint glow, signaling his wolf's presence drawing closer to the surface than usual.

We locked eyes, tension crackling between us once more. I folded my hands in front of me, the urge to flee intensifying. However, a voice inside me warned that if I ran, Reese would follow. Attempting to steady my nerves, I refocused on my task, but with every movement, I sensed him trailing closely behind, his presence overpowering. Though he didn't touch me, his proximity was suffocating, yet strangely exhilarating, making it challenging to concentrate on completing my task.

"Um, could I have some space?" I whispered, my voice barely audible.

"No," came his reply in a slightly echoing tone.

"I'm almost done," I informed him, trying to sound composed.

"Good, and then I want your undivided attention."

"My undivided attention?" I echoed, glancing nervously over my shoulder to find him standing right behind me.

I gulped, my throat feeling parched. He smiled, clearly noticing my unease. It must have pleased his Alpha instincts to see me vulnerable, and I quickly averted my gaze, focusing on completing my task. However, as I neared the end, the tremble in my

hands intensified, and the air filled with a dark, erotic scent that I knew wasn't solely mine. Inhaling it, my own natural scent mingled with his, heightening the tension between us. A low rumble emanated from him, signaling the imminent release of pent-up desire.

As I placed the last fork down, Reese seized me, causing me to let out a small scream. He ruined my carefully arranged table setting as he bent me over the table, pressing me against the surface, igniting a fiery passion between my legs. I was overwhelmed by the intensity of the moment. What was happening? How could it feel even more intense than before? I whimpered at the sight of the disordered plate, but Reese pressed against me, his body keeping me in place as he buried his nose in my neck, eliciting mutual moans of pleasure.

Unable to focus on the task at hand, I felt his cock pressing against me, sending shivers down my spine. This must be what happens between mates, I reasoned internally, the overpowering desire that made them lose control. Reese began grinding his hips against mine, his scent intoxicating me further, until I was on the brink of climax.

His teeth grazed my shoulder, right where the marking spot was on a wolf, and I couldn't help but cry out in ecstasy, pressing back against him. His hand slid beneath my skirt with purpose.

"You smell incredible," he murmured into my ear, biting down again.

"Oh, Goddess," I whimpered, my breath catching in my throat.

With each bite, he brought me closer to the edge. If he continued, I was certain to climax right there in the dining room. It was a sobering realization, and I reached for his hand just as it neared my most intimate area. He growled in frustration, his displeasure sending a thrill through me. We couldn't continue like this in such an

exposed place.

“Alpha Reese, we’re still in the dining room,” I reminded him, my voice tinged with urgency.

“So, if I take you to a bedroom, can I have my face buried in your sweet scent?” he questioned, catching me off guard with his suggestive remark. Was he really suggesting...? I couldn’t finish the thought as the doors suddenly swung open, revealing other staff members entering the room, their eyes widening in surprise at the scene before them. While I glanced at them in embarrassment, Reese seemed more preoccupied with my scent, refusing to move from our position.

“Alpha Reese!” I hissed, my patience wearing thin as the other wolves stared at us incredulously.

He groaned, pressing closer to me, his behavior noticeably possessive, eliciting astonishment from the few females who had entered. This was beyond mortifying, and I pushed back, my frustration mounting.

“Alpha Reese!” I growled again, this time devoid of any amusement.

Finally acknowledging the situation, Reese pushed back slightly, his hand resting on the table. Seeing my expression, he turned to address the group who had witnessed our exchange, his demeanor shifting as he realized the awkwardness of the situation. With a forced smile, he helped me stand.

“We’ll relocate to a more private place,” he declared, his words implying a continuation of our intimacy elsewhere.

Too stunned to protest, I allowed him to lead me out of the room. As he guided me into a nearby living room and closed the door behind us, I turned to him, my anger

bubbling to the surface as I shoved my hands against his chest, though it hardly made an impact.

“Do you have any idea how that made me look?” I demanded, my frustration evident in my tone.

“What?” he asked, genuinely confused.

“How we were... the way you just...”

“I doubt anyone will question our connection now,” he countered casually.

I glared at him, finding nothing amusing about the situation. His lack of concern only fueled my anger, as I feared the potential repercussions for myself.

“I’m sure they’ll only see me as... promiscuous!” I snapped.

“Why shouldn’t I show you affection if you’re already bound to me?” he challenged.

“Maybe they still think I enchanted you, or perhaps I have magical lady parts!”

“Magical lady parts?” he echoed, clearly puzzled. “You mean a pussy so sweet I can’t think about anything else.”

His crude description caused my cheeks to flush, and I took a step back, a dark smirk spreading across his lips.

“What’s gotten into you today?” I inquired, noticing a flicker of exhaustion returning to his eyes as he rubbed them wearily.

“I honestly don’t know,” he admitted. “Suddenly, the need to see you was

overwhelming, and the moment I started to follow you, you just smelled so sweet. The same scent that drew me to you from the moment I laid eyes on you after years of being apart.”

His confession left me feeling overwhelmed, realizing the depth of his struggle, and as I studied him, I noticed the fatigue etched into his features.

“Have you slept at all?” I asked, concerned.

“Not really. At least not tonight. I feel on edge. It’s like I’m a young Alpha again, grappling with the weight of this power.”

I could sense his inner turmoil, and my sympathy for him deepened.

“So, what do you want to do?” I prompted gently. “What do your instincts tell you?”

He appeared momentarily nervous, then shrugged in a way that seemed to convey ‘isn’t it obvious?’

“Oh,” I murmured, understanding his silent implication. “But we’ve only spent a short time together. You said 30 minutes wasn’t enough!”

“I thought it wasn’t. Apparently, it’s enough to put me on edge,” he sighed.

“We’re not mating. It was just a joke.”

“I’m fully aware.”

“Then don’t look at me like that,” I insisted.

“Like what?” he questioned innocently.

“Like you want to chase me around the room,” I murmured.

“I do want to chase you around the room, and I shouldn’t! I have a mate!” he exclaimed, frustration evident in his tone.

“Yes, I’m aware.”

“Then don’t put such thoughts into my head!” he urged.

“It seems like they were already there,” I countered.

“Well, then don’t vocalize them, because now I really want to do it, and once I catch you, I want your full submission,” he declared, his voice laced with desire.

Chapter 21

-Reese-

C hasing her around the room certainly didn't sound unappealing, especially when she pointed it out. I could vividly imagine the thrill of the pursuit, with the sweetest prize awaiting at the end. But how had things escalated so quickly?

Naomi stumbled back slightly at my words, though it was expected that her submission would be given once I caught her. The idea of having her under my control was enticing, envisioning how easily I could maneuver her into the positions I desired.

"Um," she stammered, clearly flustered.

"Don't worry, I won't do it, but it's been on my mind," I admitted, trying to reassure her.

"Yes, that's..." She trailed off, her gaze falling to the ground, yet her scent suddenly filled the room, betraying her true feelings.

I scrutinized her, noting the shallow breathing and the telltale flush creeping onto her cheeks.

She wants you to chase her! my wolf concluded, echoing my own observation. It seemed she enjoyed the thought as well. Should I encourage her to run? The urge to do so was overwhelming as I stepped closer to her, inhaling her intoxicating scent. A

dark growl escaped my lips, relishing the effect I had on her, prompting a soft whimper from her.

“If you want to run, do it now, and I’ll catch you,” I declared, my voice echoing.

Slowly, she tilted her head back, her eyes betraying her temptation as she took a tiny step back.

“I’ll give you a head start,” I murmured.

What was happening to us? Why couldn’t we resist this urge? Despite our wolves’ reluctance to claim each other, we couldn’t seem to stop ourselves. Stepping closer to Naomi, I watched as she suddenly spun around, darting toward the other end of the room. A pleased growl escaped me as I followed her, nearly catching her as she maneuvered around the couch. Then, I realized her intention as she made a dash for the door, but I caught her in time, wrapping an arm around her waist.

“No!” she yelled, kicking at the air in a futile attempt to escape.

So she was playing with me? I realized as I closed the door, then swiftly brought her down onto the couch, her body flat against the cushions. I positioned myself on top of her, my long frame stretched out over hers as I asserted dominance. Burying my nose in her neck, I detected no genuine fear. Instead, her desire mingled with the rush of adrenaline.

“ You think you can outsmart me ?” I growled into her ear, my voice low and commanding.

“W-We need to stay away from each other,” she protested weakly.

I didn’t take kindly to her words, so I bit into her neck, not breaking the skin but

enough to elicit a whimper from her as she slumped further into the couch, a clear display of submission. The sound pleased me, relishing her surrender. With my hand wedged between us, I traced upward beneath her skirt once more.

“A-Alpha Reese,” she stammered, her voice wavering.

“You smell so good. I can’t resist,” I murmured against her neck, intoxicated by her scent. No one in the world smelled like Naomi—so alluring, so tantalizingly ripe for the taking. As my hand ventured higher, between her legs, she moaned and pressed back, craving my touch. She wore dark pantyhose beneath her skirt, but they wouldn’t last long under my teasing ministrations.

Pressing my fingers against her drenched panties, I rumbled in satisfaction, reveling in her response to me even without direct contact.

“A-Alpha Reese,” she stuttered again, attempting to shift her hips against me.

But it was futile. My body kept her firmly in place, compelling her to accept the pleasure I offered.

“P-Please,” she pleaded softly.

“Yes, beg me,” I purred in her ear, relishing the power I held over her. “Beg me to make you come.”

This wasn’t like me—I’d never acted so demanding, using pleasure as a means of control. But something primal within me drove the need to show Naomi that when we played, she was at my mercy, and she had to remember that.

Continuing to caress her sensitive area, I couldn’t resist the urge to see her reaction. I lifted her skirt and tore through the pantyhose, eliciting a startled gasp from her.

Pushing her underwear aside, I made contact with her burning skin, causing her to cry out and convulse in pleasure. Had she just reached climax from a mere touch to her clit? I watched in stunned silence, halting my movements, sensing her mixture of pleasure and embarrassment.

That was a swift reaction , my wolf remarked, pleased, in my head.

It certainly was.

Did Rosa ever do that?

I didn't answer him, as the mention of Rosa felt like a splash of cold water, reminding me of the precarious situation. Yet, I found my hand unwilling to move away, its own will driving it to continue teasing her, eliciting soft whimpers as I set a rhythm. More , I thought, craving another orgasm from her. I wanted her to surrender to me completely, to explode in pleasure before I claimed her as... mine? Was she truly mine yet? My wolf remained silent on the matter, refusing to acknowledge her as a mate, yet not urging me to stop either. Meanwhile, she began rocking against me, caught up in the sensation.

Taste her , he suggested.

I yearned to do just that. I wanted to be enveloped by her sweet, curvy thighs as I savored her slick like a man dying of thirst in the desert. Leaning down, I sank my teeth into her ass cheek, eliciting another whimper as I increased the pace with my fingers. She grasped a pillow, muffling her own cries in a futile attempt to silence them. But she couldn't suppress her pleasure as she came again, trembling and filling the room with her intoxicating scent. My cock throbbed violently, on the brink of release, and I knew I couldn't hold back any longer. I tore her clothes further, desperate to be inside her.

However, the ripping seemed to jolt her back to reality. When she saw me kneeling, working on my pants, she recoiled, turning away from me and pressing a foot against my thigh.

“W-We shouldn’t mate!” she exclaimed, reminding me of the perilous situation we found ourselves in.

With my belt already unbuckled, I slumped down, the urge to take her overwhelming, disregarding the fact that I had another mate. I wanted Naomi now. But the fear in her eyes brought me back to my senses, dispelling the sweet haze with a more humid scent.

“What the fuck is happening to us?” I groaned, shaking my head, desperate for answers.

I remained rock hard, but Naomi had curled up at the end of the couch, clearly embarrassed by the situation. I hadn’t meant to overwhelm her. My desires had simply overridden my restraint, and her attempt to escape had triggered me.

“I need to get out of here,” I stated firmly, recognizing that if I remained, she would draw me in again. This connection was becoming more powerful than anything I had experienced before.

Hurrying away, I had a new goal in mind, something I hoped would quell this burning desire. I found Rosa in our bedroom, engrossed in something on her computer. As she saw me enter, she closed her laptop, offering me a smile.

“Hey,” she greeted warmly.

I didn’t reply but stormed over to where she sat at a small desk. Pulling her chair back, I crashed my lips against hers. She moaned into the kiss, but quickly pulled

back.

“You reek of someone else,” she snapped, pushing me away, and I groaned in frustration.

“Then shower with me,” I suggested urgently, my actions driven by the need to reconnect with her.

Rosa seemed confused by my sudden moves.

“Let’s reconnect,” I coaxed, feeling guilty for almost using my first mate to appease the unease caused by my second mate’s reluctance to let me near her. But I didn’t know what else to do.

“We do have a lot to connect over,” she mused thoughtfully.

“I know this is a confusing situation. Trust me, my head is barely staying attached,” I admitted.

She sighed and nodded. “I know...”

“If I could, I would make this so much less complicated,” I declared sincerely.

“You don’t have to tell me, I know,” she replied, understanding my predicament.

“But you’re still upset.”

“Maybe I just don’t want my mate to reek of someone else and clearly be aroused by them,” she confessed.

“I can’t help it,” I replied, feeling remorseful.

“I’m aware, but don’t you think it makes me feel awful?”

“I know, I’m sorry.”

“It just feels awful that you also have to apologize for it when I know it’s not your fault,” she groaned.

“Then what do you want to do?” I asked, eager to find a solution.

Rosa seemed to ponder it, visibly distressed by the situation. I wished I could make it easier for her, but I couldn’t ignore the growing need I felt for Naomi. However, Rosa finally met my eyes with a soft, understanding gaze.

“Very well, let’s take a shower.”

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Chapter 22

-Naomi-

I returned home to change, my entire body still aflame from what Alpha Reese had done to me. It was clear that something was pulling us together, yet neither of our wolves offered any answers.

As I shed my ruined clothes and slipped into something fresh, I collapsed onto my bed, feeling utterly defeated. I couldn't believe the predicament I found myself in. Alpha Reese had always been my dream, but now it felt like a nightmare. How long before we succumbed to our desires completely? I dreaded our next encounter, knowing it would be charged with even more sexual tension.

Maybe we should just try to get it out of our system? my wolf suggested.

"No! I am not sleeping with him just to get something out of my system," I stated firmly, crossing my arms.

Then what do you suggest? she inquired.

"I suggest we stay away from him. No more dates or evenings. Wherever he is, we won't be."

That's going to be a bit complicated considering he's our Alpha, and perhaps our mate. We don't want to be apart.

“Then claim him or tell me if this situation is absolutely ridiculous!” I demanded.

I... still can't choose , she admitted quietly.

“Do you want to claim him?” I pressed.

She remained silent, leaving me with more questions than answers and a throbbing ache between my legs that only he could satisfy. It wasn't fair that someone held such power over me, and that I couldn't do anything about it. If I hadn't heard my clothes being torn, he would undoubtedly have mated with me, and I would have eagerly accepted. But none of this made sense. Why were we affected this way? And why couldn't anyone give us an answer?

Instead of returning to my job, I had dozed off, pondering over my many questions. When I woke, I found someone hovering over me.

“Mom?” I questioned, seeing her in my room, gazing down at me with an unusual intensity. She seemed more focused than she had been in years.

“Why do I smell something?” she asked, her tone laced with curiosity.

“What do you mean?”

“I smell an Alpha, marking something as his,” she murmured, her words sending a shiver down my spine.

Then, unexpectedly, she grabbed my hair and began sniffing it, before pulling back with a shake of her head in disbelief.

“So much Alpha,” she commented, her expression unreadable.

I stared at her in shock, unable to comprehend her sudden behavior. She was acting even stranger than usual. Then, she took hold of my arm and drew us closer together.

“Why is your mate an Alpha?” she questioned.

“H-He is not,” I insisted. “Mom, you’re just confused. It’s late.”

“You need to be careful with Alphas.”

“Mom, please, just go to sleep,” I urged, hoping to end the conversation.

“Alphas are very powerful, and different dynamics in pairings can make things confusing,” she continued, her words sounding more coherent than they had in a long time.

“Come, let’s get you back to your room,” I suggested, attempting to divert her attention.

“No, Naomi!” she insisted, causing me to pause and look at her. “He smells wild.”

“And?” I responded, unsure of where she was going with this.

“It’s not a good scent. It’s everywhere. Why does he smell so wild?”

“He is... troubled,” I replied, trying to downplay the situation.

“No, this is not the scent of a troubled Alpha. It’s the scent of one who is desperate, as if he is losing something,” my mother murmured, her words adding to the mystery.

“Mom, it’s a complicated situation,” I explained, feeling overwhelmed.

“Are you rejecting him?”

“Um, no, I don’t think so,” I replied.

“Then why does he seem so desperate to mark you?” my mom pressed.

“He doesn’t,” I insisted.

“I smell it. It’s his wild nature he placed on you, meaning he is afraid you will leave him. He wants to mark you to ensure you stay with him.”

Her words became more and more unsettling. Alpha Reese wasn’t afraid of losing me. He might even end up with two mates, a situation I couldn’t even fathom dealing with at the moment. Therefore, I decided to focus on my mom.

“Hey, let’s get you to your own bedroom,” I suggested, leading her with me.

“Naomi, the house reeks of his desperation,” she persisted.

“I’m sure it’s just bad ventilation. I will have it checked.”

“No, you need to be careful. Desperate Alphas are dangerous, even to their mates. He could mark you violently.”

“And what do you suggest? That I give him what he wants?” I chuckled.

“Yes,” she insisted.

We halted in the hallway to her room, and I turned to her, noticing more life in her eyes than I had seen in ages. It was rather unsettling, and I wondered if she thought this was a dream.

“What?” I prompted.

“To appease the Alpha, you give him what he wants,” she said.

“I don’t understand.”

“You let him mark you, and it will appease his instincts,” she explained.

“Mom, it’s not that simple.”

“Why not?” she inquired. “Between mates, it’s very simple.”

I didn’t know if I should tell her, but if this was one of her lucid moments, did it hurt to lean on her a little?

“Mom, it’s Alpha Reese,” I informed her. She blinked, looking a bit confused, as if she didn’t know who that was. “You know, the former Alpha’s son.”

“But he is a boy,” my mom said, making me shake my head.

“No, he is all grown up now, and he has a mate.”

“You?”

“No, a Luna, an actual Luna. But we are... drawn to each other, and something seems to be happening when we are together,” I admitted, playing with my blouse, uncertain of how much I should reveal to her.

My mother studied me for a moment before stepping closer and inhaling deeply. “He desires you,” she declared.

“He might desire us both—”

“No, he desires you. I can sense it. You exude his scent, as if he needed to assert his dominance.”

“Mom, he has two mates,” I pointed out.

“She is the mistake then. It’s you. Only an Alpha who desires you this intensely would leave such a mark,” she clarified.

“Then she must bear his scent too,” I argued.

She shook her head. “This is primal.”

“Mom, I don’t understand. Besides, he has already admitted he prefers having one mate.”

“Then he means you.”

“No, he was quite clear about wanting the other. It would also strengthen the pack if they were together,” I explained.

“You would strengthen him, which in turn strengthens the pack,” she countered.

“Mom, it’s late. I don’t think we should continue this conversation,” I said, rubbing my eyes and feeling drained. I couldn’t think about Alpha Reese or what had occurred between us so late into the night.

“Naomi, you should claim him now.”

“Why?” I half chuckled. “Why should I?”

“Because he belongs to you. Claim him!”

“Mom!” I sighed, but she shook me, insisting that I should claim him, causing me to push her away. She stumbled, and I immediately regretted my action.

“Sorry, Mom,” I apologized, reaching out to her, but she didn’t want me near, holding up her hand as a vacant expression clouded her face.

I sighed, overwhelmed with guilt, but her demands had made me feel trapped. Without a word, she retreated to her room, leaving me more confused than ever.

Chapter 23

-Reese-

The next day, my body felt battered. Despite mating with Rosa and finding release multiple times, I didn't wake up with a sense of satisfaction or as if I had enjoyed a wonderful night. I almost crawled to work, stumbling slightly and feeling dizzy. My dad watched me, clearly concerned, even as I tried to rally us all to get back to business.

However, I could barely stifle my yawns, and they kept recurring as the words before my eyes blurred. I groaned, rubbed my face, and tried to focus when my Beta abruptly threw the papers in his hand down and stood up. We all turned to him, and he gave me a strange look that I couldn't quite decipher before leaving without a word.

Confused, I watched him go, telling myself I didn't have the strength to deal with his odd mood. Yet barely 10 minutes passed before the office door swung open again, and he returned, holding Naomi's wrist and dragging her with him. We all stared in disbelief at the scene, but my Beta brought her over to me and gently pushed my chair back, placing Naomi directly in my lap. The moment she settled close to me again, her sweet scent enveloping me, I instantly grew calmer, a soft rumble escaping my chest, even as she trembled in my arms, obviously as confused as I was. Yet I began to understand the purpose of this as my Beta returned to his chair, looking somewhat pleased.

"You already look better," he remarked.

I didn't know how he had come up with the idea, but everyone began smiling, though it felt somewhat inappropriate with Naomi there. Nonetheless, it quelled something within me, and I wrapped my arms tightly around her, lifting her higher onto my lap.

She continued to shake, her eyes meeting mine with an expression of fear, but I simply stroked her hair before returning to work. No one paid her any attention, and I knew this situation must be incredibly confusing for her, but I didn't want her to leave. Holding her helped me regain focus, and I found myself working more efficiently. Of course, Naomi shifted around after the initial shock wore off, but I drew her closer and leaned down to her ear.

"Stay still. I need you here if I'm going to concentrate," I asserted.

She turned to me, blinking in surprise, but as if sensing my seriousness, she fell silent. She seemed to relinquish her resistance and slumped down as I worked around her, familiarizing myself with everything. Naomi clearly felt overwhelmed by the powerful male wolves in the room and sought refuge closer to me. She buried her face in my neck, sending shivers down my spine, but it also filled me with a sense of completeness, as if having Naomi in my arms was what I had been waiting for my entire life.

I held her tighter, ensuring she felt my protective presence, and the day progressed much more smoothly now that I didn't feel disoriented. Naomi even appeared to drift off slightly, as if she had also endured a rough night. Perhaps she had. It wouldn't be surprising. Having her asleep in my arms only intensified the feeling of completeness, and I couldn't help but smile as I worked.

I noticed the way my dad looked at me, recognizing the peaceful expression on my face, and I rolled my eyes, silently signaling him not to comment. But why was everyone suddenly starting to accept this situation?

As Naomi slept peacefully, a serene energy enveloped us, signaling the rare opportunity to sort things out uninterrupted. The day grew late, and one by one, my dad and the others departed from the office, concluding our work for the day. I reclined in my chair, relishing the moment with Naomi by my side.

Unaware of our solitude, Naomi remained in her tranquil slumber. I couldn't help but smile, running my fingers through her long ponytail, savoring her delightful scent. How had she managed to captivate me so completely? And why hadn't I realized it before? It dawned on me then that there was a significant age gap between us, and I wouldn't have recognized Naomi as my own until she reached the age of 18. Frustration welled up within me at the thought of not being present when she came of age, missing the chance to confirm our connection definitively.

Perhaps it wasn't as straightforward as my wolf instinctively declaring her as my mate. Maybe there were other factors at play, given my attraction to two individuals. Nevertheless, I was beginning to find solace in this complex situation.

As I gently stroked Naomi's hair, she stirred, gradually awakening from her slumber. Blinking groggily, she stretched before realizing that we were alone once again.

"Oh," she murmured, attempting to rise, but I held her close.

Turning to me, her eyes brimmed with admiration, but then she averted her gaze, clearly still puzzled by our circumstances.

"Why am I here, Alpha Reese?" she inquired.

"Just Reese," I corrected her softly.

Her reaction to my correction was evident, but in the context of being potential mates, formal titles seemed unnecessary.

“I-I don’t think—”

“Yes, as my mate, you should,” I asserted.

“But I’m not your mate.”

“Then how do we make sense of all this?” I questioned, my hands gliding over her body, eliciting a soft whimper from her. I relished that sound, despite not even targeting any sensitive areas. It was merely the sensation of my hand moving along her form that made her react. “Something is happening, and I’ve been experiencing restless nights lately. I fear it’s because of our separation. How have you been sleeping?”

“Um,” she hesitated, her uncertainty conveying what I needed to hear. She, too, was struggling, indicating a connection deeper than mere attraction.

“You haven’t been sleeping well, have you?” I pressed.

She sighed, averting her gaze. “Not really,” she confessed.

“In that case, it’s clear we need to make some adjustments.”

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“I believe you should stay in the house with me.”

“What?”

Chapter 24

-Naomi-

Alpha Reese appeared resolute, but his suggestion of me staying in the house with him seemed utterly nonsensical. Yet, his unwavering gaze conveyed his absolute certainty, though I couldn't help but shake my head in disbelief.

"We can't!" I exclaimed.

"But we can," he insisted firmly.

"Alpha—"

"Reese," he interjected, correcting me again.

"No, Alpha—"

"Reese," he reiterated, prompting a frustrated groan from me as I shook my head.

"Fine, Reese," I conceded, and his smile in response was gentle, his hand tenderly brushing against my cheek.

A soft moan escaped me unintentionally as his touch sent shivers down my spine, and when he leaned in closer, inhaling deeply, I couldn't help but whimper.

"Goddess, I love it when you sound like that," he murmured against my skin, planting

gentle kisses.

“This is all too much,” I whispered, feeling overwhelmed.

Respecting my boundaries, he withdrew, though an unmistakable desperation lingered in his eyes—a desperation reminiscent of what my mother had described. I tried to push aside any connections, refusing to entertain thoughts that seemed too absurd. Instead, I redirected my focus to his proposal.

“I can’t just move here,” I stated firmly.

“Why not?” he inquired. “Being closer to each other is only natural, especially if we are mates and have claimed each other.”

“It would be... complicated and awkward,” I countered.

“We can simplify it,” he proposed.

“No.”

“Naomi,” he chided gently, clearly displeased with my swift rejection of his idea. Yet, I couldn’t acquiesce this time.

“I have my mother. She needs me,” I explained.

He leaned back in his chair, mulling over my words before nodding as if reaching a conclusion.

“She could come along,” he suggested.

“No, she couldn’t.”

“Why do you dismiss the idea so readily?”

“Because she doesn’t need more people around her. She’s already broken enough. And if I’m potentially in danger because of any influence I might have on you, imagine the risk to my mom. I can’t take that chance,” I insisted.

Reese sighed, acknowledging the complexity of the situation. The room fell into silence as I allowed him to contemplate, his hand still on my lower back, radiating warmth through my clothes.

I tried to ignore the sensation, preparing to stand, but his hand on my hip prevented me. Turning to face him, I met his gaze, observing an almost pained expression, as if my departure from his side was unbearable. It was puzzling, yet I remained seated, locking eyes with him.

“Is there something we can do?” he inquired.

“About what?” I asked.

“About moving you and your mom. Perhaps we can find a solution.”

“Reese, we’ve only had two meetings, and before that, you were convinced I’d cast a spell on you,” I accused.

“I know, but I’ve come to realize my mistake and have been more open to accepting what’s happening between us,” he explained.

I sighed, shaking my head. “Well, I’m not.”

His expression showed hurt at my words, and slowly, his hand lowered, granting me space. I slid off his lap, distancing myself a few steps away.

“Why are you resisting this?” he asked, his voice tinged with pain.

“Because we don’t even know what ‘this’ is!” I retorted.

“You know me well, Naomi.”

“And?”

“It makes me think you’ve been keeping tabs on me,” he suggested.

“I...”

“Do you have feelings for me?” he asked bluntly, putting me on the spot.

“I-I...” I stuttered, feeling utterly exposed.

“Because if you do, then why are you fighting our connection?” he inquired.

“What connection?”

“What’s happening between us!” he exclaimed, standing up and appearing frustrated.

“Well, I don’t see any connection,” I retorted.

“What do you mean you don’t see one? Just a touch from me, and you were practically on fire,” he pointed out, causing my cheeks to flush red.

“T-That was just...”

“That’s the effect of a mate. We’re drawn to each other, and the slightest contact ignites intense attraction,” he explained.

I shook my head in denial.

“Yes, it does,” he asserted, advancing toward me as I retreated. He noticed and warned, “Don’t try to run away again, or I’ll chase after you. I’m losing control. I shouldn’t be like this when I have another mate who depends on me.”

“Exactly. You already have a mate, one your wolf has claimed. Why isn’t that enough?” I questioned.

“I don’t know!” he exclaimed, his voice resonating in the room.

“I don’t... know,” he murmured, his tone softening. “Even my Beta recognized that it was you I needed, not Rosa.”

“But why?” I pressed.

“I just told you I have no idea. This is simply how it is. For some reason, I feel pulled in two directions. It was just as intense in the beginning with Rosa. Obviously, I need more time with you as well.”

“Time?” I inquired.

“Yes, more time.”

“As in more dates?” I clarified.

“As in more dates, more nights, more hours. I want it all, and I want a lot of it,” he declared.

“We can’t...” I started to protest.

“Why not?” he interjected.

“Because what if it turns out we’re not mates?” I challenged.

He appeared somewhat taken aback, his behavior confusingly inconsistent. First, he wanted me nowhere near him, then he wanted me closer than ever.

“We have to be!” he insisted.

“We can’t be certain.”

“That’s why we need more time,” he countered sharply.

“No.”

“Naomi!” he scolded.

“No!” I shouted, causing him to draw back. “I wouldn’t be able to handle it.”

“What?” he queried.

“The fact that you wouldn’t be mine in the end. Can’t you see how devastating that would be?” I challenged. “What if we grew to care for each other so deeply that we could barely stand to be apart, only to realize that our wolves would never claim each other?”

Chapter 25

-Reese-

Naomi posed an excellent question, one I hadn't considered, and we lapsed into silence, both grappling with the complexities of our situation and the potential ramifications if our assessment was wrong. What would become of Naomi? What if I relocated her here, only to have her leave again?

The notion felt cruel, and I shook my head at the mere thought. I couldn't subject her to such turmoil.

"Why is this so complicated?" I murmured, rubbing my tired eyes.

"I don't know," she responded softly.

"Mating is supposed to be simple. We're meant to instinctively know and then claim each other. With mutual support, that bond is supposed to thrive and grow stronger. So why are we struggling?" I questioned, turning to her for answers. But Naomi had none to offer. She merely shrugged, unable to provide an explanation. I understood her silence, so I nodded slightly, exhaling heavily as I reclined in my seat.

"It shouldn't be like this."

"No," she whispered, echoing my sentiments, and in that moment, I felt utterly defeated as we both retreated into our own thoughts.

Suddenly, I sensed her drawing closer, and I turned my head to look up at her. Despite the dark circles under her eyes, she appeared even more beautiful to me.

“Maybe we should consider it,” she suggested.

“Consider what?” I inquired.

“Consider rejecting each other.”

“I’ve already told you I don’t want to hear that suggestion anymore,” I snapped, rising from my chair and stepping away from her. Her words unsettled me deeply, and I didn’t want to risk using my Alpha powers on her. It would be inappropriate to exert dominance over her for merely expressing an idea, but I couldn’t bear to hear such words from her.

“But Reese—”

“It’s a firm no, Naomi!” I exclaimed, stopping a few paces away from her.

“What other option do we have? Don’t you desire just one mate?” she pressed.

“I do, but not at the cost of losing you,” I declared.

“It’s not like you can give up Rosa!” she countered, the room falling silent as our eyes met. “Can you?”

I pondered her question, but my wolf snarled and growled within my mind, shaking its head. “No,” I replied firmly.

“See?”

“But I can’t let you go either. It’s simply not possible,” I admitted.

“Reese...” She sighed.

“No, Naomi. I can’t bring myself to reject either of you. It’s just not an option,” I asserted firmly.

“But Reese, what other choice do we have?”

“We do have a choice. We just need to find a way out of this situation,” I explained.

“And how do we do that?”

“I need time to think,” I murmured, feeling the weight of our dilemma pressing down on me.

As I rubbed my tired eyes, trying to untangle the knots of confusion in my mind, Naomi remained silent. However, her scent began to fill the air, triggering my instincts. I turned to her, glaring, and she instinctively drew back.

“What?” she asked, puzzled by my reaction.

“You need to stop that,” I insisted.

“Stop what?”

“Your scent is distracting me. I can’t concentrate,” I explained, feeling the frustration building within me.

“But I can’t control that,” she protested.

I knew she couldn't, but her sweet aroma enveloped me, stirring primal instincts that I struggled to suppress. A low growl escaped me, causing her to gasp, as if even the sound of my voice affected her.

"I need some fresh air," I declared, striding over to a nearby window and throwing it open.

The cool evening breeze brushed against my skin, soothing my racing thoughts and frantic heartbeat. I took deep breaths, inhaling the crisp air and trying to dispel Naomi's intoxicating scent. Gradually, it helped me regain my composure, and I rested my hands on the window sill, taking a moment to gather my thoughts. We needed to find a way to navigate through this mess.

I listened as Naomi moved around behind me, and when I glanced back, I saw her standing there, offering me a small smile.

"The pain won't last forever," she reminded me gently.

My response was a dark growl, shocking her into silence.

"You're still fixated on us rejecting each other?"

"I just don't know what else to do!" she protested.

"Help me figure this out and stop suggesting we reject each other!" I demanded.

"I just..."

"What?"

"I don't want any of this to happen!" she shouted. "I thought I did, but it's turning

into a nightmare!”

Her words resonated in my mind, confirming a suspicion I had been harboring about the young wolf. Had she been noticing me, even longing for me from a distance? The thought pleased a part of me, but I couldn’t dwell on it while she kept entertaining the idea of rejecting me.

“We’ll find another solution,” I assured her.

“Well, I’m out of ideas,” she snapped, crossing her arms defiantly.

“We haven’t even begun to try.”

“We have tried! If a few days can bring us to this, then I don’t want to see what more time will do!” she declared, her defiance only stoking the flames of my frustration. My growl deepened, a clear warning she chose to ignore. Chin raised in defiance, she dared to challenge me, a gesture that only fueled my anger.

I strode toward her, my growl intensifying, a warning for her not to push me further. Yet, she met my gaze with unwavering defiance, trembling but resolute. It was both intriguing and unsettling to witness. Without hesitation, I reached for her, grasping her throat firmly and drawing her closer, our bodies pressing together.

“We are not rejecting each other,” I stated firmly, my tone dark and commanding.

Chapter 26

-Naomi-

He refused to heed my words, and it frustrated me immensely. How could we ever hope to resolve this complicated situation if we remained inexorably drawn to each other? Alone together, we could barely think straight, yet he seemed oblivious to this fact as he drew me closer, his face mere inches from mine.

His eyes lingered on my lips, their intensity revealing his desires. He swallowed nervously, his anger dissipating as he continued to study my mouth, clearly yearning for a kiss yet awaiting a signal from me. I remained resolute, maintaining eye contact and denying him what he sought.

“Little mate, I’m on edge. Don’t push me,” he warned, his grip tightening around my throat.

“Allowing you to kiss me won’t calm you, nor will bringing me to this house,” I asserted.

He growled again, attempting to restrain himself from using his powers on me, though his desire to do so was evident.

“Doesn’t this affect you at all?” he asked, his gaze returning to my lips. “Don’t you desire the same thing?”

“I...”

“Because I can barely think straight. Why am I the one losing my mind while you seem to have control over yourself?” he questioned.

“Maybe because I’m not an Alpha. You’re naturally more possessive,” I pointed out.

“Will I lose control in the end? I don’t want to hurt you,” he admitted, his turmoil evident in his words. I watched as confusion clouded his expression, and in that moment, my anger dissolved. All I wanted was to alleviate some of his discomfort, so I reached up, running my fingers through his hair. He let out a soft moan, his eyes closing as I offered him solace with a simple gesture, something I had longed to do for so long. He leaned into my touch, his head coming to rest on my shoulder as I continued to stroke his hair. His arms wrapped around my waist, holding me close.

“I can’t bear this,” he murmured. “I don’t understand what’s happening to me.”

“I know,” I whispered softly.

“How do you manage to stay so composed?”

“I don’t know,” I admitted, though deep down, I had a clear understanding. Yet, I wasn’t prepared to fully acknowledge the depth of my feelings for him. Being vulnerable in this moment didn’t feel like the right solution.

So I continued to caress his hair, offering him the comfort he needed. He pulled me closer, and I found myself finding solace in his embrace as well. His warmth enveloped me, and his scent, a blend of freshness and a hint of something primal, was undeniably enticing. While to others, it might have been a warning, to me, it had always been irresistible, drawing me in. Could it be that we had been mates all along?

“Your scent is still intoxicating,” he confessed, pressing a kiss to my shoulder.

“I can’t help it,” I replied softly.

“No, but I don’t know what to do about it. I can’t hold my breath that long around you,” he said, attempting to inject some humor into the situation, which elicited a small chuckle from both of us.

“No, that might make you pass out,” I agreed with a smile.

“So what do we do? You say you don’t want to spend time with me, but I want to be around you.”

“Maybe some distance is needed. Perhaps it will help to calm us. You mentioned in the beginning it was intense with Rosa too. Did it eventually subside?”

“I don’t know. Maybe it became a bit calmer, less exhilarating, but the attraction is still there,” he admitted honestly.

I felt a pang in my heart upon hearing that he still found her alluring, desiring for her to be the one he was completely enamored with.

“But then maybe we should try to stay away?” I proposed, but his response was to tighten his arms around me, pulling me closer to him.

“Reese,” I whispered.

“I don’t want space.”

“But I think it’s necessary,” I stated firmly.

“Must we?” He sounded like a child being coerced into spending hours at a museum, and I couldn’t help but smile at the hint of whining in his voice as I continued to

comfort him.

“I think we should give it a try.”

“And if it doesn’t work?” he inquired.

“We could... discuss me moving here or spending some nights.”

He pulled back slightly, looking elated as I conceded to his wish regarding staying in the house for some nights. I knew I could rely on Thomas to assist my mother, or I could go check on her right before coming to the house.

“You mean that?” he questioned eagerly.

“What?”

“That you would spend some nights here if we tried staying away from each other?” he clarified.

I nodded, confirming my willingness to try. He began smiling, seeming to enjoy my suggestion.

“How many days do we stay away from each other?” he asked.

“A week.”

He paled at the prospect, but we had to try something longer than just a few days.

“No,” he protested.

“Yes.”

“No!” he exclaimed.

“Reese, yes,” I insisted, hearing him sigh deeply, his expression indicating his reluctance to be apart from me for an entire week.

“I’m not sure I can do that,” he admitted.

“Reese, it has to be more than just a few days. Let’s try a week and see where it takes us,” I stated firmly, watching as he slowly and reluctantly took a few steps back.

Chapter 27

-Reese-

A whole week she wanted us to be apart. I absolutely hated the idea, but if that was what it took for her to at least spend some nights here with me, then I had to accept the offer. So I nodded slowly, seeing her give me a small smile.

“Okay, then let’s talk again in a week,” she suggested.

She was about to walk away, but I grabbed her hand, stopping her. She turned, gazing at me, confused.

“What?” she inquired.

“If I am to go a week without you, then at least let me kiss you,” I said, waiting for her consent.

She seemed a bit surprised, then pondered my suggestion. My heart beat fast in my chest, begging her not to reject me, and soon a little smile spread across her lips.

“All right, one kiss,” she conceded.

I brought her closer, placing my hands on her hips. She seemed almost a little nervous, unsure if she should do this. It was the sweetest of blushes that tainted her cheeks, and I leaned closer, halting just a moment before our lips met. Hearing her breathing change, the excitement rolling beneath her skin fueled my own desires, and

I pressed on, meeting her lips with mine in a gentle touch, only for the kiss to turn deeper and more demanding. Our mouths moved together, my tongue sliding into hers and caressing her.

She moaned against me, the sound igniting a fire within me. I grasped her tighter, pressing her to me, and her arms came around my neck as we got lost in each other. The sensation was out of this world. I couldn't remember a kiss being this good, but her taste, sounds, the feeling of her against me, it completed me, and I continued to touch her. I continued to devour her, wanting all of her.

She seemed equally desperate for me, her small nails digging into the back of my neck, pulling me closer. I reveled in the intensity of her embrace, a testament to her desire for me. I groaned in pleasure, and her panting grew louder, the kiss incredibly heated. My hands descended, squeezing her ass, and she filled them out perfectly. Pressing my leg slightly between hers, I urged her to find a rhythm to grind against me, and her hips moved subtly, her body insisting on a release that only I could bring.

"Reese," she called, her tone needy, almost sending me to my knees, but I remained standing, wanting to witness her getting lost in our embrace.

However, just as her hips began moving with more fervor, someone knocked on the door to the office, and we pulled away, realizing our positions.

"Reese?" a soft voice called, and I knew immediately who was demanding my attention.

An awkward energy enveloped us as we both acknowledged Rosa waiting on the other side. I cleared my throat.

"I'll be out in a second," I assured her.

“I want to discuss the ceremony with you,” she stated.

“Okay, I’ll meet you downstairs.”

As I heard her heels clicking against the floor, signaling her departure, I turned to Naomi. A dark energy seemed to grip her, understandable after hearing Rosa call for me. I felt the urge to comfort her, but my father’s words echoed in my mind: find a balance . I couldn’t lose myself in Naomi again when my other mate needed me.

“I’ll see you in a week,” I murmured.

“Yeah, a week,” she confirmed.

However, I didn’t leave immediately. I remained in my spot, looking at her before nodding in a determined manner, then departed. Glancing back, I saw Naomi with her arms around herself, her eyes fixed on the ground, and my heart ached at leaving her.

I closed the door behind me and made my way downstairs to find Rosa. She sat in one of the living rooms with a cup of coffee and some pictures before her, smiling at me as I approached, her mood considerably brighter than mine. Taking the empty spot beside her, I glanced at the pictures she had printed.

“What’s this?” I inquired.

“Just some setups I’ve made. I wanted your opinion on how we should manage it all. After all, there will be two packs present. It’s going to be crowded.”

I nodded in understanding, agreeing with her assessment. Indeed, accommodating two packs in one space would be challenging, but it represented a significant step forward for both parties. No more animosity between us, just peace, and I eagerly anticipated it.

“So?” she prompted.

“Um,” I began, uncertain of which one to choose. She seemed more adept at this than me, and she chuckled when she noticed my dilemma.

“You can just pick one, and we can discuss it,” she suggested.

“I want to hear your opinion first,” I insisted.

She rolled her eyes, as if she knew I was stalling, but she chose a setup and handed it to me, and I found myself already liking it.

“This one,” I said.

“No, come on, that’s just the first one!” she chuckled.

“But I like it.”

She continued to laugh, the sound bringing me solace, yet I couldn’t shake the guilt creeping in as my thoughts drifted to Naomi alone in my office because I had left her behind.

Chapter 28

-Naomi-

Watching Reese leave because he was needed with Rosa stung deeper than words could describe. I knew I had no right to feel this way. I had no right to demand he stay with me. After all, I was the one who suggested we stay away. Yet, I found myself rubbing the spot where my heart resided, feeling on the brink of breaking into pieces. How could it hurt so much?

Maybe the Moon Goddess has a cruel sense of humor , my wolf scoffed, clearly angered by the fact that Reese was needed elsewhere too.

“You’re jealous,” I whispered.

I am not!

“It’s okay. I can admit it. I’m jealous,” I whispered. “I’ve been jealous since the moment I heard someone else had claimed him.”

My wolf sighed deeply in my mind. You finally admit it , she murmured.

“Yeah, I think there’s no reason to hide it anymore.”

Maybe you’re right , she agreed, sighing once more and whimpering a little.

“You like him too,” I reminded her.

But I don't think I want to... Not if we must share him.

I could only agree with her. It was incredibly painful to share Reese with someone else when all I desired was to be the one he wanted.

"Maybe... Maybe this week will help," I suggested.

I hope you're right, because I don't know if I can bear this pain for so long. For the rest of our lives, even.

I couldn't either, and tears threatened to well up in my eyes at the thought of enduring this agony indefinitely. However, I quickly composed myself, taking a deep breath and steeling myself as I walked out of the office to resume the tasks that awaited me.

There was much to handle, but too little time to do it in. It didn't escape notice that I had been excused from my duties because Alpha Reese needed me elsewhere. I faced many stares, but thankfully, someone sought me out after dinner, joining me as I continued cleaning while others ate. I was informed I could have my meal once I finished with the room.

"Hey!" Thomas greeted, poking his head into the little game room.

"Hey," I replied, noticing he held two plates.

"I can't eat yet. I'm not done," I explained.

"I think they are being unfair, so I brought food," he stated matter-of-factly.

"Thomas," I scolded gently.

"What?" he asked innocently, shrugging, then coming over to me and placing the

plate on a round table often used for card games.

“Not hungry?” he teased, knowing full well I was.

I could smell the delicious scent of food, and my stomach growled loudly, prompting him to chuckle.

“Come on,” he urged, pulling out a chair and gesturing for me to sit.

“I-I really shouldn’t.”

“Yes, you should. You were only with Alpha Reese because that is your duty too. It’s not like you were hiding away from work. They are being unreasonable,” he reasoned.

I sighed, grateful for his support, and made my way over to where Thomas had set everything up. I sat down, and he joined me before we grabbed the utensils and started to eat.

“Thank you,” I said sincerely.

“Not needed. I’m just glad I can be of a little help,” he replied, though a mischievous smile crept onto his lips.

“What?”

“H-How is it going between you two?” he inquired, his tone suggestive.

“You mean me and the Alpha?”

“I think you knew I was referring to him,” Thomas teased, nudging my shoulder

playfully.

“It’s... complicated,” I admitted with a sigh.

“I can imagine.”

“We barely know which way is up, and we can’t seem to figure out what we really want, or what our wolves want,” I explained.

“Have they not said anything yet?”

I shook my head. “No. My wolf seems to want him, but she won’t claim him for some reason. She is quite hurt by everything.”

“You must feel exhausted too,” he observed. “It’s been a confusing time for you as well.”

“Yes, but I can’t really focus on it.”

“Why not?” he prodded gently.

“Because if I do, then I think I might burst into tears,” I admitted, feeling a lump form in my throat.

“Naomi...”

“It’s just... I never thought I would ever share a mate,” I confessed, turning to Thomas and meeting his gaze. I knew he saw the intensity in my eyes because he drew back slightly, taken aback by the raw emotion.

“How did you see it?” he whispered, his voice barely above a murmur.

“Well, I saw that he was mine,” I confessed. “It wasn’t as complicated as this. I imagined him being honest about his feelings for me and everything just... falling into place.”

“You know it isn’t always so easy between mates. You need to fight for the bond and prove why you’re worthy, or it doesn’t become this beautiful thing the older wolves speak of.”

“No, I know, but that doesn’t mean this situation isn’t extremely complicated,” I countered.

“No, of course, it is,” he agreed. “I know no one pictured this ever happening, but maybe that’s just how lucky the Alpha is.”

I shot him a glare, and he began chuckling. “What? Most male wolves would probably be jealous.”

“It’s not as glamorous as it seems. Alpha Reese is losing his mind too,” I confessed.

“He is?”

“Yeah, he seems even worse than me, but maybe that’s because he’s an Alpha,” I murmured.

“Or maybe you’re just stronger,” he pointed out.

I couldn’t help but laugh at his remark. “He is an Alpha. How am I stronger?” I asked.

Thomas shrugged, but his own words didn’t seem to amuse him, halting my chuckle.

“I think you’re much stronger than you seem.”

“Really?” I whispered, touched by his words.

He nodded. “I admire that you’ve been able to handle so much from a young age.”

I had never received praise like this before, and it deeply touched me. I began smiling, and he returned the gesture, lightening the mood with a wink.

“I’m really grateful,” I whispered.

“For someone acknowledging what you’ve done?” he inquired, sounding confused.

“No, for your support. No one else seems to want to give me any.”

“And that is their mistake,” he snapped.

I continued to smile, feeling warmed by his words.

“So, what’s going to happen between you and the Alpha?” he questioned, changing the subject.

“I don’t know. Right now, we’ve decided a little time apart might do us some good.”

“You’re not going to see each other?”

“No,” I replied, and Thomas grew quiet, which puzzled me. Then his focus shifted back to me.

“Why?” he asked.

“I think it will help.”

“This was your suggestion?” he questioned.

“Yes.”

“Wow, you must be the only one wanting to deny an Alpha,” he murmured.

“But it’s not an Alpha I want.”

Chapter 29

-Naomi-

Thanks to Thomas offering not just food, but also a helping hand, I was able to complete my task. Once everything was done, we brought the plates into the kitchen. We hadn't spoken much after eating together or while working.

I knew he pondered my strange confession, but the truth was, I wanted Reese, even if he was as far from an Alpha as someone could be. I desired the man himself, not his title. Yet, I didn't express this. I simply decided to pack up my things when I was suddenly intercepted by an older female wolf. I quickly realized who she was and bowed my head in submission.

"Luna," I murmured.

"I don't think that title befalls me anymore. Especially not with two women fighting over it," she commented.

However, I continued to look at the ground as I had been taught, feeling her scrutinizing gaze upon me. I held my breath, waiting for some verbal reprimand, as she had to deem me unworthy of her son.

"Naomi, right?" she asked.

I nodded.

“I really want to have a chance to talk to you, but it is late now. Could I get you to come find me tomorrow when you have a break and then we can have a chat?” she inquired.

I was surprised she asked me and didn’t directly demand me to come find her and talk to her. However, I quickly nodded, not wanting to anger her. As I lifted my eyes slightly, I saw her smiling, appearing pleased, not as furious as I had expected.

“You seem like a sweet wolf,” she remarked. “However, I would love to have a chance to judge your character in a one-on-one meeting.”

I gulped, my heart pounding with apprehension at what she might think of me. I dreaded the thought of her finding me displeasing or in any way unpleasant. Yet, she continued to smile at me before turning on her heel and walking away. Despite her age, she remained a strikingly beautiful wolf. We wolves aged much slower than humans.

That was strange , my wolf remarked.

“I don’t think so. I believe she’s simply a mother concerned for her son and the situation he finds himself trapped in,” I murmured.

You don’t see our mother coming after Reese , she snapped.

“Our mother is broken by her grief. She doesn’t have the capacity for something like that.”

My wolf still didn’t appreciate how the older Luna had approached us, but I didn’t sense it was out of disturbance. She had made us nervous, and now she seemed to want to assess our character as well. It left me feeling rather apprehensive, and I trembled on my way home. However, upon entering the house, I noticed something

peculiar. A pleasant scent filled the air, as if someone had decided to cook. Setting my things down and removing my jacket and shoes, I followed the scent to the most surprising sight I had ever encountered.

“Mom?” I questioned, bewildered, as I saw my mother turn, giving me a sweet smile from the kitchen where she was cooking her own dinner.

“Hey, welcome home,” she greeted.

I glanced behind me, half-expecting her to be addressing someone else, but there was no one else in the house but me.

“Um, what?” I asked, perplexed. My mother continued to smile, motioning for me to come closer.

I stared at her, baffled, but she persisted in gesturing for me to join her at the small kitchen table. Tentatively, I obeyed, and she began setting down the food. I wasn’t sure if it would be edible. When was the last time she had cooked for me? I wondered. Yet, my mother distracted me as she sat down herself, bringing food with her and starting to eat with a smile.

“Are you all right, Mom?” I questioned.

“Of course.”

As she continued to smile, a nagging thought crossed my mind—had she been replaced by aliens?

“Are you certain?” I pressed.

“Why wouldn’t I be?” she countered.

“You just seem...”

“Yes?”

“You seem... different today,” I ventured.

“Well, of course,” she said matter-of-factly.

“What?”

“My daughter has found her mate. I must be presentable for him,” she explained, her tone filled with determination.

I blinked rapidly, unsure of what she was talking about. I didn’t even know if I was mates with Reese, and more importantly, why would she feel the need to be presentable?

“Mom, what are you talking about?” I questioned, my confusion growing.

“What do you mean?”

“You’ve been bedridden for years since Dad died,” I pointed out, the weight of reality crashing back in, dispelling the happy energy that had momentarily filled the room. But none of this made any sense. “How can you suddenly sit here and... and be this person?”

“I just...”

“You what? Mom, I don’t even know what’s happening to me!” I exclaimed, frustration seeping into my words as I grappled with the surreal situation unfolding before me. My mother hung her head, her expression filled with a mix of sadness and

shame, and I couldn't bear the sight of it.

"I..." I started, but the words caught in my throat.

The room grew still, enveloped in my mother's obvious sadness, thick enough to choke on. Consumed by guilt, I averted my gaze, taking several deep breaths before mustering the courage to meet my mother's eyes once more.

"Mom," I called, reaching for her hand, and she slowly turned to me. "Thank you for the food."

She offered me a small smile, gradually returning to the present moment.

"I'm just confused," I whispered.

"Why? A bond is a beautiful thing."

"Maybe for you it was, because it was simple, but I don't even know if what I have is a bond or... a failure," I admitted.

"A failure?" Her brow furrowed in confusion.

"I'm not his only mate," I revealed, feeling a knot form in my stomach.

My mother leaned her head to the side, her expression a mix of concern and curiosity.

"It's a long and complicated story," I sighed, leaning back slightly, my appetite waning.

"Maybe invite him over?" she suggested.

“What?” I exclaimed.

“Invite him over.”

“Mom, he’s the Alpha. I can’t just invite him over to...” I trailed off, gesturing vaguely around the modest surroundings of our home.

My mother glanced around, seemingly oblivious to the same imperfections I noticed. When our eyes met, she persisted.

“Invite him,” she urged.

“It’s a nice thought, Mom, but I can’t,” I groaned.

Pushing up from my seat, I began to walk away, but I couldn’t help glancing back to see my mother watching me, a flicker of familiarity in her eyes.

“Thank you again for the food. It’s nice to see you up,” I said, attempting to offer some semblance of gratitude, noticing a genuine smile spread across her lips.

Chapter 30

-Naomi-

The morning was as bewildering as the previous evening, with my mother rising early to prepare breakfast. Reluctantly, I ate the food, finding it edible albeit with a peculiar taste. Despite my reservations, my mother remained in high spirits, insisting that I should invite my mate over, as if it were a simple task. I offered a feeble excuse in the hope of appeasing her before hastily departing for the pack house. My mission: to fulfill my promise to Reese's mother and engage in a conversation with her.

As I entered the pack house, the atmosphere remained subdued. Barely having stowed my belongings in the kitchen, I was greeted by the presence of the older Luna. She offered me a small smile, which I returned, albeit with a touch of nervousness.

Be prepared, my wolf warned as I followed the Luna to the living room.

It's going to be all right. She is just a mother concerned for her son's well-being, I reassured myself, though my wolf remained skeptical.

I hoped my assessment was correct. Despite having relinquished much of her authority to her son, the former Luna still exuded power. I couldn't help but feel inadequate as I sat before her, my hands trembling, struggling to maintain eye contact.

"So, Naomi," she began.

I gulped nervously. “Yes?”

“This is an interesting situation, don’t you think?”

“I...”

I observed as she poured herself some coffee, already having prepared breakfast for herself. I was taken aback when she offered me something to eat as well. Politely declining, I watched as she took a sip of her coffee.

“You and Reese,” she murmured, stirring her drink.

“Um, it’s not really decided yet what we are,” I whispered.

“But you want to be his mate?” Her gaze bore into mine, causing a slight sweat to break out on my forehead.

“I... don’t know.”

“Let’s be honest with each other, Naomi. Don’t you think we should?” she inquired, her tone gentle yet insistent.

I nodded.

“Then tell me how you really feel. I want to understand your perspective as well.”

“I... do... did want him,” I admitted, my fingers fidgeting with the sleeve of my black dress.

“Did?” Her voice was filled with curiosity.

I hesitated before continuing, my voice barely above a whisper, “He hasn’t been very nice to me lately, and he... threw me in jail.”

“You must understand my son is under a lot of pressure. He hadn’t expected there to be two mates,” she explained, her tone softening with empathy.

“I hadn’t either,” I defended, my words slipping out before I could stop them.

I glanced away, fearing I had overstepped, but then I noticed her setting her mug down. Carefully meeting her gaze again, I saw a small smile on her lips.

“No, you’re correct. You must feel a lot of pressure too, and I’m unsure what exactly is going on here, why this is so complicated for you two, but I truly do hope that you have nothing to do with it.”

Told you she would accuse us! my wolf snapped within me.

Straightening up, I made myself appear larger. “I can assure you that I have nothing to do with it. I’m just a lower-ranking wolf in this pack, but I would never hurt Reese. I would never do anything to harm him because...” I trailed off, the words catching in my throat, but the former Luna seemed to understand my unspoken sentiments, and I lowered my gaze.

“How long have you had these feelings for him?” she inquired.

“I don’t—”

“No, lies, remember?” she cut in.

I sighed. “For as long as I can remember.”

“Your entire life?” she asked.

“Most of it,” I admitted.

“Why?”

“He seems... different,” I replied.

“Different?”

“I can’t explain it. I just felt connected to him. He seemed a bit lonely, like myself,” I admitted.

“Lonely?” his mother mused.

“Maybe searching for something, something he couldn’t quite find here.”

“Had you hoped you might be what he could find?” she asked.

I blushed a little, embarrassed, and she chuckled.

“I see,” she replied.

“It doesn’t matter. I always knew it wouldn’t come to be,” I sighed.

“But you say you have felt connected to him all your life.”

“It’s not... It’s just a feeling,” I whispered.

“Yes, so you say,” she murmured, and I glanced at her, seeing the way she seemed to contemplate what I had informed her. Feeling unsure of what to make of it, I settled

for watching her.

“I heard that Reese needed you in the meeting just to focus on work,” she said.

“Um...”

“Means your connection is growing.”

“I, well, I don’t know,” I replied. “I guess it is.”

“Then you should work on that. You’re free from your duties today. Go find him,” she replied.

I stared at her, shocked, remaining in my seat. “Sorry?”

“I said you’re free from work today. Permission from me. Go find Reese. He would enjoy having you bring him breakfast,” she said.

“I-I’m sure he is sleeping.”

“In another room than Rosa, yes,” she replied.

“What?”

“I noticed it late last night,” she explained. “He went to sleep somewhere else, which is not a good indication, but it could merely be because his new bond is battling with the old one.”

“But isn’t that bad for him and Rosa?”

“If you are both meant to be Reese’s mate, it’s going to take some adjustments, but if

you aren't willing to fight for it, then it was never meant to be," she explained.

I looked a little surprised at her. "You think it could still not work out for them?" I couldn't ignore the almost hopeful plea in my voice.

The older Luna noticed, smiling, and I looked away, embarrassed.

"The bond is a magical thing, but it won't fix all your problems. You need to work for it, show why you are deserving of it," she revealed.

"I see."

"I know my son and you didn't have a great start, but if you are mates, then I think it's worth fighting for. You might not be so lucky to find a second chance."

"But I'm not a Luna."

"Some people don't have to be," she said. "Sometimes the love aspect is enough. Maybe you even have enough fire to challenge Reese."

"I don't," I stated.

"Don't say that yet, not until you have given it a chance."

"A chance?" I echoed.

"You seem ready to bolt," she admitted, and I felt my cheeks heat again.

"I just don't know if... if we should even continue it."

"Does Reese want to?"

“He seemed very upset whenever I brought up a rejection,” I explained.

“Then don’t do it,” she insisted. “At least not yet.”

“What am I waiting for?”

“The mate bond can move mountains. It’s worth fighting for, trust me. So give it more than a few days. Try to continue to see where it might take you, spend some time alone. You might be surprised by it.”

“We agreed to stay away from each other for a week,” I said.

“What a horrible idea!” she exclaimed, shocking me.

“No, that was our agreement, and then I would maybe stay here for a night or two.”

“I urge you, Naomi, not to follow through with that plan. It won’t help you.”

“How can you be certain?” I inquired, yet she smiled mysteriously.

“Go see him,” she persisted, making me waver in my decision.

Chapter 31

-Reese-

As soon as I put some distance between me and Rosa, I began to feel a little better, and last night, while she slept, I managed to find an unoccupied room to sleep in. But by the time I finally drifted off, it was very late.

A sudden knock startled me awake, and in my daze, I reached out, momentarily expecting Rosa beside me. My disappointment was obvious when I found the space empty, but the knocking persisted. With a groan, I sat up, rubbing my eyes, feeling the exhaustion weighing heavily on me, along with a persistent inner turmoil.

With each subsequent knock, my irritation grew. I tossed aside the covers, clad only in my underwear, and flung open the door in frustration, not bothering to dress. To my surprise, it was Naomi standing on the other side.

She let out a startled gasp, quickly averting her eyes and holding up a tray as if to shield herself from my half-naked state. I couldn't decide if I appreciated her gesture or not. Did I want Naomi to see me like this? Arms crossed, I leaned against the doorframe, noticing the deepening blush on her cheeks.

"I was instructed to bring you some food," she murmured.

"By whom?" I inquired.

"Your mother. She wished to speak with me this morning."

“About what?”

“Our connection,” she whispered.

“What did you tell her?” I asked.

“It’s complicated.”

I couldn’t argue with that assessment. It was indeed complicated. “And so she sent you to find me?”

“She said I’m relieved of all duties today,” Naomi explained.

“Why?” I inquired.

“To... be with you.” She slowly raised her gaze to meet mine. My heart quickened as I gazed into her eyes, a mix of fear and curiosity reflected in them.

“I see. I thought we agreed to take a break for a week,” I murmured.

“She believes we should continue exploring our connection.”

“Does this mean you’ll stop suggesting we reject each other or maintain our distance?” I pressed.

She shrugged.

“I’m not going to speak those words or distance myself from you,” I declared.

“It might bring you freedom,” she suggested.

“Perhaps I don’t desire freedom,” I admitted, noting the shock on her face. Quickly, I shook my head, unwilling to delve into such discussions while half-dressed.

“Come in,” I instructed instead.

She appeared somewhat apprehensive, yet obediently followed my instructions into the room. As I closed the door behind her, my eyes lingered on her figure as she made her way to the small coffee table in front of the TV. Dressed in dark attire from head to toe, she seemed to blend into the background, but a shift occurred within me. The dress, though modest in length, hugged her curves enticingly, igniting a desire to reach out and touch her. My hands tingled with need as I moved closer, feeling the pull intensify with each step.

Just as she set the tray down, she turned abruptly, nearly colliding with me, emitting a startled squeal upon realizing my presence.

“How did you manage that?” she whispered, casting a glance to where I had been moments before.

I reached out, grazing her soft braid with my fingertips, her intoxicating scent filling the confined space. Almost instinctively, I leaned in, my lips hovering tantalizingly close to hers, but she turned her head away. A low growl escaped me, not meaning it to, but I struggled to control myself around Naomi. This wasn’t my usual behavior, and as I held her close, I realized the significance of the gesture, despite having touched her before.

“You leave me dizzy,” I confessed, watching as she slowly turned to meet my gaze.

Stepping back to create some distance between us, I sighed.

“Well, I suppose you’re mine for the day,” I stated, walking away to get dressed.

“The entire day?” she questioned.

“My mother wouldn’t have relieved you of your duties otherwise.”

“But you have work,” she pointed out.

“Then I suppose you’re joining me,” I replied.

“Where to?” she inquired, a hint of fear creeping into her voice.

“Everywhere I go today. It’s essential to check on the pack and the territory for any issues,” I explained.

“And I’m expected to accompany you?”

“Yes, as the other Luna, understanding pack management is crucial,” I affirmed.

“But I’m not trained for this,” she protested.

“Then consider today the beginning of your training,” I declared.

Chapter 32

-Naomi-

I struggled to grasp Reese's purpose as he walked alongside his father, his Beta, and a group of seasoned fighters. Keeping to the back, I hugged my jacket tightly, trailing behind as we patrolled the perimeter of the territory. It appeared they were scouting for any signs of intruding wolves and ensuring the border guards were positioned correctly, yet I couldn't quite discern why it necessitated their physical presence.

Nevertheless, I remained silent, merely shadowing the group. My attention often drifted to Reese, observing his earnest dedication to his responsibilities. I knew it weighed heavily on him, as he had never felt entirely suited for the role. However, it seemed he had undergone a change in perspective. Despite this, I couldn't help but feel a twinge of annoyance, knowing the reason behind his transformation wasn't our newfound status as mates.

As we retraced our steps back to the starting point, where a few cars were parked, Reese slowed his pace, breaking away from the group and falling into step beside me.

"Are you okay?" he asked, concern lacing his voice.

"Yeah, just... trying not to be in the way," I replied, my words tinged with uncertainty.

"My mate would usually walk beside me up front," he explained.

“I... I didn’t know that,” I murmured. “But we still don’t know—”

“I think we can stop pretending. Even though our wolves haven’t vocalized it, I’m certain I wouldn’t feel this way without a bond between us.”

“Maybe it’s a weaker connection.”

“Weak isn’t quite how I’d describe it, but we can arrange that run together to confirm if our wolves align,” he suggested.

I shook my head.

“Why not? We might as well get it over with.”

“Because I... I don’t know if I can,” I confessed.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“The pack doctor thought all I needed was a run to appease my wolf, but she... she didn’t want to emerge,” I admitted, feeling a knot of nerves forming in my stomach.

“What?” he exclaimed, taken aback.

“Yeah, she refused to take control.”

I glanced up at him, noticing the intensity of his scrutiny as he assessed me, undoubtedly trying to determine if I was flawed. It made me uneasy, and I averted my gaze.

“This hasn’t happened before,” I added quickly. “I’m usually perfectly fine.”

“Do you think I’m judging you for it?”

“I should be able to change,” I whispered, my voice barely audible.

“I’m concerned. If she refuses to emerge, there must be an underlying issue,” Reese admitted. “Have you considered going back for a checkup?”

“No, but I suspect it’s related to everything that’s been happening,” I replied. “I doubt there’s much she can do about it.”

“Then perhaps we should give it a shot,” he suggested. “Maybe she needs a stronger incentive to come forward.”

“Incentive? She’s quite resentful about the whole situation. I’m not sure she would want to cooperate,” I explained.

“Is she angry with me?” Reese asked, his tone tinged with apprehension.

I hesitated, reluctant to reveal the truth.

“She is,” he concluded from my silence.

“She can be quite stubborn,” I admitted, glancing at the ground.

Hey! my wolf protested.

“Regardless, I believe we should try,” he persisted.

“You know what can happen when wolves run together, especially mates. It unleashes our primal instincts,” I reminded him, turning to face him. However, I was taken aback to see a faint glow in his eyes, a sign of his wolf’s presence.

“I-I don’t think I want to risk us mating in the forest,” I clarified hastily.

Reese reached for my arm, his touch gentle but firm, anchoring me in place as the rest of the group gradually disappeared.

“It might bring clarity to our situation,” he murmured softly, lowering his arm.

“What?”

“Mating. It might help us sort things out,” he elaborated.

I stared at him, stunned, realizing the seriousness of his suggestion, and shook my head.

“Could you really do that to Rosa?” I questioned.

He groaned, running a hand through his hair before meeting my gaze.

“The thing is, if you’re both my mates, I’ll have to... find a balance, show affection to both of you.”

“Share your affection,” I muttered sarcastically, crossing my arms, discomfort creeping in at the thought of him being with another woman.

“I know it sounds complicated. I didn’t ask for this!” he hissed.

“I’m well aware, but that doesn’t mean I’m comfortable with the idea of sharing you, waiting for you to divide your time between us,” I retorted.

“Naomi...”

“That’s why I keep suggesting we break the bond!”

“I can’t,” he insisted. “I don’t seem to want to. Just the thought of it infuriates me.”

“But I don’t think I can bear being touched by you, knowing where your hands have been before,” I confessed, my voice faltering. “Could you stand the thought of me touching you, knowing another man had held me, kissed me, seen me na—”

A low growl rumbled from Reese before his hand closed around my throat, pressing me against a tree, his eyes gleaming with a powerful yellow hue. My heart raced in my chest, but it wasn’t fear that coursed through me. It was something else entirely—a surge of excitement.

Chapter 33

-Reese-

I empathized with Naomi's concerns, especially as she vividly depicted someone else being with her before me. The possessive feelings surged within me, and I couldn't quell the urge to dominate her. Pressing her firmly against the tree, I felt her pulse quicken beneath my hand. Despite her vulnerability, my desire intensified, fueled by the intoxicating scent of her arousal.

"Don't toy with my instincts, little wolf," I warned, my voice low and intense. "You won't like the consequences if you do."

"I-I was just making a point," she defended, her eyes flashing with defiance.

"It doesn't matter. Just the thought of it makes me want to claim you against this tree before the others find us," I growled.

Her gaze mirrored a faint yellow hue, indicating her wolf's interest in the primal encounter as well. Her scent grew even sweeter, tempting and enticing. Without thinking, I sank to my knees, my hand sliding beneath her dress. She quickly seized my wrists, a mixture of surprise and apprehension in her eyes.

"Not here!" she hissed urgently.

"So, if I take you somewhere private, I can have you?" I pressed, my voice laced with desire.

Her eyes widened, but before she could respond, voices called my name. I knew our companions would soon return, interrupting our forbidden moment. Reluctantly, I tore my gaze away from her, the ache between her legs calling to me. Rising to my feet, I reached out, placing my hands on her neck.

“Say you want me too,” I urged, my voice pleading.

She blinked rapidly, hesitation evident in her expression.

“Just say it, and I’ll show you how deep our connection truly is,” I insisted.

“You’re the one who accused me of witchcraft!”

“I admit my mistake. But I can’t deny the power of this attraction,” I confessed. “I don’t care if our wolves choose to mate. I believe they should, and so should we.”

She continued blinking rapidly, but the crunching sound drew closer. I turned, noticing the group watching us with knowing smiles, understanding why we had lingered behind. Naomi averted her gaze, her cheeks flushing beneath my touch.

“Don’t worry, we didn’t get lost,” I reassured them, eliciting laughter as they walked away once more.

Turning to Naomi, I found her still avoiding my gaze. Gently, I took her hand, silently urging her to accompany me. Though she didn’t resist, I knew I needed an answer from her before proceeding. I wouldn’t push further until she agreed.

We carried on with our duties, checking in with the pack and offering assistance to those in need. The tasks flowed smoothly, granting me a deeper understanding of what it meant to be an Alpha. While I recognized there was still much to learn, I began to feel more empowered and suited to the role.

Upon returning to the house, someone sought me out, prompting me to release Naomi's hand, which I had been holding throughout. Rosa approached, her heels clicking against the floor. Yet, the warm sensation she once stirred within me seemed absent. Now, there was only a sense of detachment. Though I could acknowledge her beauty, it didn't evoke the same pull as before. Naomi, on the other hand, held an inexplicable allure that transcended physical appearance.

"I see you're hard at work," Rosa remarked, her gaze briefly flickering toward Naomi.

I glanced at Naomi, but she remained silent, avoiding our gazes. With a quiet excuse, she slipped away, leaving me with an overwhelming urge to follow her. However, my father's words echoed in my mind once more. I needed to learn to balance my time. Rosa reached for my hand, pulling my attention back to her.

"I feel like we're already spending so little time together," she said softly.

"I'm sorry, I have a lot to catch up on," I responded, a pang of guilt tugging at me.

"No, I understand. And with a second mate, it doesn't make it any easier," she acknowledged, surprising me with her openness. She had struggled with this in the beginning, but now she seemed remarkably accepting.

"It doesn't, no."

"And I found you out of bed this morning," she continued, her tone gentle.

"Sorry about that. I couldn't sleep," I admitted, feeling a flush of embarrassment.

"You seem to be having a lot of restless nights lately."

“Yeah, it’s... it’s difficult.”

She stepped closer, wrapping her arms around my neck, but her touch felt cold to me now. Why was this happening? Should Naomi and my bond really overshadow what was happening between Rosa and me?

“Come to bed later,” she urged softly.

“I... I don’t know,” I hesitated, torn between conflicting emotions.

“Please, I need you too,” she pleaded, leaning in to softly kiss me.

I shivered slightly against her, not because the kiss was unpleasant, but because I felt overwhelmed with frustration, unsure of which path to choose. Even my wolf seemed to urge me to seek out Naomi. However, Rosa pulled back, her eyes searching mine.

“Please,” she whispered, her vulnerability tugging at my heartstrings.

I sighed, feeling torn. “All right, I’ll stay in bed tonight.” I relented, knowing I had to alleviate her worry, even though it meant sacrificing my own desires.

Chapter 34

-Naomi-

Seeing Rosa approach Reese, flaunting her power over him, left me feeling unworthy and hurt. She seemed absolutely perfect, and despite being mates with Reese, I couldn't help but feel inadequate compared to her. I had to escape from that situation, so I left the house, seeking solace in my own bed. It reminded me too much of my mother, who had also retreated to find some semblance of peace amidst her struggles.

The next day, I returned to the house hoping to follow my usual routine. Thomas found me as I cleaned up the game room, which had been left in disarray by yesterday's occupants. He brought a simple breakfast, and we settled on some high stools, surveying the mess I still needed to tackle.

"Sometimes I wonder if they ever appreciate how the rooms stay so clean," he teased, eliciting a chuckle from me.

"I think they believe in housekeeping fairies," I replied with a smile.

We shared a laugh, enjoying the well-made breakfast sandwiches together.

"So, I heard you spent the day with the Alpha yesterday," Thomas commented, and I sighed.

"Most of it. Then Rosa showed up, and he had to attend to her," I explained.

“You sound quite bitter,” he teased gently, earning a sad smile from me.

“I can’t measure up to him, Thomas. Even though we’re mates, I’ll always feel lacking.”

“I bet you’re not the first to feel that way,” he mused.

I looked at him, puzzled by his statement.

“People from different social statuses have mated before, and they likely harbored similar thoughts,” he clarified.

“Maybe.”

“But then again, I wouldn’t be too upset if you decided to call it quits,” he admitted sheepishly.

His honesty made me smile, and I turned to him, knowing his feelings for me. We would make a good match, our statuses aligning, and I liked Thomas. However, as I imagined a future with him, the vision seemed dull, lacking in passion and significance.

“I’m still trying to figure it all out,” I explained.

“No, I understand. I’m just saying.”

I nodded, reaching out to touch his free hand. He squeezed mine before hopping off his chair, shrugging slightly.

“Anyway, I have my own duties. Do you need any help here?” he inquired.

“No, I think I can manage,” I assured him.

He smiled at me before walking away. I finished the last of my food and then proceeded to clean up the mess in front of me. Returning to my old routine brought a sense of calm, without any unexpected disruptions. However, as I finished, I entered the kitchen to assist with breakfast for the rest of the pack. Unfortunately, I arrived too late to help prepare the food, so I settled for washing up. Two female wolves passed by, their voices low, but I caught their conversation clearly.

“Have you seen Alpha Reese?” one of them inquired.

“Yeah, he seems to be completely deteriorating,” the other replied.

I stared after them, perplexed by their words. He seemed fine yesterday. Why was he suddenly looking so bad that he appeared to be ‘deteriorating’, as they had put it? Intrigued by the thought, I decided to investigate further after I had finished cleaning up. I made my way to the next floor, noticing that the office door was wide open, indicating that no one was inside. Continuing toward Reese’s bedroom, I hesitated, fearing Rosa might be there.

Stopping in the hallway, I turned around, only to let out a little scream as I collided with a solid body. Stumbling back, I looked up into eyes that seemed lost and desperate.

“R-Reese,” I stammered.

As I took another step back, I could see him clearly. While his clothes appeared perfectly fine, clinging to his powerful frame, it was the expression on his face that betrayed his true state. Something seemed to have drained the life out of him overnight.

“I... just came up to rest a little,” he whispered, his voice as broken as he looked.

“Um, I see,” I responded, unsure of how to react to his sudden appearance and obvious distress.

He kept his gaze fixed on me as I lingered near the threshold of his bedroom. I took a step aside, assuming that was his silent request. Instead, he continued to watch me, his eyes strangely devoid of emotion.

“Reese, are you okay?” I asked, concern evident in my voice.

“I don’t want to go in there,” he confessed.

“Then why not choose the other room you slept in?”

He glanced toward the room he had occupied earlier when I brought him breakfast. With a nod that seemed almost robotic, he stumbled away, his hand finding support against the wall. I told myself I should return to my tasks, but it didn’t feel right to leave Reese in this state. I needed to uncover what had suddenly afflicted him.

I trailed behind him as he entered the room, leaving the door slightly ajar. Watching him collapse onto the bed, his groans hinting at pain, I hesitated in the doorway, unsure of my next move.

“Can... I bring you something?” I offered tentatively.

He patted the empty space beside him, a gesture I couldn’t quite decipher.

“Thirsty?” I ventured, seeking clarification.

“Here,” he murmured, patting the spot once more.

Approaching cautiously, I closed the door partially before joining him.

“Sit,” he commanded, his voice soft yet authoritative.

Complying instinctively, I perched on the edge of the bed, surprised by his vulnerability. As he inched closer, seeking solace, I found myself enveloped in his embrace. His head rested in my lap, his arms encircling me, and he nuzzled into my side.

“Um,” I began, but he let out a groan, signaling for silence.

Stunned into stillness, I sat there with him, feeling the tension slowly ebb from his body. A sense of tranquility enveloped him, and unsure of what else to do, I gingerly reached out, running my fingers through his hair. The sound of relief that escaped him tugged at my heart, as if my touch was the only balm for his agony. He trembled beneath my touch before gradually relaxing, exhaling a sigh of calm.

“Reese?” I whispered softly.

“Shh.”

Nodding in understanding, I continued to offer him comfort. I noticed that whenever I paused, he would reach for my hand, silently urging me to continue stroking him. So, I sat there for almost half an hour, gently petting him, until his breathing gradually evened out and he began to drift off to sleep. Thinking it was time for me to leave, I began to withdraw, but his arms tightened around me, pulling me closer.

“Reese, I have my duties today,” I reminded him, attempting to gently extricate myself from his grasp.

He shook his head against me, his hold becoming firmer. Despite my efforts to free

myself, I found myself ensnared by his strength.

“Really, Reese, the others will be furious,” I insisted, but he remained resolute, drawing me into bed and covering us both with the blanket. His large Alpha frame enveloped me, his face nestled in the crook of my neck as he inhaled deeply, as if savoring my scent. Though I relished the sensation of being close to him, I knew I couldn’t linger indefinitely.

“Reese, I need to go,” I murmured, attempting to shift his weight off me.

He growled in protest, pressing all his weight onto me. Though it felt somewhat suffocating, I didn’t entirely mind. He seized my arms, urging me to wrap them around him so that I could continue running my hands through his hair. Despite knowing I shouldn’t indulge, I couldn’t resist the temptation and began to caress his body once more. He released a long, shaky exhale, gradually relaxing on top of me.

“Why are you feeling so bad today?” I inquired softly, concerned for his well-being.

He shook his head against me, unwilling to speak.

“Reese?”

“Just stay,” he murmured, his voice laden with vulnerability.

“I don’t think I can leave with you on top of me,” I teased lightly, attempting to lighten the mood.

He groaned softly, unable to summon a laugh at that moment.

“Are you hurt?” I pressed further.

“Not physically.”

“Then that’s a relief,” I sighed softly.

“Just don’t go anywhere,” he pleaded, his grip tightening ever so slightly.

Chapter 35

-Reese-

I couldn't comprehend why this had occurred. A night with Rosa had never unfolded like this. Not only did we attempt to share a bed, but we also tried to mate, yet I couldn't reach climax. Something frustratingly held me back, and each attempt at mating only exacerbated the situation. It left an obvious tension in the room, rendering sleep impossible. It felt as though I belonged elsewhere. Despite feeling drained the next day, simply being in bed with Naomi provided solace. No food, water, or space seemed to offer relief except for her presence. I couldn't bear the thought of her leaving, fearing I would unravel without her.

Naomi seemed to heed my unspoken plea, falling silent herself and offering only the soothing touch of her hand. In her presence, I experienced a sense of calm I had never known before. As I teetered between sleep and wakefulness, I gradually became aware of the warmth beneath me. Naomi's scent enveloped me, offering comfort. I ran my hands down her body, nuzzling her neck and planting kisses on her skin.

"Reese," she breathed, her voice filled with concern.

"You feel amazing," I murmured, unable to resist the urge to express my admiration.

"Why do you feel so good? You even make me feel better."

"What happened to you?" she inquired, attempting to divert my attention. However, I continued my descent, trailing kisses along her collarbone, eager to explore further.

Sensing my intentions, Naomi reached out, cupping my cheeks and drawing my gaze to hers.

“Reese, you seemed unwell,” she observed. “What happened?”

Her concern touched me deeply, prompting me to respond, “I... I’m not entirely sure.”

“What do you mean?” she questioned.

“Rosa... she wanted my attention for the night,” I confessed, sensing the anger simmering in Naomi’s gaze before she averted her eyes.

“I see,” she responded quietly.

“I tried to give it to her, but it left us both feeling awful,” I admitted with a groan, resting my forehead against her chest and inhaling her scent deeply. “But you... you make me feel so good.”

“Yet, you can’t simply give all your attention to me. We both know that,” she countered softly.

“But I want to.”

“What?”

“I want to give you all my attention. You smell fantastic, feel incredible, and I love how caring and wonderful you are,” I confessed, my words pouring out in a torrent.

“Reese, I don’t think you know what you’re saying,” she chuckled softly, her fingers gently threading through my hair.

“Maybe not, but I’m not lying. You truly do make me feel better,” I acknowledged, pulling her close and reveling in her warmth.

She reached for me again, her touch soothing and comforting.

“Stay with me tonight,” I pleaded.

“What?”

“I want us to spend the night together, sleep in the same bed, just be close,” I confessed.

“Reese, I don’t think—” she began, but I interrupted her.

“Rosa had me last night. It’s only fair you have me tonight,” I asserted, meeting her gaze with determination. “Unless... Unless you don’t want me.”

I felt exposed, vulnerable, and uncomfortably weak, but the desperation for Naomi’s presence, even her touch, outweighed any discomfort. If she chose to reject me, I would have to accept it, but the thought left me feeling hollow.

“I... don’t know. My mom needs me,” she explained, her voice tinged with uncertainty.

“Then I’ll come to your house,” I declared.

Her eyes widened, almost fearful, and she began shaking her head in protest.

“Yes, either you come here or I go there,” I insisted firmly.

She sighed, letting her head fall as she contemplated the idea.

“My house isn’t really—”

“I don’t care,” I interrupted, determined to show her my unwavering resolve.

Her gaze met mine, and as she searched my eyes for answers, I could sense her slowly lowering her guard.

“Very well, but then you need to let me go now. I have duties,” she insisted.

Reluctantly, I acknowledged the necessity of her leaving. Though she felt too good beneath me, as if she belonged there, I knew I couldn’t keep her with me.

“Okay,” I conceded, lifting myself so she could slide away from beneath me.

She stood up, turning to look at me again, her expression tinged with nervousness as I settled back onto the bed.

“Come find me when you’re done,” I instructed.

“You’ll be in the office?”

“I don’t know. I feel completely drained,” I admitted, though being with Naomi had restored a bit of my strength.

“I’ll come search for you,” she agreed.

I smiled as I watched her leave, suddenly feeling much better at the thought of spending the entire night with her. However, I couldn’t shake the need to figure out what was happening to me. Was my wolf suddenly changing his mind regarding mates?

I was roused from my slumber late in the day by a gentle shaking. Blinking in confusion, I realized that the day had slipped away while I slept. Naomi looked down at me with a concerned expression.

“I was worried I wouldn’t be able to wake you,” she admitted.

I sat up, still feeling slightly groggy.

“Do you want to pack some stuff?” she asked.

“Pack?”

“You said you wanted to be at my house,” she reminded me.

“Right, yes, I still want to do that,” I assured her, rising from the bed and feeling much better. “Let’s meet downstairs.”

She nodded, and I headed to grab some essentials. As I entered my bedroom, I found Rosa sitting on the bed, absorbed in her phone. A smile brightened her face when she noticed me.

“Hey,” she greeted.

“Hey, listen,” I began, bracing myself for her reaction.

She straightened up, her expression turning serious. “What?”

“I need to go be with Naomi for the night,” I stated plainly.

Her complexion paled, and I understood the weight of my words. It was a difficult decision, but one I had to make.

“She deserves to have me this time,” I explained, trying to convey the necessity of my choice.

“I see,” she replied, her tone tinged with disappointment.

“Rosa, I know this is complicated, but I need to divide my time,” I continued, reaching out to her.

“You seem to have spent extra on her,” she accused, her arms crossing defensively.

“I’m trying to figure out what’s happening between us.”

She looked upset, her expression reflecting the turmoil of emotions swirling within her. I drew closer, gently kissing her cheek.

“I still love you,” I confessed, feeling her soften against me. “I just need to do this.”

She turned to me, her gaze filled with a mixture of pain and longing. But even as she reached for me, planting a kiss on my lips, I remained resolute in my decision. Pulling away gently, I grabbed a small bag to pack some extra clothes and a toothbrush. Kissing her on the top of her head once more, I bid her goodnight and made my way downstairs, where Naomi awaited with a sweet smile.

“Lead the way,” I said to her.

“You’re still sure?” she asked, a hint of uncertainty in her voice.

“I’m certain,” I affirmed.

Chapter 36

-Naomi-

B ringing Reese to my house felt incredibly overwhelming, but as we stepped inside, the soft hum of activity greeted us.

“Um, there’s something I didn’t tell you,” I confessed.

He looked at me, puzzled.

“A few days ago, I found my mother in the kitchen, cooking,” I explained.

“And?” he prompted.

“She’s usually bedridden, but ever since she caught wind of you and me... well, after she sensed your scent on me, she’s been different, and I don’t know why,” I admitted, noticing the perplexed expression on his face. Before he could ask any questions, my mother appeared.

“Oh, you’re here!” she exclaimed.

Approaching us, she didn’t reach for Reese’s hand, leaving the Alpha to initiate contact. To my surprise, Reese extended his hand, and my mother shook it.

“Claire,” she introduced herself.

“I know, I remember you and your mate,” he replied.

My mother seemed to swell with pride before ushering us along.

“I have food for you two,” she revealed.

“But you didn’t know I was bringing Reese,” I pointed out.

“I made extra in hopes you would.”

I rolled my eyes slightly, but Reese appeared content as he set his bag down and headed straight for the small table. Watching my mother heap a plate with food for him, I felt a sense of serenity wash over me, as if a dream were coming true. When I lingered in the doorway, my mother gestured for me to join them. I sat down beside Reese, and my mother joined us, diving into conversation with a newfound vigor. She spoke freely, about everything and nothing. She even bombarded Reese with questions, though he barely had a chance to speak. It was as if all those years of her silence were melting away as she rediscovered herself. I wasn’t sure why my bond with Reese seemed to lift her spirits, but I wasn’t complaining.

After dinner, she volunteered to help clean up, allowing me to show Reese around. Though we lacked a spare room, I was certain Reese intended to share a bed with me. Nerves fluttered in my stomach as I opened the door to reveal our humble accommodations. Reese set his bag down again, but as I began explaining the layout, he suddenly pulled me into his embrace, spinning me around.

“Kiss me,” he whispered huskily, kicking the door shut with his foot.

“W-What?” I stammered.

“Kiss me. Right now, little mate. Show me you want me too.”

My cheeks flushed, his flirtatious tone sending a jolt of nervous excitement through me. However, my wolf seemed to hear his command, seizing control and propelling me forward. Our lips met in a tender kiss, which Reese swiftly deepened, his tongue intertwining with mine. I moaned into the kiss as he lifted me off the ground, carrying me over to the bed. Settling me down gently, he hovered above me, teasing me with his presence, before he kissed me again, the intensity making me melt beneath him.

“Reese,” I breathed as he trailed kisses down my neck, his hands deftly working to remove my dress and reveal my covered breasts. He seemed ravenous for touch, and I yielded to his advances, allowing him to peel the garment away. His lips traced over my skin until he reached my bra. Slipping his hand underneath, he cupped both breasts, and I bit down on my lip to stifle a scream at the overwhelming sensation. It was utterly intoxicating. Every touch, every caress, sent shivers of pleasure through me. When his lips closed around my nipple, I let out a deep, guttural moan, my body igniting with warmth as desire pooled between my legs.

“I can hardly control myself around you,” he confessed, his tongue flicking over the sensitive nub.

“I...” I began, lost for words amidst the overwhelming sensations.

“I’m not usually like this, but you drive me mad with need,” he whispered huskily, moving to give the other breast the same tantalizing treatment.

“I truly believe we should see what a night together can do for us,” he murmured, sucking a little harder before releasing me.

I gasped, allowing my head to sink into the pillow.

“I think it could change everything,” he remarked.

“A-Are you certain you want everything to change?” I challenged, noticing him lift his head. Despite his attempt to meet my gaze, his attention remained fixated on my breasts.

He leisurely toyed with the sensitive skin and nipple, eliciting pleasurable shivers from me.

“I just know I can’t get enough of you,” he confessed.

“I-I’m not convinced that spending a night together is the right approach.”

“Why not? What if it brings us clarity?” he countered.

“And what if it doesn’t?” I retorted.

“Then I suppose we’ll remain in this limbo, needing each other but unable to determine if we’re truly meant to be mates.”

“I’m not sure I want that,” I admitted.

He tilted his head slightly, a furrow forming on his brow. I grabbed his hands, finding them distracting and disruptive to my thoughts.

“I don’t want to spend a night with you only for you to decide afterward that you don’t actually want me,” I explained.

“I don’t think—”

“But it’s a possibility. We’re different, our statuses are different. You seem to align better with Rosa. Perhaps your bond with her, your similarities, would overshadow everything.”

“Being with Rosa lately is draining me,” he confessed, shocking me with his candor.

“What?”

“I don’t know why, but she doesn’t evoke the same feelings in me that you do. Everything I used to enjoy with her feels... wrong. Yet, when I’m with you, I feel better,” he admitted, revealing a vulnerable side of himself. However, his gaze kept returning to my breasts, filled with hunger. “You just have to be in front of me, and I want you.”

I gulped, feeling the heat rising within me, altering my breathing and silently offering myself up. Reese leaned in once more, ready to continue, but I instinctively covered myself with my arm. He growled in frustration, clearly displeased with being interrupted. A small smile tugged at my lips as I met his gaze.

“I’m afraid to risk it,” I confessed.

“Why?” he inquired.

I sighed, tilting my head back slightly before meeting his gaze again.

“I’ve been in love with you for too long,” I whispered, watching his eyes widen in shock.

“What?”

“You didn’t notice me, but I noticed you,” I admitted, laying my heart bare. “I knew you would never see me, so I harbored my feelings in secret. Even when you disappeared for years... my feelings remained unchanged. I’ve never looked at anyone else or desired their touch.”

He seemed momentarily perplexed, then realization dawned upon him. Rising up on his hands, he hovered above me, searching my eyes for clarity.

“Have you saved yourself for me, little wolf?” he inquired, his voice deep and sultry.

“Not exactly,” I replied, noting the displeasure in his eyes. “I simply didn’t desire anyone else.”

“Isn’t that the same?”

I shook my head. “It wasn’t a deliberate choice, just a lack of attraction toward others.”

He sighed, understanding my perspective.

“I can’t risk everything only to be shattered by your decision in the end,” I explained.

“What if my decision was you?” he countered.

“You know I can’t be.”

“What if you could?”

“Reese, please...” I whispered.

“No, what if this isn’t what we think it is,” he suggested.

“What do you mean?” I inquired.

“What if my wolf made a mistake?”

“A mistake?” I echoed.

“What if it’s not about having two mates, but about finding the right one?”

“I’m not following.”

He let his head hang, as if unsure of his own words. I watched him, waiting for clarity. After a moment of contemplation, he refocused on me.

“What if Rosa is the wrong one, and you’re the one I’m meant to be with?”

Chapter 37

-Reese-

I struggled to find the right words, aware of the weight they carried. Yet, I had to convey the turmoil consuming me. With each passing moment, it felt as though I was drifting further from Rosa and gravitating toward Naomi.

“I... can’t fully grasp it myself,” I confessed.

“I don’t understand,” she murmured.

“Nor do I.”

“What do you mean by... her being the wrong one?” she asked, her words hesitant.

“I mean, perhaps my wolf made an error in judgment,” I proposed, knowing how improbable it sounded.

“That’s unheard of!”

“I’m aware, but our circumstances are far from ordinary. This shouldn’t be happening,” I acknowledged.

“No, but...”

“But?” I encouraged, sensing her hesitation.

“It just... doesn’t quite add up,” she pointed out.

“None of it does. But perhaps my wolf truly made a mistake.”

“But then what does that imply for our packs? Rejecting their Luna won’t sit well with our former adversaries.”

“I know...” I murmured.

“Reese, are you already considering... leaving her?”

“I don’t know yet,” I admitted.

She sighed, and I hung my head, overwhelmed by the turmoil within. Yet, slowly, she raised both her hands, a gesture that unveiled her beauty once more. In that moment, every fiber of my being longed for her touch, yearning to feel her close to me. Drawing me in, she kissed me tenderly, and I surrendered to the sensation, wishing for this moment to last an eternity. Despite the turmoil, I knew there had to be a solution, a path to clarity, but Naomi’s kisses clouded my thoughts, her hand teasingly inching up my T-shirt.

“What if we didn’t mate tonight?” she whispered huskily, her words stirring desire within me. “What if we approached this with caution?”

My desires surged, my body responding eagerly to the thought of her lips on me.

“Do you believe it would make a difference?” she questioned, her voice thick with anticipation.

“It’s worth exploring,” I replied, a sense of agreement passing between us in our shared silence.

Reaching for her once more, I captured her lips with mine, the kiss growing more fervent, less restrained. My longing to see her undressed consumed me, and with a swift motion, I removed her clothing, eliciting gasps and shivers of pleasure from her. Yet amidst her reactions, I sensed no fear, only desire hanging heavy in the air. When she lay before me in nothing but her panties, I took a moment to admire her, watching her resist her instinct to cover herself.

“Goddess, you’re perfect,” I whispered, my hands tracing the curves of her thighs, eagerly exploring every inch of her.

I felt her shiver beneath me, her scent enveloping me, and I treated her panties with the same urgency as her other garments before delving into her sweet pussy. A small gasp escaped her lips as she instinctively covered her mouth, but I took my time, relishing in the intoxicating aroma that coated my senses. Never before had I felt such possessiveness, not even with Rosa. Yet with Naomi, I craved to be smothered in her juices, to be marked by her in every way imaginable.

With each tender stroke of my tongue, I sought to make her climax, igniting another cry from her as she writhed against me. Holding her firmly, I lavished attention on her clit, alternating between gentle caresses and tantalizing flicks, reveling in her struggles and the undeniable pleasure I invoked. Her desperate attempts to stifle her cries only fueled my desire, driving me to push her to the brink swiftly. She rocked and whimpered, her pussy craving my touch. Guiding her through the waves, she attempted to signal for me to cease, but I persisted, briefly withdrawing before positioning her for a new angle, relishing the sight of her ass presented to me.

As she buried her face into the pillow, I seized the opportunity to bury myself in her again before she drenched me with her juices. Gently cleansing her, I indulged in the taste of her before playfully swatting her behind and then sinking my teeth into her skin. Though she whimpered at the sensation, I found myself drawn to the sight of the mark forming on her flesh, unable to resist tracing its outline with my tongue even as

she hissed from the sting.

“R-Reese,” she stammered, her voice laden with a mixture of desire and uncertainty.

“Fuck, you wear it well,” I murmured, captivated by the sight before me.

However, Naomi’s sudden change of positions drew a growl of annoyance from me. Yet, her approach, hands deftly undoing my pants, redirected my thoughts entirely.

“You’ll have to show me,” she whispered, her husky tone rendering me speechless as I allowed her to unveil me for the first time. With pure desire gleaming in her eyes, I pulled her closer, consumed by the primal need that bound us together.

“Use your tongue,” I instructed, watching a newfound determination flicker in her eyes as she tentatively complied, tracing her tongue along my length, sending shivers of pleasure coursing through me.

Her courage grew with each passing moment, her hand joining in to stroke me as she attempted to take me deeper. I groaned with desire as she enveloped me, trying to resist the urge to move against her.

My hips betrayed me, a slight movement prompting a gasp from her lips. Yet, instead of hastening her pace, she adopted a leisurely rhythm, as if relishing every moment of my cock in her mouth.

“Don’t be so slow. You’re driving me wild,” I managed to articulate through clenched teeth, struggling to maintain control.

But she paid no heed to my plea. Instead, a mischievous glint danced in her eyes as she realized the newfound power she held over me.

“Be careful, little mate, or I might not be able to hold back,” I cautioned.

Ignoring my words, she moaned around me, threatening to push me over the edge sooner than I anticipated. Her ability to torment me was unparalleled, my grip tightening on her hair as I was consumed by the desire to use her as my own little plaything. When had I become so consumed by my own desires? With Naomi, it seemed inevitable, her presence unlocking parts of me I never knew existed.

Taking control, I guided her movements, urging her faster. She complied eagerly, spurring me on until I could no longer restrain myself. With abandon, I surrendered to the pleasure, my release crashing over me in waves as I filled her throat with my cum.

She swallowed around me, though some escaped, trailing down the corner of her mouth. Finally releasing my grip, I leaned back, gasping for breath as she withdrew, her tongue darting out to clean herself.

Her actions threatened to reignite my arousal, and I knew this encounter had only strengthened the bond between us, promising even more intense experiences to come.

Chapter 38

-Naomi-

I awoke to the sensation of hands gliding over my body, and lips teasing my neck and shoulders. Though I knew who it was, the reality of having Reese in my bed filled me with a profound sense of joy. He continued to caress and tease me, revealing his desires with every touch. I couldn't help but moan in delight, stretching my body, before I found myself suddenly on my back, with him hovering over me. Smiling up at him, I saw his smile mirrored in return.

"Do you feel any different?" he inquired, his voice soft with curiosity.

"Are you searching for something specific?"

"I simply wondered if this night changed anything for you. Does our connection feel different?" he pressed, prompting me to delve into my feelings. What I discovered wasn't a weakening of our bond, but rather a surge of desire unlike anything I had felt before, directed toward something that startled me. My gaze fell upon his still-bare marking spot, and a tingling sensation spread through my canines, causing them to elongate slightly. It frightened me, this sudden emergence of such potent feelings, and I instinctively covered my mouth to hide the transformation.

"I want to say go for it," he murmured huskily, his eyes drawn to the hand concealing my mouth.

"I-I can't," I whispered.

“I know, but that doesn’t change the fact that I want it,” he confessed. “I even want to reciprocate.”

“Perhaps you were right,” I admitted, lowering my hand as I struggled to regain control. “Maybe this night did change something.”

“But then why won’t our wolves claim each other?”

I shared his bewilderment. It made no sense why our primal instincts refused to align.

“Perhaps...” I began tentatively, catching his attention. “Maybe we should run together.”

Excitement ignited in his eyes, his smile widening at the suggestion.

“I can’t guarantee she’ll join us,” I cautioned.

“No, I understand,” he replied.

“And it can’t be today.”

“Agreed. I have work to catch up on, and Rosa...”

We both groaned as Rosa’s name entered the conversation, yet Reese’s suggestion lingered in the air, prompting me to entertain the possibility that perhaps they weren’t meant to be together. It was a fleeting thought, tinged with wishful longing, imagining a reality where Reese belonged to me and me alone. With a soft touch, I ran my hands through his hair, drawing him closer until the heat between us ignited into a burning desire.

“I wish we could stay in bed all day,” he murmured, his lips trailing kisses down my

neck, his proximity sending shivers down my spine.

“We should probably get dressed and stop indulging,” I chuckled softly, though the allure of his touch made it difficult to muster the will to move.

“Just a moment,” he whispered, slipping further beneath the sheets until he disappeared from view.

A giggle escaped my lips, anticipation mingling with excitement as his ministrations sent waves of pleasure coursing through me. His skilled tongue teased and tantalized, coaxing me to the brink of ecstasy. I longed to surrender to the pleasure completely, but the knowledge that we weren’t entirely alone tempered my cries of delight.

Suddenly, he withdrew, the blanket falling to the floor as he claimed my lips in a passionate kiss. I watched as his breathing quickened, his hand finding its way to his hardened length. Before I could fully comprehend his intentions, he released his cum onto my lower stomach, his fingers trailing through it to tease my sensitive clit. With a low scream of pleasure, I surrendered to the sensations.

After a refreshing shower together, we dressed and prepared to return to the main house. My mother once again offered us food, her presence a comforting reminder of support in this newfound journey. As we walked through the forest, our glances exchanged spoke volumes, desire simmering beneath the surface. Though tempted to reach out to him again, I knew the implications of our actions. Our bond was strengthening, whether our wolves acknowledged it or not. They would have to come to terms with each other, for I couldn’t envision a future where I let Reese slip away.

As we approached the house, he suddenly reached for me, pulling me into a deep kiss that spoke volumes without a single word. As he pulled back, his hand caressed my cheek, silently conveying his emotions.

“I’ll see you soon,” he assured me.

“Yeah,” I replied, though we hadn’t established a specific time to meet.

It seemed our agreed-upon evenings had become more of a loosely defined arrangement. Despite the lack of structure, I didn’t mind. Watching him enter the house, I chose a different path inside, preferring to avoid any prying questions about our relationship. Getting straight to work, I found fewer interruptions than usual, allowing me to focus on my tasks. However, as I dusted some shelves in a small room, the sound of approaching footsteps caught my attention. Turning, I saw Rosa standing in the doorway, her smile sending a chill down my spine.

“Naomi,” she greeted, her tone tinged with an unsettling edge.

Stand up to her! If we want to prove Reese can be ours, then we need to be able to challenge her too.

I wasn’t entirely convinced. Besides, my wolf hadn’t fully claimed Reese yet.

“Can I help you with something?” I asked, as she entered the room and closed the door behind her.

“Perhaps,” she replied cryptically.

“Oh?” I prompted.

“I’m just curious about your relationship with Reese. Do you feel... different?” she inquired, her gaze probing.

“Um...” I hesitated, unsure if I wanted to divulge intimate details to her.

“Are you feeling closer? More attracted? Or is it the same?”

“I’m not entirely sure.”

“I understand what it’s like in the beginning,” she asserted.

“Oh?” I raised an eyebrow.

“Yes, all those intense feelings you have with Reese, I experienced them too,” she declared, positioning herself squarely in the center of the room.

“Well, you’re mates too.”

“And now he’s pulling away from me,” she lamented.

“I’m sure he—”

“What? Will come back to me?” she interjected sharply.

I shrugged, at a loss for words. “I can’t say.”

“Because let me tell you, if our bond breaks, then what’s to stop yours from breaking too? How do you know you’re not just another test for him?” she challenged.

“Have you... spoken to Reese?”

“Barely. He had work to do, but we’re planning to talk later,” she explained.

“Although, I have a feeling I already know what he’ll say.”

“What do you think he’ll say?” I asked, trying to maintain a composed demeanor despite my growing excitement.

“He’ll question our connection, because we both feel it. He’ll say he’s being drawn to you,” she disclosed.

I attempted to temper my enthusiasm at her revelation, but it was clear I wasn’t fooling anyone.

“Don’t get too excited,” she cautioned. “As I’ve already pointed out, you could be just another in a long line of female wolves Reese has to go through to find the right one. Although it’s unheard of.”

Her words struck a chord, causing my heart to sink. What if our bond was indeed fragile? What if Reese was somehow incapable of forming a deep connection? Despite my efforts to conceal my concern, I knew I wasn’t doing a very convincing job.

Show some backbone! my wolf urged.

“Or what if it’s the two of you?” I asked.

“Sorry?”

“Maybe it’s just your connection. Maybe it’s not me and Reese,” I suggested.

“Are you willing to bet on that?” she retorted sharply.

“Listen, I’m not here to come between you two,” I asserted.

Rosa huffed in response.

“No, truly, I’m not. I even suggested we rejected each other. I understand this is a complicated situation, but if Reese chooses me, then that’s his decision.”

“And why would he do that?”

“We might belong together,” I insisted.

“You and him? Do you really believe that?” she scoffed. “Just look at yourself.”

She gestured toward me, and I glanced down at my plain dark attire, feeling a pang of self-consciousness. Despite my doubts, Reese had looked at me with desire this morning. Yet Rosa’s words stung, and I instinctively wrapped my arms around myself.

“You’re nothing special. You’re not someone an Alpha would look twice at,” she declared.

I swallowed the hurt, knowing deep down she was right. Rosa gave me a shrug, as if to emphasize her point.

“Don’t get your hopes up, Naomi. If he leaves me, you can never be certain he won’t do the same to you,” she warned before walking away.

Chapter 39

-Reese-

Later in the day, I attempted to find Naomi, eager for a quick encounter. However, instead of crossing paths with her, I found myself packing up for the day when Rosa sought me out, a flirtatious smile playing on her lips. Even my wolf recoiled at the sight of her, a reaction I hadn't experienced before.

"Hey," she greeted, approaching me, while I leaned against the desk, subtly attempting to create distance between us.

Why was I suddenly feeling a sense of unease in her presence? Could one night with Naomi truly have such a profound effect on me? Though the answer seemed evident, I struggled to accept it.

"Hey," I replied, striving to maintain composure.

"I missed you last night," she remarked, halting in front of me and blinking sweetly.

"Um, I missed you too," I responded, unable to muster the usual ease in my tone.

Why was it suddenly difficult to fabricate a simple lie? Why did Rosa's presence evoke such discomfort?

"How was your night?" she inquired, her curiosity evident.

“Good.”

“Did you learn something?”

“Um, just that I enjoy being in her presence,” I admitted reluctantly.

“Weird answer,” she commented, her arms crossing as she scrutinized me.

Sighing, I watched her closely before gathering my thoughts.

“I don’t know how to explain it,” I confessed.

“Do you also want to be with her?” she asked.

“I...”

“Have your wolves claimed each other?”

“Not yet,” I admitted.

“Do you believe it will happen?” she challenged.

“I can’t say,” I responded.

“Don’t you still find it odd that they haven’t claimed each other?” she persisted.

“Of course I do! I even accused Naomi of witchcraft because of it!” I snapped in frustration.

“Then why are you trying so hard to be with her?”

“The witch advised us to, and I believe it was good advice. I enjoy being around Naomi. It brings back memories.”

“You spent a lot of time with her?” she inquired.

“No, but I did run into her a few times, and I knew who she was. Now I have a chance to truly get to know her, and I like it,” I confessed, aware that my words might sting, yet I didn’t care much. My mind seemed consumed with thoughts of Naomi—how she tasted, the way she cried out in pleasure whenever I touched her. I wanted more of that, and I could feel my desires for Naomi growing even in Rosa’s presence.

“Reese, we have to fix this broken mess between us,” she asserted firmly.

I sighed once more, running a hand through my hair. “Yeah, I know...”

“We’re mates too!” she reminded me.

“I know!” I exclaimed, causing her to draw back slightly. “I’m sorry, no, you’re right. We need to work on our connection too.”

“I feel like I’m losing you.”

“I know. I’m sorry. I really am. I want to work on it too,” I assured her.

“Does this mean you’re mine tonight?” she asked, a hint of hope in her voice.

I nodded. “I’m yours.”

“Then I want something else too,” she added.

“Okay.”

“Dinner, somewhere private for the two of us,” she explained.

“Now?” I questioned, slightly taken aback.

“No, maybe in a few days. I know you’re busy, and I want to continue planning our ceremony,” she clarified.

I felt a twist in my heart at the thought of our upcoming ceremony. Suddenly, the idea didn’t bring me the joy it once did, but I nodded nonetheless.

“How about this Friday?” I suggested. “It’s in four days.”

She smiled, radiating happiness, and leaned in to kiss my lips. However, the gesture felt colder than ever.

I made an effort to please Rosa throughout the evening and even in bed, though we refrained from mating. Yet, I found little enjoyment in our interactions. Despite my attempts, I couldn’t bring myself to climax, no matter how she touched me or tried to entice me. Nothing seemed to work anymore, and I knew it was frustrating for her.

As we retired to bed, my thoughts once again drifted back to Naomi, and I felt an overwhelming need to cleanse myself, as if Rosa’s touch had tainted me. Though I knew these feelings were irrational, I couldn’t shake them off. I headed for a shower, then dressed in some pants before descending downstairs. I needed to dispel this restless feeling that had settled over me.

Entering the kitchen, I noticed a solitary figure seated there, nibbling on some cake. I froze in the doorway, surprised to find Naomi still present, enjoying the dessert she had made—the only thing I had truly relished at dinner. She noticed me too, our eyes meeting as we both remained rooted to our spots, enveloped in silence.

Suddenly, she pushed her plate forward, as if offering me the food. Unable to resist, I approached and took a seat beside her. She extended her fork, and I accepted, savoring the delightful dessert she had prepared. Though she had barely touched it, I polished off the rest in mere seconds. Her smile in response brought a sense of peace amidst the chaos swirling within me.

“You haven’t gone home yet,” I pointed out, breaking the silence.

“No, I was about to, but then...”

“What happened?”

“I don’t know. I just didn’t feel like leaving,” she admitted hesitantly.

“Why?” I pressed, feeling a sudden tension coursing through my body.

“I... spoke to Rosa today,” she confessed.

“You did?” I responded, my curiosity piqued.

“Don’t worry, it wasn’t a confrontation. She simply suggested that maybe you’re a special case,” she explained.

“A special case?” I repeated, puzzled.

“That perhaps you need to go through several female wolves before you find your mate,” she elaborated.

I recoiled, stunned by Rosa’s insinuation. Was that really what she thought?

“I can see why she might think that, but I’m not on some mate hunt,” I asserted

firmly.

“Maybe it’s not entirely up to you.”

“Well, then I refuse to participate in this ridiculous mate game,” I growled, burying my face in my hands.

After a moment, I lifted my head to find Naomi gazing at me with sympathy in her eyes.

“I don’t want multiple mates. I don’t want to test out numerous partners in search of a connection,” I confessed. “I’ve seen the strength of the bond between my parents and other wolves. That’s what I want.”

She nodded understandingly, then reached out to clasp my hand, offering a sense of calm.

“But you might have to choose between us,” she suggested softly.

“Then—”

“And Rosa is the better match. We’ve discussed this already!” she interjected.

“Naomi...” I began.

“But she is,” she insisted.

“That doesn’t mean I want her!”

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Chapter 40

-Naomi-

Reese's words ignited a flutter in my chest, reigniting the hope that he might belong to me alone. It felt selfish, knowing it would leave Rosa without him and might unleash unforeseen consequences. But the heart, stubbornly, wants what it wants, and mine yearned for Reese. I held his hand tighter, finding solace in our vulnerable moment, but I also noticed the pain etched in his features.

"Why does it have to be like this?" he murmured, his thumb tracing gentle circles on my skin.

"I don't know," I admitted softly.

"Tell me you haven't given up," he implored.

"I... I don't even know what to feel."

"Listen," he began, his other hand finding its way to my neck. "I understand if Rosa's words have shaken you, but I want you to know, I don't want to just cast you aside."

"But can we navigate this?" I questioned. "It's already a labyrinth. We're lost because we don't even understand how we got here."

"I know," he sighed heavily.

“Reese, this is tearing you apart.”

“What do you suggest I do?”

“Maybe we should step back, create some distance between us, just to gain clarity?” I proposed, though I knew he despised that idea. “We need to untangle this mess.”

“But I don’t want distance,” he protested.

“Perhaps it’s what we need,” I insisted. “To truly try this time.”

“It won’t lead to anything good,” he argued.

“How can you be certain?”

“Because I feel more at ease in your presence than anywhere else!”

His words touched me, but I believed we needed this—needed to make a sincere effort. I reached out, brushing his cheek tenderly, before pulling away, gently extricating myself from his grasp.

“Naomi,” he called out.

“We have to give it a chance,” I insisted softly.

“For how long?” he pleaded.

“Just a few days.”

“No, I can’t,” his voice broke, dripping with desperation.

I drew nearer, pressing a gentle kiss to his lips.

“We need some time to think,” I explained, attempting to step away. But he caught my wrist, his eyes pleading, as if begging me not to leave.

“See you around,” I murmured, gently prying his fingers from my wrist. I glanced back, witnessing the conflict in his gaze, torn between wanting to follow me and letting me go. With a heavy heart, I walked away, deciding it was time to head home.

Yet, midway there, a sudden wave of pain and sorrow engulfed me, driving me to lean against a nearby tree. The anguish threatened to overwhelm me, and I sank to the ground, tears streaming down my cheeks. I couldn’t comprehend the depth of this despair, and despite my sobs, I couldn’t release the true agony brewing inside me. It gnawed at me relentlessly, fragmenting my spirit. What was happening to me?

Eventually, I managed to compose myself, though a hollow ache lingered within. I retreated to bed, enveloped by the eerie stillness of the house. Sleep eluded me, and I tossed and turned until the early hours of the morning. With the sunrise, I found myself devoid of the strength to rise, anchored to the bed by an invisible weight.

My mother, sensing my prolonged absence, ventured into my room. Our roles seemed to have reversed, but the bond between us remained undeniable.

“Naomi?” she called softly.

“I don’t want to talk,” I whispered.

“What’s wrong?”

“I can’t... I can’t get up,” I confessed, tears welling in my eyes.

Her gentle touch on my arm brought comfort as she moved to my side, offering solace.

“What happened?” she asked.

“I can’t share him, and I can’t keep him,” I confessed, the weight of my words heavy in the air.

“Naomi...” her voice trailed off, filled with empathy.

“I don’t know what to do.”

“You fight for him.”

“But I can’t... He doesn’t belong to only me,” I protested.

“He has to. I saw the way he looked at you,” she reassured me.

“No, you don’t understand. We’re not compatible.”

“Sometimes those who seem different are more alike than you realize,” she offered gently.

“No, not this time,” I whispered. “I have to let him go.”

“Don’t say that,” she pleaded.

“I have to, Mom!” I cried, burying my face in the pillow. “Before it’s too late...”

“I don’t think you can let go even now.”

“What other choice do I have?” I questioned, my voice muffled by the fabric.

“You fight!” she repeated.

“How?”

“You claim him,” she asserted, meeting my gaze.

“Mom, I can’t just claim him,” I protested, feeling conflicted.

“Yes, you can. You must.”

“No, it wouldn’t be right. Not until Reese knows what he wants,” I reasoned.

“He wants you,” she affirmed.

“He wants us both!” I exclaimed, frustration lacing my voice.

“I don’t believe it.”

“Well, you haven’t seen him with her...”

“So, you’re just going to lie here?”

“I don’t see what else I can do,” I admitted, feeling trapped.

My mother sighed in disappointment. Unable to muster the strength to move, I watched as she left the room, her departing glance filled with concern and uncertainty.

Chapter 41

-Reese-

Four days slipped by in a blur. I hadn't slept at all, consumed by the desire to see Naomi, but also driven by a determination to prove that this distance between us was futile. With each passing moment, the ache of separation grew stronger. As dusk began to settle on the fourth day, I found myself unable to bear it any longer. The absence of Naomi from the house only intensified my frustration. Knowing her dedicated nature, I realized that her absence from even her usual tasks indicated the depth of her commitment to maintaining this distance. Yet, far from easing my mind, this realization only fueled my determination.

In the midst of an important meeting, I abruptly stood up, the room falling silent as all eyes turned to me. Ignoring the questioning stares, I left without a word, descending the stairs with purposeful strides before storming outside. Though I didn't run, my steps were resolute as I made my way to Naomi's house. Despite my initial resolve to wait for her to yield, I found myself unable to resist the pull of our connection. I couldn't quite define what that connection was—whether it was a mate bond or something else—but I knew I needed to see her.

As I approached the house, the door swung open, revealing Naomi dressed in running attire, earphones dangling from her hand. She froze at the sight of me, and for a moment, we stood in silence. Then, without a word, I closed the distance between us.

"Okay, enough!" I shouted. She looked up at me, confusion etched on her face, but my anger clouded my perception, preventing me from seeing how utterly exhausted

she truly was.

“This distance thing ends now,” I demanded, my tone firm.

“It’s only been four days,” she murmured, attempting to evade me, but I blocked her path.

“Four days of pure agony. Am I the only one feeling it?”

She shrugged, refusing to meet my gaze or offer a response. Determined to make her listen, I seized her arm, forcing her to focus on me.

“Naomi, I can’t take it any longer. This distance is crushing me. Hasn’t it proven that it doesn’t work?” I pleaded.

She stared at me blankly, as if the vibrant spirit I once knew had vanished into thin air. What had happened to her while I kept my distance? Slowly, she reached for my hand, brushing it down, before silently moving past me. I watched as she walked ahead, picking up the pace and disappearing into the distance.

Is she running from us? my wolf inquired, mirroring my confusion.

“I cannot believe her,” I snarled in frustration.

Then chase her and make her listen , he suggested.

As I watched her disappear into the distance, something dark and primal stirred within me—a possessive need to claim what was rightfully mine. Despite feeling somewhat detached from myself, I made the decision to pursue her. With determined strides, I closed the distance between us. When she heard my approach, she glanced back over her shoulder, a look of surprise crossing her features. Ignoring her attempts

to flee, I maintained my pursuit, knowing that challenging an Alpha on edge was a futile endeavor.

Changing pace along with her, I effortlessly kept up with her, confident that this hunt would be a straightforward one. Despite the fear evident in Naomi's eyes as I drew closer, I could sense that it wasn't the only emotion she was experiencing. Her sweet and alluring scent ensured that I didn't lose her trail.

I was determined to catch her, and when I did, I wouldn't hold back. Just as I was about to reach her, Naomi used a rock to propel herself into the air and mid-flight, she shifted, her clothes tearing away as her phone and earphones dropped to the ground with a soft plop on the earth below. A beautiful, albeit smaller wolf, suddenly stood before me, causing me to freeze in awe. She glanced back briefly before darting off into the distance.

Me! Let me out! my wolf's voice echoed within me, his eagerness to chase after Naomi's wolf clear. I recognized this as the perfect opportunity for them to meet.

I relinquished control, feeling the rush of power surge through my veins as the transformation took hold. Soon, a sandy-colored wolf, mirroring the color of my hair, stood in my place. With a deep growl reverberating through the woods, I pursued Naomi, her scent guiding me. Despite her attempts to blend into the foliage, her darker brown coat offered little concealment against my heightened senses.

With excitement coursing through my veins and adrenaline propelling me forward, I ran faster than I had ever thought possible, driven by the urgent desire to catch up to the elusive female before me. Barely feeling like myself, my heart pounded eagerly in my chest as I advanced.

As I closed in on her, I veered to the side, colliding with her and sending us both tumbling across the forest floor in a blur of motion. She whimpered and attempted to

snap at me, but I responded with a growl, asserting my dominance. Before long, she found herself beneath me, submitting to my strength, her whimpers a testament to her surrender. Towering over her, my wolf form exuded a primal power that eclipsed hers. Tilting her head back, she exposed her neck in a gesture of submission, eliciting a growl of satisfaction from deep within me. A powerful need surged from my wolf into my being.

He snarled once more before leaning down to bite at her neck, though not breaking the skin—a symbolic display of dominance. She whimpered again, acknowledging her place before me. My wolf continued to assert his desires through his biting, and she shifted, offering herself to him. With no further hesitation, he initiated the mating, releasing his bite to claim her fully. Doubt dissolved as they both embraced their union. He accepted her, and she embraced him willingly.

As they reached a mutual understanding, they relinquished their control, granting Naomi and me our power once more. Despite this, my hips continued their rhythmic movements, driving deep into her wet warmth. She cried out in ecstasy beneath me as I took her forcefully on the forest floor, my own primal groans drowning out the world around us. I claimed her as my own, her cries escalating as her orgasm approached under my relentless thrusts. She had run, but now she belonged to me, and she surrendered eagerly, reaching out to draw me closer. Leaning down to her ear, I panted breathlessly.

“You’re mine,” I declared.

“Reese...”

“You’re mine and mine alone.”

Lost in the overwhelming pleasure, I paid little heed to the discomfort of the forest floor beneath us. The sensation of her tight warmth consumed me, driving me toward

a climax that promised to be explosive. As I finally succumbed to ecstasy, releasing myself inside her, I marked her with my scent, ensuring she understood that she belonged to me.

-Naomi-

I hadn't experienced anything so overpowering, nor had I ever felt something so undeniably right. I didn't resist when my wolf presented herself. She had made her choice, and I eagerly followed suit. Despite the tenderness between my legs and the weight of the Alpha above me still attempting to assert dominance, waves of pleasure coursed through my veins, a reminder of the incredible orgasms he had given me.

In the aftermath, we lay panting, both of us struggling to overcome the intensity of our encounter. We were immobilized by the encounter, unable to move or even separate from each other. Reese began to nuzzle the spot where he would mark me, but I gently shook my head.

"They still haven't said the word," I reminded him.

"We don't need further proof. They accept each other," he declared.

"Reese..."

"I claim you. I don't need to hear that word shouted in my head. You're my mate, Naomi," he assured me, filling me with a warmth so profound it brought tears to my eyes.

Sensing my distress, Reese reached for my chin, turning my head to face him.

"Did I hurt you, little mate?" he inquired, his voice soft as a purr, conveying his genuine concern.

I shook my head, unable to articulate my feelings. Instead, I drew closer to him, tangling my fingers in his hair and pulling him nearer.

“Why are you crying?” he whispered in my ear.

“I-I want you so much,” I admitted, my voice trembling. “These four days broke me...”

“Then why didn’t you come to me? I didn’t want the distance.”

“I-I couldn’t. I’m scared to lose you,” I confessed, tears streaming down my cheeks.

“It won’t happen. I won’t allow it,” he vowed, kissing my neck tenderly to reinforce his words.

“But what if it did?” I choked out.

“No, you’re mine now,” he insisted.

I continued to cry, overwhelmed by emotion, but deep down, I knew I couldn’t let him go now. It was simply unthinkable.

Chapter 42

-Naomi-

Reese asked several times if he had hurt me or if I didn't enjoy what had happened, but I reassured him that I wanted it. Still, we had to sneak back into my house through the slightly cracked window to avoid being seen naked. I had found my phone and earphones as we ventured back, and I placed them on my nightstand as we entered. Reese came up behind me, grasped me, and gently placed me on the bed.

"Reese, we're covered in dirt," I chuckled softly.

"I don't care. I want you again," he murmured in my ear, and I nodded, giving him my consent without hesitation. He growled softly, urging me to part my legs, which I eagerly did. His hand teased me, but I was still dripping from our previous encounter. He quickly brought me to climax, teasing my clit until I had to bite down on his shoulder to muffle my cries. He couldn't wait to enter me again, and he did so eagerly, sinking deeply inside me. The entrance was easier this time, yet he still seemed to take up so much space. He appeared to be trying to hold back, and I noticed how he trembled beneath my touch.

"Reese," I panted, and his eyes met mine. "You're shaking."

"I-I'm scared to lose control with you again. But I want to," he admitted.

It was incredible to see this powerful Alpha at my mercy, losing his composure over simply being with me. I pulled him closer and kissed him.

“Take me however you like,” I told him, and he reached out, grabbing the headboard, squeezing it until it snapped under his powerful grip. I gasped in shock, but he wasn’t deterred. He began to mate with me in rough, long thrusts that awakened a primal part of me, causing me to call out his name in pleasure. This spurred him on, and he drove deep into me, making love to me as if it were our last chance.

I clung to his powerful body as he brought me to another orgasm, trembling beneath him and biting into his shoulder to stifle my cries. He continued to thrust into me, the bed creaking underneath us. Maybe this truly was our only chance to be together, as our wolves still hesitated to fully claim each other. Regardless, I wanted to savor every moment and pushed all doubts aside as Reese grew more desperate, his rhythm becoming unsteady as he thrust into me over and over again, his groans growing louder. His muscles tensed beneath my touch as he reached his climax, collapsing onto me, eliciting a smile of contentment from me.

We lay there, both in need of a shower but unwilling to move, relishing in each other’s presence. I ran my hands over his body, feeling a sense of peace wash over me.

“No more distance,” he declared firmly.

I nodded in agreement. “Okay,” I whispered in response.

He drew back slightly, a serious expression settling into his eyes as he shifted his weight onto his forearms.

“I mean it, Naomi. I can’t handle it anymore. No more distance,” he reiterated.

I sighed, giving another nod. “All right. No more,” I affirmed.

Leaning in closer, he tenderly kissed my lips, pouring his emotions into the gentle

gesture.

“I want you to come live with me,” he stated.

“I-I don’t know if that’s a good idea. Sneaking from bedroom to bedroom is a bit—”

“No, I won’t be with her,” he interjected.

“What?” I exclaimed, taken aback.

“I can’t be with her,” he confessed, shocking me to the core.

“But she... don’t you still feel attached to her?” I asked, my voice trembling.

“Barely,” he admitted. “I don’t know why it’s happening, but a mistake must have been made.”

“How?”

“I don’t know. But I wouldn’t have pursued her like this. I know it.”

“How can you be certain?”

“Because everything we’ve shared surpasses anything I’ve experienced with her. I don’t feel this way with Rosa. I never have. You make me feel whole,” he confessed, his words sending my heart into a frenzy, which he undoubtedly noticed with his keen senses. “Do my words scare you?”

“They excite me,” I breathed, leaning in to capture his lips with mine once more.

A broad smile graced his features as we pulled back, both of us basking in the

moment.

“But Reese, it’s going to be even more complicated. What will you say?” I inquired cautiously.

“I don’t know, but I’ll figure it out after tonight.”

“After tonight?”

“Unless you’re kicking me out, I’m not leaving. I want to stay here in bed with you,” he confessed, his words filling me with joy.

“Yes, I want you here,” I confirmed, a smile spreading across my face.

He leaned in to place another kiss on my lips, and I responded eagerly, feeling like I was living in a dream.

“Once I’ve figured everything out, you’ll accept my mark too,” he whispered softly.

“Okay,” I agreed without hesitation.

“I won’t tolerate any objections,” he teased.

I chuckled, shaking my head as I leaned back slightly.

“I have no intention of protesting. I want you. I always have,” I confessed, watching as his eyes softened, hoping it was a sign of love, or the beginning of it.

“I consider myself very fortunate,” he remarked.

“What do you mean?”

“It’s rare to have someone’s deep affection like yours, especially from a distance,” he explained.

“I can’t help it.”

“And I don’t want you to. I want you to keep loving me, no matter what,” he insisted.

“I can promise that.”

“Yeah?” he asked, looking rather pleased with himself.

I nodded. “I will gladly love you, always.”

He began to trail his hand over my body, committing every curve to memory with his touch. Yet, it sparked a new, intense desire within me that I couldn’t ignore, and I pulled him closer to me.

Chapter 43

-Reese-

My decision hadn't been simple, but as I had anticipated, mating with Naomi changed everything. It was like suddenly seeing clearly, realizing that something had always been missing with Rosa. I couldn't quite explain why my wolf had chosen her over Naomi, but after borrowing some clothes that once belonged to Naomi's father, I returned to the house the next morning to find Rosa.

However, as soon as I entered the bedroom, Rosa was already awake and waiting for me, seated in a comfortable chair with a cup of steaming coffee.

"Morning," she greeted, her tone sharp.

Taking a deep breath, I approached her. "Listen, Rosa—"

"Remember something important?" she interrupted.

"What?"

"Dinner," she reminded me, causing my heart to sink.

"Shit," I murmured, realizing I had promised to have dinner with Rosa in private. Instead, I had been out chasing Naomi through the woods and experiencing the most intense mating I had ever encountered. But the experience had only confirmed what I already knew—Naomi and I belonged together.

“I’m sorry,” I apologized.

“Are you?” she challenged.

I groaned, rubbing my eyes. “Maybe... not. But the thing is, I think there’s been a mistake.”

“A mistake?” she echoed, tapping her finger against the mug.

“I... can’t be with you,” I confessed.

“You’re rejecting me?”

“I know how it sounds, but what I feel for Naomi transcends everything I’ve experienced with you. I can’t explain it, but our wolves must have been confused. That’s the only way I can understand it,” I explained.

Rosa seemed to ponder this, taking a small sip of her coffee as she remained silent. The tension in the air was thick and unpleasant, but my feelings were clear, and they wouldn’t change. Slowly, she lowered the mug and stood up from her chair.

“I understand,” she replied suddenly.

“Sorry?” I uttered.

“What?” she replied. “Did you expect me to resist?”

I shook my head. “No, I just... I suppose I thought you might want to protest a bit, urge me to do more for our bond.”

“No, I’ve felt it too. The way we’ve been drifting apart,” she admitted, approaching

me and handing me the coffee.

“You look like you need it,” she teased lightly, a faint smile playing on her lips.

I accepted it, taking a sip as she moved away, the pink robe flowing around her.

“Where are you going?” I inquired.

She paused, turning to face me. “To the closet. To pack.”

“You can have the room for a while if you want,” I offered, following her as she disappeared into the closet.

I stopped in the doorway, watching her pack a bag while I savored the coffee.

“No, it’s okay,” she assured me. “I don’t feel right staying if I’m not your mate.”

“I’m sorry,” I murmured, my gaze falling to the floor.

“Don’t be. Something strange happened, right?”

I nodded, taking another sip of the coffee. Yet after the third sip, I detected an odd taste lingering on my tongue.

“Something wrong?” Rosa asked, noticing my expression.

“I think you used some bad milk in this,” I remarked, returning to the bedroom to set the mug aside.

“Or maybe you just need something else to replace the taste.”

Confused by her words, I turned to find her suddenly standing naked in the room. I tilted my head in bewilderment, unsure why she had undressed. She approached me, advancing closer, and just as I was about to protest, something strange happened. My body responded to her proximity, and when she reached me, she pushed me back into the chair she had occupied. Suddenly, I couldn't recall why I didn't want her, and she reached for my pants, sliding her hand inside, eliciting a groan of pleasure from me as she found me hard and ready for her.

“There it is,” she purred against my lips. “You’re mine, Reese.”

It seemed she was right.

-Naomi-

I wandered around with a foolish grin as I got ready slowly. Reese had left early to have a discussion with Rosa about their situation, so I arrived later at the house, still smiling. I struggled to contain my overflowing emotions. Making my way to the kitchen, I put my things away when two other female wolves entered the room, giggling.

“They’re so loud,” one of them chuckled.

“I know. That’s how mates are.”

Confused by their conversation, a dreadful thought suddenly crossed my mind. I tried to convince myself I was being foolish, but I needed confirmation. A voice urged me to check, so I did. Racing up to the floor where Reese’s bedroom was, even before reaching the hallway, I could hear it—her. I wasn’t sure if Rosa did it intentionally, but listening to her cries of pleasure shattered me.

“But he promised...” I whimpered.

I can't believe this , my wolf said.

“Can you reach him?” I whispered.

No... I can't. It makes no sense ! she shouted in my head.

“It seems perfectly clear,” I snapped. “He couldn't do it. He lied to me.”

Naomi, wait , my wolf interjected.

“Why?”

Because something isn't right.

“I think you're clinging to false hope,” I accused.

No, I felt something, I know I did. This entire situation is... not right!

“No, we were just fools,” I insisted, tears streaming down my cheeks. “He promised, and we were idiots for listening.”

No, Naomi, I mean it. We need to figure out what happened. I wouldn't have surrendered to his wolf if I wasn't absolutely certain.

“Certain about what?”

He belongs to us.

I froze on my way to the staircase, the cries of pleasure still echoing in my ears. Yet something else now occupied my attention more.

“Do you... claim him?” I inquired, wanting to gauge how serious my wolf was.

After a long pause, she replied, Yes.

“Is he our mate?”

He is, she confirmed.

Chapter 44

-Naomi-

It was challenging serving breakfast, especially with the sudden sight of the love-struck couple clinging to each other. This time, Reese barely acknowledged me, appearing completely enamored with Rosa. This only confirmed that something very strange was amiss. His parents and friends didn't seem to notice anything unusual, but they were unaware of the promise he made to me. I tried to ignore the pain of seeing them together and the pressing need to unravel this mystery until I was finally off from work. Contemplating confronting Reese, I hesitated, realizing that if something peculiar was at play, questioning him might lead to an argument I wasn't prepared to handle. I had to tread carefully.

Instead of seeking out Reese, I decided to approach the older Alpha. With caution, I knocked on his bedroom door, where I had seen him retreat earlier. He answered, his clothes slightly disheveled, clearly indicating I had interrupted something.

"Sorry, I-I can come back," I offered.

"No, what's going on, Naomi?" he inquired, surprisingly open to conversation.

"Could I ask a favor?" I ventured.

"A favor?"

"The witch you hired to interrogate me. Could you summon her here?"

He looked puzzled. “Why would I do that?” His tone carried a hint of accusation, but then his mate appeared in the doorway.

“What’s happening?” she asked.

“Naomi is requesting that I call back the witch who assisted us,” he explained.

“Why?”

“That’s what I want to know as well.”

I bit the inside of my cheek, uncertain about what I should reveal.

“Naomi, is something wrong?” she probed.

“I... don’t know,” I confessed. “And I’m not even sure if you’ll believe me.”

“Try us,” she encouraged.

Glancing over my shoulder with a hint of fear, I stepped closer to them.

“Reese promised me last night that he wanted me and only me,” I disclosed, noting the shocked expressions on their faces. “He said his connection to Rosa had ceased.”

“But they seemed so—”

“That’s what’s strange!” I interjected, halting the Alpha from speaking further. “He went to her early this morning to end it, that’s what he told me.”

“Maybe he had a change of heart,” his father suggested.

I felt a surge of anger as he said it, meeting his eyes, something I shouldn't have been capable of. He seemed taken aback by it.

“You were quick to accuse me of witchcraft when Reese explained his odd behavior toward me, but you won't even consider the possibility that Rosa might be involved?” I challenged.

“She is a—”

“She's the Luna of a former enemy pack. Isn't that suspicious?” I pressed, and the couple exchanged uncertain glances.

However, his mate gripped his shirt, nodding. “We should reach out to her. What if Naomi wasn't the one we should have been investigating, but Rosa?”

I couldn't help but rub the spot where I still bore the mark that prevented any magic use by me or others. I could still feel the burn, and the thought of a spell being used on Reese unsettled me, but there might be no other option.

“Very well,” the Alpha conceded, “but for a meeting, not to confront Reese immediately.”

I nodded, accepting his terms, and he promptly left to make the call.

The following day, we gathered—myself, the former Luna and Alpha, and a few of his most trusted men. The witch arrived, Reese still asleep, and she gave me that smug look again.

“Still dabbling in magic?” she taunted, and I instinctively touched the mark.

“I can't.”

“No, you can’t,” she teased, advancing, her heels clicking against the floor, and her focus was on the Alpha. “Yet you’re still concerned someone is manipulating your son.”

The Alpha took a deep breath, then glanced at me. “Tell her.”

The witch turned her attention to me, and I met her gaze. “Reese claimed his connection to Rosa had changed. He swore to me he wanted only me and intended to end it.”

“A mate bond doesn’t just diminish because another becomes more dominant. If he has two mates, they should match in power.”

“That’s what he told me. He said his experiences with me were stronger.”

“I detect no deception,” the Alpha stated. “And with the mark on her, she can’t use magic to deceive my senses.”

“No, I don’t believe she’s lying either,” the witch concurred. “But you know what’s happening, don’t you?”

“It means we’ve been infiltrated, and my son is under the other pack’s influence.”

“We can’t confront him directly, and if we bring him here, he might sense something is amiss immediately. I don’t know the extent of this magic or how it’s affecting him. I might not be able to help him before he retaliates,” the witch explained.

“Then what’s our course of action?” the Luna inquired.

The witch began pacing back and forth before her gaze suddenly fixed on me, causing everyone to turn in my direction. I stepped back, feeling bewildered by the

sudden attention.

“What?” I asked.

“What if it’s true?” the witch inquired.

“What?”

“That maybe you and Reese were true mates all along, but because of what Rosa has done, you couldn’t fully claim each other. It would explain everything,” she speculated.

“How so?” his father queried.

“Because nothing can ever be powerful enough to completely block a true bond. It explains why Reese was always drawn to her, and why over time that attraction intensified, overshadowing the magic Rosa used on him,” she explained.

“But now he’s back in her embrace,” his mother remarked.

“She must have found a different spell or potion to reinforce the false bond,” the witch revealed. “We’re dealing with very potent forces here.”

“Then what should we do?” the Alpha asked.

“We need to utilize something even more potent,” the witch declared.

She pointed to me. “You.”

“Me?” I responded, surprised.

“Yes, you. You might be the only one strong enough to reach him.”

“How? He initially thought I used witchcraft,” I pointed out.

The witch paused for a moment, then glanced at the spot where she had marked me before meeting my eyes.

“You need to claim him, mark him,” she clarified.

“Will that make a difference?”

“The mark is a powerful tool. It should help him regain his awareness and recognize who he truly belongs to,” she explained.

“And if it doesn’t?”

“Then my brand should protect you. I’ll remove it if it doesn’t work,” she assured me.

I sighed, feeling uncertain, but then I turned to his parents, seeing the concern for their son in their eyes. I knew I couldn’t back out. I had to help him.

“What’s the plan?” I asked determinedly.

Chapter 45

-Naomi-

We needed to isolate Reese, so his mother volunteered to distract Rosa while his father summoned him to the office. The other wolves all departed, taking refuge in nearby rooms, ready to intervene if needed, while I remained behind, awaiting his arrival. Reese walked in, looking freshly showered and oddly content, a sight that pained me to see, knowing the reason why. As he closed the door, his gaze finally fell upon me, a look of confusion crossing his features.

“What are you doing here?” he inquired.

I recoiled, stunned, realizing how thoroughly Rosa had manipulated him, making him sound almost hostile toward me.

“Reese, I mean, Alpha Reese, I, um...” I faltered, feeling foolish now, my words stumbling.

“Can I help you?” he asked, approaching a bit closer. Despite his lack of recognition, he remained the same trustworthy Alpha as always.

“Yes,” I replied, closing the distance between us. “But I need to whisper it.”

“What?” he prompted.

“It’s... embarrassing, and I don’t want anyone to overhear,” I explained.

Reese appeared skeptical, not fully grasping my intentions, but his trusting nature, perhaps the very trait that had led him into this situation, compelled him to draw nearer. Leaning in, he awaited my supposed secret, and I seized the opportunity to act on my primal instincts. With a swift motion, I pulled his T-shirt aside, and before he could protest, I sank my teeth into his shoulder, piercing his skin and leaving my mark. He struggled against me, but I clung to him, ensuring the connection wasn't severed too soon. Yet, his strength surpassed mine, and he forcefully tore me away, gripping me by the hair. I screamed in pain as he held me in a bent position, his own teeth bared in aggression, seemingly ready to strike.

With my eyes squeezed shut, I feared my attempt had failed, until a sudden thud echoed through the room, followed by a loosening of his grip. Opening my eyes, I saw Reese before me, doubled over and coughing, clutching his chest in agony. He vomited onto the floor, the expelled substance an unnatural shade of blue, as if he had ingested something toxic. He continued to retch, the pain evident as he purged whatever poison Rosa had given him, perhaps continuing to administer. When the ordeal finally subsided, he trembled like a newborn pup, hands resting on his knees as he remained hunched over, visibly in distress.

“Reese?” I whispered, cautiously inching closer, avoiding the blue mass on the floor.

He continued to cough, expelling more of the blue substance before slowly turning toward me, tears brimming in his eyes, his expression shattered.

“W-What’s happening to me?” he breathed, his voice trembling.

I moved closer, enveloping him in my arms, seeking to offer comfort through my touch. He didn’t resist, drawing me nearer, his hand trailing down my arm, seeking solace.

“Naomi...” he whispered, his voice barely audible.

“You recognize me as your mate?” I asked, locking eyes with him.

He nodded, still trembling, his gaze feverish. “Of course... But I don’t... remember...”

“What’s the last thing you remember?” I inquired gently.

“Telling Rosa I didn’t want her anymore.”

“And then?”

He groaned, unable to recall, and I shook my head, hushing him.

“You’re safe now. No more magic,” I reassured him.

“Magic?”

Just then, we heard approaching footsteps, and his father entered with the other fighters, surveying the chaotic scene before him. He quickly moved to Reese’s side, gripping his shoulder tightly as if afraid he might vanish.

“Are you okay?” he asked, concern etched on his face.

“I-I don’t know,” Reese admitted, his memory blank. “I don’t remember what happened to me.”

“Let’s get you downstairs to have you checked,” his father decided.

Reese nodded, and we all helped him to his feet, his body still wracked with pain as the others stayed behind to tidy the room.

-Reese-

Naomi and my father swiftly filled me in on everything, with the witch present, ready to remove Naomi's brand. However, she declined, insisting on keeping it to demonstrate her loyalty. I assured her it wasn't necessary, but she stood firm in her decision. I had her stay by my side as the doctor and witch examined me, both concluding that I simply needed time to recuperate. But everything they told me reshaped my understanding of recent events, and it filled me with a deep sense of dread. I had been living amongst enemies all this time, unaware.

"I still can't wrap my head around this," I murmured, squeezing Naomi's hand, drawing strength from her touch.

My wolf finally confirmed our bond as mates, his confusion evident except in this certainty. It seemed Naomi and I truly belonged together all along, but our connection had been obstructed by Rosa's magic. It explained the chill of her touch and the sickness I felt after being with her. As true mates, no one else should have been able to captivate me. Yet Naomi didn't seem angry with me, only concerned. She offered me a gentle smile, leaning down to kiss my arm before focusing her attention on me once more.

"It seems your mate was right all along," my father remarked, gesturing toward Naomi, and I felt a profound sense of fulfillment knowing I could finally claim her entirely.

"How did you know marking would help me?" I asked.

"We weren't entirely certain," Naomi interjected. "But it was the best option we had."

"How did you figure this out?"

“My wolf realized it after she finally claimed you,” Naomi explained.

“She claimed me?” I questioned, my tone tinged with happiness.

“Yes, even while you were involved with Rosa,” she admitted, causing a pang of guilt to surge through me.

“Hey, I’m not upset,” she reassured me.

“Maybe you should be. I can’t believe I did... those things while you were in the house!” I exclaimed, overcome with remorse.

“Reese, it’s not your fault. It was the magic.”

“Still, you’re my mate, my true mate. I shouldn’t have been able to betray you like that. I didn’t want to!”

“And you didn’t. I promise you, I’m not angry. I’m just concerned. I mean, where do we go from here?” she asked.

“What do you mean? I’m claiming you. You’re moving in with me,” I declared, a smile spreading across her lips.

She chuckled softly, but then shook her head.

“I meant with Rosa,” she clarified.

“Oh,” I responded, sharing her laughter and squeezing her hand in mine before turning to my father.

“She’s with your mother right now, keeping her distracted.”

“We have the advantage at the moment,” I pointed out. “She doesn’t know the spell or potion has been expelled.”

“You want to continue pretending,” my father observed.

I nodded.

“Is that wise?” Naomi interjected.

“Yes, because it gives me a chance to gather intel on where and when they might strike,” I explained.

“What if they aren’t planning to attack until after you’re mated?” Naomi countered.

“She may have a point,” my father chimed in. “They may be waiting for you two to be bound together, playing the long game.”

“What do you suggest?” I asked.

“What do you remember about their formation? Their tactics?” my father questioned.

“Not a lot, I must admit.”

“But you have a way to get inside, right?”

“I do.”

“Then suggest a visit to her parents, her pack. Let them believe you’re still under their influence. When you can, slip away and create an opening for us. I want this done swiftly and with less brutality, probably more than they deserve, but I want this fight to be over with once and for all.”

I nodded, in agreement with my father's plan.

"Now, I wish I could let you rest, but it's better you get up as fast as you can," he insisted.

"Yes, just a moment," I said, holding Naomi's hand even tighter, and my father understood the silent promise in my gesture. He motioned for the witch to follow, most likely going to do some extra planning with her. The moment the door closed, I lifted Naomi into bed.

"Ah, Reese," she chuckled, as I placed her beneath me.

I let my hands roam down her covered body, feeling the electric sensation growing even more powerful than before.

"Mm, this is something I can get used to," I purred, leaning down to take in her scent, which was stronger as well.

I grasped her thighs, spreading them open for me, so I could settle between them.

"Reese, you were just cured," she pointed out as I nibbled the skin on her neck.

"Yes, we should celebrate."

"No, we have work in front of us."

"And if I'm a good Alpha who does his job well?" I teased, hearing her laugh again, the sound doing funny things to my heart.

"I think we can talk about a private meeting to reward you," she jested.

I pulled back, seeing her smile at me. It made my heartbeat quicken, and all I could think about was resting in bed with her. I couldn't believe I even thought Rosa was my mate. This was what a true bond was like.

"I should mark you too," I said, coming closer, but Naomi placed her hand over my mouth.

"What?" I asked.

"You can't. We can't solidify it yet. She would notice."

"Goddess, I have to cover this up well," I groaned, placing my hand over Naomi's mark.

"You can do it," she assured me, running her hands down my shoulders. "And I will be waiting for you."

I leaned closer, pressing my forehead to hers.

"Thank you for not giving up on me. I meant what I said. Rosa only—"

She placed a finger over my lips.

"I know," she whispered, then wrapped her arms around my neck, hugging me to her.

Chapter 46

-Reese-

“ A visit?” Rosa inquired.

“Yes, a visit. I think it would be nice to go see them again, and for you too. I mean, I can understand if it has been overwhelming for you to come here,” I insisted.

Rosa sat on the edge of the bed, contemplating it.

“You wouldn’t mind?” she asked.

“No, not at all. I want you to be happy, and I bet you miss them all.”

“I do,” she agreed, yet I noticed the way her eyes seemed to gleam with evil intention. I couldn’t believe I hadn’t seen it before or how I even found her attractive. She was no match for Naomi.

“So shall we go today?” I questioned.

“Today, already?” she inquired.

“Or tomorrow.”

“Let me call my father, just so he is prepared.”

I nodded acceptingly when Rosa suddenly got up from the couch, coming toward me. My skin started to prickle, disgust filling me, and as she touched me, I found it incredibly hard to smile.

“But I don’t have to call right away.” She ran her hands down my chest, but I seized her wrists.

“Naomi has requested I’m hers tonight,” I explained.

“You want to go to her?”

“I have to divide my attention,” I reminded her.

“You still feel drawn to her?”

I shook my head. “No, not as much as I thought, but I have to be a fair Alpha, right?”

“Right,” she murmured, sighing deeply and crossing her arms.

“Make the call, and I will be here before you even wake up.”

She nodded, and I began departing the room. I couldn’t stay. It was much harder than I had expected, so I walked away. I went downstairs and outside, going toward Naomi’s house. It was already rather dark, and most had gone home or were lounging around the larger house. However, if I was going into enemy territory, then I wasn’t going to do so without bringing something with me to keep me going.

As I neared Naomi’s place, I found the window leading into her room. It felt much like two teens sneaking around, but I tapped on her window. She turned her head, sitting on the bed, reading, yet her look of surprise was incredibly adorable.

She approached me, gracefully opening the window, and I immediately pulled her close, capturing her lips in a passionate kiss before guiding her inside and quietly closing the window behind me.

“What brings you here?” she inquired, her voice tinged with curiosity as I gently pushed her onto the bed.

“I couldn’t stay there. She was insistent on being intimate,” I confessed.

“What?” Naomi growled, a possessive glint in her eyes surfacing.

Without hesitation, I tore off my T-shirt, letting it fall to the ground, and then reached for her shirt, eagerly exposing her to my hungry gaze. A soft gasp escaped her lips at the sudden unveiling.

“Yes, I couldn’t resist. And if I’m facing a battle tomorrow, I refuse to leave without feeling your warm body beneath mine,” I murmured, swiftly removing her pants and panties before discarding them.

Hovering over her, I met her lips in another heated kiss, eliciting a moan that reverberated through me. Every fiber of my being responded to her presence, my desire intensifying with each passing moment. She held an undeniable power over me.

“I love you,” she whispered, sending my heart into a frenzy.

“Naomi—”

“Don’t say it yet. I know you haven’t thought about me like that for years, but I want you to hear it anyway,” she said, smiling up at me and running her thumb over my lips, teasing me.

A low rumble escaped me, and I kissed her again before shedding the rest of my own clothes. As I settled between her legs once more, we both trembled with anticipation.

“I can’t get enough of you,” I confessed, my voice filled with longing.

“Do you ever want to get enough?” she teased.

“Never. I want you forever and exclusively as mine.”

“You’ve always had me,” she teased back.

“I know, but this time, nothing will stand in our way,” I vowed, my fingers tracing patterns over her skin, eager to erase any doubt or hesitation.

She blinked up at me, her eyes covered in a hint of moisture, but I diverted her attention by moving a hand between us and kissing her again. As I teased that sensitive bundle of nerves, she writhed and whimpered against me, succumbing to a swift orgasm. I was too on edge to prolong this, craving the sensation of her around me. Guiding her through the sweet waves, I positioned myself and slid inside her, hearing the small cry that escaped her lips as I filled her completely.

“Reese,” she gasped.

“You feel incredible,” I murmured into her ear, my own ecstasy building with each movement.

“Oh, Goddess...”

As we moved together, the bed creaking beneath us, I lost myself in the rhythm of our bodies, the sound of her panting and the sensation of her warmth enveloping me driving us both toward that euphoric peak.

Chapter 47

-Reese-

N ight had practically fallen when my father contacted me, desiring one final discussion about the plan. Leaving Naomi asleep in bed, I joined him to finalize everything before seeking out Rosa. Hopefully, this would unfold smoothly, though it was hard to predict the outcome. Thanks to the witch's assistance, I had been provided with another potion intended for Rosa's family, which I concealed.

As we journeyed toward Rosa's territory, she maintained her sinister smirk, her grip on my hand tightening. The atmosphere felt unsettling, and I breathed a sigh of relief when we finally arrived. Her parents greeted us, ushering us inside for discussions. Food and drinks were offered, but I declined, wary of what Rosa had done to me.

Placing my hand subtly in my pocket, I carefully unscrewed the cap of the potion. It had been meticulously crafted to target those blood-related to Rosa, using a strand of her hair that I had obtained.

"So, how's everything going?" the elder Alpha inquired.

"Perfect!" Rosa exclaimed. "We're preparing for the ceremony, and I'm eager for our packs to be united in one place. Aren't you, Reese?"

"Absolutely," I chimed in.

"Rosa mentioned a third member joining your little alliance," her father remarked, a

dark glint in his eyes that I hadn't noticed before. Beside him, his mate shot me a glare, her disdain barely concealed. Had I still been under the potion's effects, I wouldn't have noticed.

"We're still sorting that out, but I know who my mate is," I replied, reaching for Rosa's hand again. She beamed up at me.

"Are you certain?" her father prodded.

"Father," Rosa interjected, scolding him.

"I'm simply ensuring you won't have your heart broken," he teased, though I sensed there was more to his words than mere jest.

"I'm absolutely certain," I stated with conviction, and it seemed to appease them as they delved into the meal. However, the elder Luna observed my behavior keenly.

"Not hungry, Reese?" she inquired.

"No, I had a big breakfast," I answered.

"How about some coffee then?"

I began to sense the weight of their gazes on me as I waited for the potion to take effect. Aware that I couldn't afford to appear suspicious, I casually reached for a cup, offering it to be filled with coffee. Settling back on the couch, I held the mug in my hands, but the scrutiny from everyone around me persisted, their eyes fixed on me, waiting for me to take a sip.

"Am I the official coffee critic now?" I quipped, breaking the tension, and their overt stares suddenly became apparent to them.

“We just wanted to make sure you liked it. If not, we could have brewed you another cup,” the elder Luna explained, attempting to smooth over the awkwardness.

“I understand. No need. It smells delightful.”

“But does it taste as good as it smells?” Rosa pressed, their eagerness for me to drink the coffee clear.

I hesitated, pondering whether I needed to expose myself to another round of poison in order to prove my loyalty. Slowly, I raised the mug, cautiously inspecting it for any signs of tampering, but nothing seemed amiss. Steeling myself, I prepared to take a sip, relying on Naomi’s mark to protect me once again. However, before the coffee could touch my lips, the Alpha suddenly dropped his own mug, the glass shattering against the floor.

“Dad?” Rosa called out in alarm, but the older Alpha shook his head, signaling that he was all right, though his actions said otherwise.

Then, without warning, he collapsed forward, crashing into the coffee table and sending it tumbling, mugs and plates clattering to the ground.

“Dad!” Rosa cried out, before succumbing to the same fate, her body slumping onto the couch.

“What’s happening?” the elder Luna whispered, her distress evident as she turned her gaze toward me. “You...”

I raised the mug in a gesture of acknowledgment and then tipped it, spilling the contents. “I know about the potion,” I confessed, and she growled in frustration, her eyes flashing with anger. She seemed poised to lunge at me across the table, but instead, her strength failed her, and she collapsed onto the couch beside her mate.

I carefully set the mug down before I texted my father. Then I rose to my feet with a composed demeanor as I surveyed the three wolves, their bodies now under my control. Waiting for the inevitable chaos to erupt, I listened intently until the sound of commotion filled the air. Seizing the opportunity, I strode purposefully to the closed door and flung it open, revealing the chaos unfolding among the pack members. They raced about, screaming of an intrusion into their territory and the incapacitation of their Alpha. A small smile tugged at my lips as a warrior approached.

Without hesitation, I swiftly grabbed him, pinning him against the doorframe before relieving him of his weapon and awareness, knocking him into a peaceful state.

Leaving the doors ajar, I positioned myself over the Alpha, the gun held firmly against his temple. It didn't take long for his fellow fighters to find us, their own firearms trained on me.

"I wouldn't advise that course of action," I warned coolly. "My pack, aided by a witch, is advancing steadily. Your Alpha is at my mercy. Fire, and he dies."

They exchanged nervous glances, weighing the risks. A tense standoff ensued, with neither side willing to make a decisive move. As we stood locked in this deadlock, the silence stretched agonizingly, until suddenly, the doors deeper within the house burst open, and a voice cried out, "They've breached the border! They're coming!"

The fighter in the front cursed under his breath, then glanced down at his immobilized Alpha.

"You can put an end to this now," I urged him. "My pack seeks no bloodshed. Surrender, and we can establish peace."

"Peace?" he scoffed.

“Yes, I understand it may be unfamiliar to you, but it’s possible,” I assured him.

He appeared to consider my proposition, and I leaned in closer to the Alpha, making my threat unmistakably clear.

“The choice is yours. You still hold some power. Use it wisely now, or I’ll kill your entire pack.”

With a low, menacing growl, he reluctantly relented, knowing I wouldn’t hesitate to eliminate the Alpha, especially after the deception I had endured.

“Drop your weapons. Order all fighters to stand down,” he commanded.

They complied, discarding their weapons and kneeling before me, baring their necks in submission—they had surrendered. With a satisfied smile, I leaned down to the old Alpha, seizing him by the hair.

“Your plan was cunning, but you can’t overpower the bond of true mates,” I sneered, before slamming his face into the ground, ensuring he remained unconscious for the time being.

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Chapter 48

-Reese-

“ R eese!” my father’s voice called out as I stood outside with some of our fighters, the majority of the enemy warriors now bound or subdued in some way. Though there were few casualties, I couldn’t help but ponder how we would navigate the aftermath of this confrontation.

As my father approached, I saw a long scratch mark on his arm, causing a surge of concern within me.

“I’m fine,” my father brushed off my worry.

“You’re not as young as you used to be,” I teased, earning a playful slap on the back of my head from him.

“I could still take you any day,” he joked, before his gaze settled on the older Alpha whom I had incapacitated and who was slowly regaining his senses.

The Alpha leaned against the wall of his house, attempting to move, but his only power seemed to be the ability to turn his head slightly.

“I should end you for what you attempted against my son and our family,” my father warned, drawing closer, and the other Alpha narrowed his eyes.

“But I’m not like you,” my father stated firmly.

“What’s the plan?” I inquired. “How do we handle all of this?”

“Do not worry, I’ve already reached out to allies. And those willing to join our pack from this one will find refuge, while the rest will be cast out to fend for themselves as rogues,” he explained.

The thought of being a rogue, alone and without a pack, sent a shiver down my spine. I silently thanked the Goddess that it wasn’t my fate.

“Your destiny is sealed, once powerful, but no longer,” my father taunted, before turning back to me. “As for your ‘fiancée’, her fate is in your hands.”

I chuckled softly. “Please, never refer to her as such.”

My father smiled, placing a hand on my shoulder. “What are your thoughts?”

“I believe a life as a rogue is a fitting punishment for her. I have no desire to ever lay eyes on her again, and I’m more than ready to start anew with Naomi,” I replied.

“Hopefully with some grandchildren on the horizon soon,” my father teased.

“Dad, she’s not even in heat yet,” I retorted, rolling my eyes. It felt empowering to regain some semblance of normalcy, and as I surveyed the chaos now slowly being brought under control, I felt confident that a brighter future awaited us.

-Naomi-

I couldn’t stop pacing, anxiety gnawing at me as we awaited news about Reese and the other warriors. The Luna and some of her friends attempted to soothe me, but I was too consumed by worry to sit still. Even my mother was present, consoling me along with the other women, but my nerves refused to be calmed.

It wasn't until late in the evening that we finally heard the sound of their return. We hurried from the room, and upon seeing Reese at the entrance of the house, I threw myself into his arms. He held me close, his warmth enveloping me as he pressed a kiss to the top of my head.

"You're okay," I breathed in relief.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Everything went according to plan," he assured me. "We only sustained a few injuries."

"And the other pack?" I inquired, pulling back to look into his eyes.

"Some casualties, and most of their fighters are now detained. They'll soon be sent out as rogues, but some have chosen to pledge loyalty to us," he explained.

I marveled at how efficiently they had handled the situation, and Reese had proven himself to be the perfect Alpha to lead us forward.

"Come, let's celebrate," his father suggested, leading the way toward the living room. However, Reese held me back, and when we were alone, he scooped me up in his arms.

I wrapped my legs around his waist as he carried me up the stairs, his lips meeting mine with fervor.

"Reese, what are we waiting for?" I murmured against him.

"I think we deserve our own private celebration," he teased.

"Yeah?" I replied.

“Yeah, and then I can finally claim what’s rightfully mine,” he purred darkly.

As he ascended the stairs, I teased his neck, eliciting a groan of pleasure from him. I couldn’t believe it was finally over and that he truly desired to be with me. With quick steps, he moved to the room where he used to stay when he didn’t want to sleep next to Rosa. There, he slammed the door shut with his foot and placed me on the bed.

I smiled up at him, his eyes showing such a powerful affection that I could hardly take it. Reese could barely hold himself back now. He tore my clothes apart, leaving me fully naked and at his mercy, yet he only removed his shirt before leaning over me and claiming my lips in a passionate kiss.

He left me absolutely breathless as he withdrew, then he looked at me with slightly glowing eyes. I already knew what he wanted.

“Mark me,” I breathed, barely able to believe it was truly happening.

With a smug smile, he tilted my head to the side. Then, with a low hiss, he bit into my shoulder, causing pure euphoria to spread through me. I cried out his name as I felt him sucking on the wound, most likely tasting my pleasure in the blood. It felt as if something clicked into place between us, and I felt his deep feelings for me. Slowly, he withdrew, licking the wound to help it close before gazing into my eyes.

“Now you’re mine. I’m never letting you go again,” he declared.

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-Naomi-

“What do you think you’re doing?” Reese’s voice startled me as he entered the house from his evening run, catching me halfway down the stairs.

“I’m taking a stroll,” I teased, flashing him a mischievous grin.

“Yes, and you’ve been explicitly instructed not to!” he admonished, ascending the stairs and effortlessly scooping me up, carrying me back to where I started.

“Reese, I’m starving!” I complained as he gently deposited me onto our bed, his concern evident in his eyes.

“Then I’ll fetch you something to eat,” he promised, his tone softening.

“And I’m bored!”

“Well, I can provide some entertainment,” he teased, shedding his shoes and joining me on the bed, his lips finding mine in a passionate kiss.

I giggled with delight before pulling back slightly to gaze at the incredible Alpha I was mated to.

“I’m perfectly fine,” I assured him.

“Yes, because you’re following the doctor’s orders and resting. You can go on adventures once our little one arrives,” he gently reminded me, his hand resting on

my swollen stomach.

“Are you still sure you don’t want to find out the gender?” I asked, curiosity lingering in my voice.

“No, I’m content regardless,” he reassured me.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, because this little one is a product of our love. They’ll be cherished no matter what,” he affirmed, his love evident in his eyes.

My heart swelled with joy as I drew him closer, savoring the warmth of his embrace. Suddenly, a loud rumble emanated from my stomach.

“I think that was our baby. I might be giving birth to a tiny monster,” I joked, earning a hearty laugh from Reese.

“I’ll fetch you some food,” he declared, but before he could move, I pulled him into another kiss, momentarily distracting him.

“I love you,” I whispered.

He gazed at me with adoration, his hand tenderly cupping my cheek.

“I love you too, more than words can express,” he murmured before kissing me passionately and bounding out of bed.

“Don’t wander off. I’ll be back to entertain you,” he promised.

“Oh, and how do you plan on doing that?” I teased, a playful glint in my eye.

“Don’t tempt me,” he warned with a smirk.

“It’s the only fun I have these days,” I chuckled.

He smiled at me as he reached the door, glancing over his shoulder to check on me one last time before disappearing. But I knew when he returned, he wouldn’t leave my side. He rarely did, even when I wasn’t pregnant. With each other, we had found the missing piece, and we were bound to always be together.

The End.