

Chapter 106

I had never quite become used to pain, even after enduring so much. Every time it ripped the breath from my lungs, unique in how it seared and tore at my insides.

As I clutched my shoulder, feeling the heat of my own blood as it wept in between my fingers, its sweet scent spilled into the air. I ground my teeth together and steeled my spine, even though the dark spots dancing behind my eyes grew in size.

I could hear Asher's muffled yet powerful voice, silencing the deafening thunder that came from hundreds of snarls. He eased the panic from the crowd, and the tension from the warriors among them.

My shoulder was throbbing and burning from the silver bullet lodged within it. Once I managed to straighten without vomiting, I peeled back the layers of my shirt and swallowed as I looked at the gaping hole in my shoulder.

I'll admit, it wasn't the most pleasant of

plans, but we knew this moment would draw them out. The crusade of Vampire's still loyal to my father were gathering, more than eager to remove me from the throne. It was why we banned children from attending and threw in hundreds of warriors from both Zeke's pack and our own.

Obviously getting shot wasn't on my to-do list for the day, but I wanted the Vampire's close. As close as they could get without dispersing throughout the town.

Our warriors had scented them hours ago but acting would have only made them abandon their plan and scatter. ①

The guards hidden in the crowd surged towards the shooter. It was easy to tell the Vampire's amongst the crowd, the ones who had moved in during the chaos of my confession. They were the same people turning on their heel, shoving past the crowd and towards the surrounding forest. The warriors hidden amongst the crowd snared them, outnumbering them ten to one.

I knew my part in all of this, especially if I



● knew my part in all of this, especially if I were to be hurt.

My jaw clicked as I ground my teeth together, and through the haze of pain in my eyes, I dug my fingers into my gunshot wound.

I could feel Asher's presence behind me, even though the silver burning into my flesh blocked our bond. He had no access to my thoughts or emotions, but he never needed them to tell what was going on in my head. 1

The hand he placed on my hip, it was what kept me from failing, from proving that I was a weakness to this pack.

The world around me threatened to sway, but the moment my fingers grasped the pesky thing, the release of pain felt like a burst of adrenaline.

Smaller than a marble, the silver bullet burned the skin of my hand, but that pain was a mosquito bite compared to the wasp sting on my shoulder.

I let the bit of metal clatter to the floor, a sound I was sure I had imagined. Feeling the weight of the crowd's eyes on my

shoulders, processing that I had been shot —wounded by silver and still standing.

“As I said, there are those who want to destroy all chances of peace, who want to stir up trouble and bring death. I am the Vampire Queen, and I will stand by those who want peace. But make no mistakes; I am also your Luna, and I will protect my people at all costs.”

We brought the meeting to an end, and while hundreds of people began to file towards town, our warriors scoured the surrounding area. The Vampire’s captured were brought to a bunker of underground cells, far from the urban areas of our pack.

Everyone’s nerves were fried, both with shock and relief that there had been absolutely no casualties. It took nearly two hours for everyone to file out, and the same length of time for the warriors to finish their search.

I had been scooped into Asher’s arms and plied with blood bag after blood bag. Even though the first healed my wound completely, Asher insisted I drink another. I couldn’t resist him, not when



his eyes turned to pools of black and his jaw was set in rage. Asher had fought against this plan from the very beginning, even though he saw the potential within its layers and risks.

The second blood bag had my head swimming deliciously, and my body thrumming with the energy that had been sapped by the silver. A thread of hope wound itself around my heart, because tonight had been a victory.

Dad and Grandma had watched the announcement from the safety of the community center, where many of the children were being watched and cared for.

Giovanni and Tristan were quickly convinced of my healthy state once they saw the blood rush to my cheeks after the first blood bag. It was Asher who hovered over me, exuding protective Alpha vibes. As I felt his muscular chest beneath my fingertips, I decided I could use a protective Alpha.

'Since there's little chance of anyone getting sleep tonight and I want you to
yourself, I think I'll spoil things a bit early.'



Asher's sudden words confused me, even more so when he led me to the Escalade and refused to answer any of my questions.

Understanding blossomed in my eyes as we turned off of a dark back road and onto a paved driveway. It twisted and turned around a patch of trees before curving in a circle.

Light posts jutted from the ground; their circular tops illuminated the expanse of flower beds that lined the front of the stunning house. I hopped from the vehicle, my eyes on the porch that wrapped around the front. Off to the side of the house, I could see a sunroom that spanned the bottom and top floor, like the spiral tower of a castle. Large windows let in copious amounts of moonlight, emitting a dull glow from within.

"This...this is the house you built for us?" I sputtered, feeling at a complete loss for words. 1

We were mates, two halves of a whole, but the man had just built an entire house for someone he's officially been with



...officially been with
only two months. A regular she-wolf
expects flowers, maybe a pup or two—
not the house of her dreams and an entire
pack to care for.

“Is there something you dislike about i
t?” His eyebrows began to knit together,
and I scrambled for a response that
wasn't hastily thrown together. “I can
have anything you want changed--.”

“No, nothing needs to be changed. It's
absolutely perfect.” I smiled softly,
giggling as I descended the porch stairs,
towards the massive set of double doors
that led inside. They were smooth and
cold to the touch, made from a thick sort
of metal. I turned towards Asher, “What
happened to living simply, taking no
more than what we needed?” 1

“That changed when my mate became
the Queen of all Vampires, and when a
group of idiots thought it'd be a good idea
to try and assassinate her.” He snarled
softly, his firm grip on my hips was more
for his sake than my own. 1

Asher unlocked the front doors and
gestured for me to enter.



The gentle scent of fresh flowers mixed with an undertone of fading cleaner filled the house. Asher's footfalls echoed as he walked over to the wall and flicked on the lights.

We stood in a small foyer that overlooked a large living room with a stone carved fireplace and a plush sectional dotted with fur blankets and throw pillows. A tantalizing image of Asher and I, sprawled out before the fireplace, flashed in my head.

I roamed the lower half of the house myself, murmuring and gasping as I ventured into room after room. Asher trailed behind me, speaking when needed while letting me explore the place.

The hallways weren't too wide, nor did they take up much space in the house. At the very end of the hall, beside a sliding glass door, was a room full of television screens. Asher pulled each one up, showing me the front yard and the driveway, we had just walked down. Somehow, I wasn't surprised to see that cameras dotted the property.

"I thought it was going to take another



...was going to take another week, at the least." I asked teasingly, my heart fluttering when Asher's full lips curved into a smirk.

"I moved things along."

It was larger than his family's home, the ceilings higher and light fixtures nicer, but it wasn't as open and empty as Tyler's home had once been. Our voices didn't echo as they had in his, nor was the house itself steeped in loneliness and melancholy.

This house, it was everything I had dreamed of. An amalgamation of my childhood home and the fortress of my child-like dreams. Asher had listened to everything...every single detail. From the color and arch of the banisters to the way the staircase curled around itself.

I let out a soft sigh when halfway through the tour, Asher's eyes glazed over. My blood induced rush of strength was wearing off, along with the adrenaline of almost being murdered. Long story short, I was ready for a long night of blissful, uninterrupted sleep.



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AI QUAD CAMERA

"Blake needs me, they picked up a stray

scent. Could just be a harmless rogue, but we'll make sure they back off." He grumbled, running a hand through his hair. "Stay here, wind down from that mess of a pack meeting. I have a group of warrior's minutes away from here.

They're coming as security detail. Show them to the camera room while I'm gone. I'll be back shortly, Lola. When I return, I'll personally run you a bath and wait on you hand and foot."

"If only you didn't know the way to my heart." I grumbled, but that shred of resistance disintegrated the moment his rough hands wrapped around the tops of my arms, pulling me flush against him as his lips grazed my forehead.

They captured my own, sucking the breath from my lungs and the light from my soul. Asher devoured my willpower and restraint, leaving me dazed and gasping as he slipped from the house.

My stomach rumbled for something other than blood, and I turned towards the kitchen which Asher had mentioned was fully stocked. In the back of my mind, I knew I had left the front door



unlocked, but what was a front door against someone who wanted to do me harm? Besides, Asher said the security men were only a few minutes away.

I told myself this while I popped a tray of pizza rolls in the oven and ate them one by one, scalding my mouth irreparably in the process. After I had finished each and every one, perched on the edge of the smooth marble counter, did I realize twenty minutes had already passed.

As I ventured back out into the living room, my eyes scanning the billowing curtains that were drawn tightly shut, the softest of breezes glided through the room. The wisp of cold air had me spinning in place, my eyes locked on the front door, which sat wide open.

I could see the forest which sat nearly one hundred feet away, the trees various towers of looming darkness, hosting a world of creatures within their depths. While it might've not been the brightest idea, I approached the open door and forced it shut.

It was when my back was turned and my eye peering through the peephole that I



It was when my back was turned and my eye peering through the peephole that I heard a single voice. It was gruff like a male, but there was something off about it, like there was another voice hidden just beneath.

“Lola, your mate sent me to protect you.”

What made me first pause was the use of my name. At Asher’s insistence, only my friends and family called me Lola. The rest of the pack and world knew me as Luna Lola. I wasn’t yet used to the title, but I knew by now what to expect. 1

If it weren’t for the gut feeling in my stomach, the one that came with a rush of something foreign in my blood, I would have made a monumental mistake.

That gut feeling chanted in my mind, “don’t do it, Lola...don’t turn around.”