

## The Alpha's Bride

### #Chapter 831: Poisoned?

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The bowls with desserts were placed in front of Talia and Damon, and Talia rotated the bowl while enjoying the visual of that culinary masterpiece.

Damon smiled while looking at Talia whose eyes were sparkling, and he knew she was happy. He gave himself a mental thumbs up for organizing this evening. The princess treatment and delicious food managed to improve Talia's mood, and that was all he wanted.

Just the dessert was left, and they will move to their next destination.

After dinner, Damon planned for a relaxing walk by the river. They would hold hands and enjoy the city lights reflecting in the water, Talia will lean on him, he will whisper sweet words, and it will be perfect.

Unaware of Damon's thoughts, Talia inched closer to the dessert. She took a deep breath, inhaling the scent of charred fruits that still had a hint of liquor. It was novel.

Without any warning, Talia's stomach churned.

After a second of hesitation, Talia dashed into the bathroom, leaving behind confused Damon, the main chef, and his two assistants.

Damon was right behind Talia, wondering what happened. One moment she was smiling at the dessert, and the next one she ran like the devil was chasing her.

Damon's insides tightened when he saw Talia hugging the toilet bowl while her dinner was coming out the same way it got in, in violent gushes.

Damon hovered above Talia, unsure what to do. Her whole body was convulsing and if he hugged her or pulled her away, she would vomit all over the place.

"Is the Miss alright?"

Damon whipped his head toward the door to see the main chef and his two helpers there.

Why would Talia be sick suddenly? Did they poison the food?

Considering that Talia was a werewolf, this extreme reaction could be caused only if wolfsbane was mixed in the food.

Before anyone could react, Damon was gripping the chef's neck, lifting him off the ground.

"What did you put in the food? Who sent you!?"

Damon could think about a few potential culprits right away. Was it Alpha Edward? Rogues? Guardians?

So many people wanted to harm him or Talia, but how could they know that Damon will bring Talia here? He booked this dinner only a few hours ago! Damon called favors and paid extra to make it happen on such short notice and to keep everything secretive. For someone to set up this ambush would be improbable, but not impossible.

The chef's legs dangled in the air. He didn't expect to be attacked, but even if he suspected it, there would be no way for him to avoid this.

Damon moved faster than human eyes could follow.

The poor chef tried to pry Damon's hand open, but it was in vain. Damon's grip was unyielding.

"What did you do to her!?" Damon squeezed through his teeth as fury consumed him.

'FLUSHHHHHH!'

Damon didn't react when Talia flushed the toilet.

'I am fine...' Talia's voice sounded in his mind.

Damon's head whipped to look at her. She was pale as a sheet of paper, crouching while holding onto the toilet bowl. He wanted to go there and comfort her, but first, he needed to cancel the cook's life subscription.

Anyone who dares to harm Talia will not find a good ending.

'How is that fine?' Damon asked.

'I mean... I am not poisoned.'

Damon's brows came together in confusion. 'If you are not poisoned, why are you puking your guts out?'

Talia wiped her mouth with the back of her palm. 'I think...' She took a deep breath and used her voice to say, "I'm pregnant."

'A pup! A PUP!' Sapa howled in Damon's head and Damon stood frozen as Talia's last word echoed in his mind.

Damon's whole world narrowed to the little woman in front of him.

"Say that again," Damon said breathily.

Talia glanced at the main chef whose face was turning from red to purple. "How about you release the man before you commit murder?"

The main chef plopped to the ground and coughed violently while his two helpers dragged him away from Damon.

In two quick steps, Damon was next to Talia, getting down to a squat to stare at her. "What did you say, kitten? Did I hear you right?"

Talia smiled a little. "I think I'm pregnant."

"You think?"

Talia shook her head. "I don't think. I know."

'THUNK!'

Damon fell to his knees with so much force that Talia worried if he shattered his kneecaps.

Damon cupped Talia's cheeks with his palms and his eyes anxiously explored every inch of her face, as if he was trying to confirm that this was really happening.

"A pup," Damon said under his breath, and then he kissed her on the lips.

Talia struggled to push him away. She just vomited, and it was gross, but Damon didn't care. He loved every inch of Talia, regardless of how dirty or smelly it was.

Damon wrapped his arms around Talia and pulled her to sit on his lap.

They sat like that, on the floor of the restroom while holding each other in silence. They didn't talk. There was no need for words.

Damon and Talia opened up their bond to share emotions that matched. Excitement, joy, anxiousness, love. There was a lot of love. It was surreal.

Damon turned his head to the right when a hubbub of people entered their private room.

It was the manager, the main chef, two helpers, and a few other people. They looked around before all following the manager into the bathroom where Talia and Damon were.

The manager was visibly troubled.

"Uhm... Mr. Blake... Our main chef says that you nearly killed him. Do you mind explaining what's going on?"

They would call the cops right away if Damon was not such a high-profile customer. He paid for one room like he was booking the whole restaurant.

Damon grinned. "She is pregnant."

The manager was confused. "Is that why you nearly killed our chef?"

Damon glanced at the man who covered behind his manager.

"Nearly killed him? I don't NEARLY do anything. If I wanted to kill him, he would be dead," Damon said like it was a totally normal thing. "Now, if you want to extort money or extra tips, there is no need for that. Just put it on the tab. Or feel free to call the police. In either case, stop spoiling our moment."

The manager didn't know how to deal with this, so he stared at Damon and Talia for a few long seconds, nodded, and left the room. Other people followed the manager gingerly.

"Will they cause you trouble?" Talia asked.

Damon pressed his lips on her temple. "Don't worry about it, kitten. We have money, and if they call the police, I just need to make a call and the report will disappear."

If these were werewolves, Damon would use his aura to remind them who is in charge. Unfortunately, humans required a different approach.

Talia was relieved to see that no one stopped them when they were leaving the Medallion, and there were no police either. She was not worried that something might happen to Damon. She was worried about humans. If anyone dared to stand in their way, Damon might really kill someone.

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## Chapter 832: Royal Hilton hotel

Damon drove his black armored Lexus SUV in silence.

Talia enjoyed the way he held her hand pressed on his chest like he was telling her she was close to his heart.

The lights of the downtown flickered as the car moved smoothly over the highway, and Talia realized that was not the way to the packhouse.

"Where are we going?"

Damon smiled mysteriously. "You will see."

Talia relaxed in her seat and let him have it. She didn't care where they were going, as long as they were together.

Damon and Talia used this peaceful drive to process the news: they will be parents!

Damon couldn't believe how excited he was at the thought of becoming a father. The thought of his seed growing in Talia's belly filled him with pride. Talia was the most amazing female he ever met, and he knew that there will never be another woman like Talia. And she was his. Will he be a good father? Damon was recollecting events with his father, and he decided to create happy memories for his child also.

Talia soaked in Damon's presence which wrapped her in safety and assurance that things will be alright. Motherhood seemed distant and daunting, but something told her that as long as she was with Damon, things will work out. If they had a boy, Damon will teach him how to be a fantastic Alpha, and if it's a girl, she will be their little princess.

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Talia craned her neck to look up when Damon stopped the car in front of a massive building that had a sign "Royal Hilton". It was the most exclusive hotel in town, and the grand entrance spoke of luxury.

Damon's original plan was a romantic walk by the river, but considering the news he just received, he decided on something more relaxing.

Talia smiled at the sight of Damon holding his hand for her to take while exiting the car. He would always do that, but this time his expression was more gentle, making her all mushy on the inside.

"Ah!" Talia exclaimed when Damon scooped her into his arms without any warning. She couldn't believe that he carried her princess style into the hotel.

The massive entrance hall had tall pillars and fancy paintings of old-style aristocrats decorating the walls.

It was late in the evening, but there were people in the lobby, most of them staring at the spectacle of Talia being carried.

'You can keep me down,' Talia spoke to Damon through their mind link.

'No,' he responded with finality while tightening his hold on her. He really wanted to hold her.

Damon walked to the reception desk where two females were standing, both staring at Damon and wondering who Talia was. They were dressed up, and women guessed they were celebrities or maybe second-generation heirs.

"Presidential suite for the night," Damon said.

The woman's eyes widened. "Excuse me, sir. That suite is taken."

Damon frowned, and the second receptionist said, "We require reservations..."

She stopped talking when Damon threw his black card on the counter.

The first receptionist cleared her throat while reaching for the black card with her fingers elegantly. "As I was saying, the presidential suite is taken, but our royal suite is available."

Damon nodded in approval. "We will take it."

About a minute later, Damon exited the elevator on the top floor of the hotel.

Talia swiped the card key, and Damon carried her into a one-bedroom suite.

They had a bedroom, a kitchen, a spa-like bathroom, and a living area with a minibar, but the most impressive were wide windows that offered panoramic views of the town from the thirty-first floor.

Damon placed Talia to sit on the sofa in the living area.

Damon removed her shoes while asking, "Are you comfortable? Do you need something?"

"Why are we here, Damon?" Talia asked. She thought they will return to the packhouse.

"I wanted us to be alone tonight. Just the two of us. No distractions."

Talia thought how that was wonderful. She loved being alone with Damon. In the forest or in a luxurious hotel.

Sensing Talia's approval, he gave her a quick kiss on the lips.

"Wait here, while I start the water in the tub. We will start with a bubble bath, and then..." His voice trailed, making Talia's heart flutter.

Talia watched as Damon hurried to the bathroom with a spring in his step. He was happy, and she was happy as well.

Talia placed her palms over her perfectly flat belly. A baby.

Talia read that an increased sense of smell and fluctuating emotions were early signs of pregnancy, but she didn't know if those symptoms were because Damon's mark was becoming more solid, because she was pregnant, or maybe she wished to be pregnant and all that was just in her head.

Talia didn't dare jump to conclusions, so she decided to take a pregnancy test secretly if her symptoms stay the same or worsen. Talia picked next Monday as a test day.

She didn't expect that the scent of charred fruits will make her vomit.

Talia was panicked in the restaurant, and between hurls, she asked Liseli what was going on, and then Liseli responded with, 'a baby,' dispelling Talia's doubts about what was happening.

Now that they got into a hotel and Damon was busy in the bathroom, Talia asked Liseli, 'Why didn't you tell me I'm pregnant?'

Liseli was outraged. 'Hello? Did you forget that you told me to keep quiet about it?'

Talia remembered it. She didn't want to be disappointed if she was not pregnant.

'What if I drank wine or beer? Wouldn't that harm the baby?'

'You were not drinking alcohol,' Liseli responded matter-of-factly. 'But even if you did, a glass here or there won't cause any harm. Your healing will protect the pup.'

'A pup?' Talia asked. 'Does that mean I'm carrying one child?'

'Yes,' Liseli confirmed. 'Do you want to know if it's a boy or a girl?'

'No, no.' Talia was quick to say. 'Don't tell me.'

Liseli rolled her eyes. 'Take a note on this, girl. You told me not to tell. I don't want to hear complaints later.'

Talia giggled nervously. 'It doesn't matter if it's a boy or a girl. He or she will be loved the same.'

Liseli agreed.

'Lis? Is this the time to have a baby?' So many people were after her. And even if she manages to deliver her baby safely... 'What if I'm a horrible mother?'

'It's never the right time for a baby, Talia,' Liseli responded seriously. 'Children are a blessing. If it's not your time to be a mother, the Moon Goddess wouldn't allow it to happen. Trust in her, and trust in yourself. I will be by your side, and so will your mate. You are not alone...'

Liseli was still talking, but Talia was stuck on the 'not alone' part. It meant the world to her.

Damon came out of the bathroom and his expression fell. He dashed to Talia and kneeled by her side to wipe her teary cheeks with his palms.

"What happened, kitten? Are you unwell? Should I take you to a doctor?"

Talia shook her head. "I am fine, Damon."

"Why are you crying?"

"I am happy," she said. "We will have a baby and... I am not alone."

Damon's heart cracked. "Of course, you are not alone, kitten. I will never leave your side."

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Chapter 833: A new life (1)

When Talia calmed down, Damon kissed each of her cheeks.

"Don't cry, kitten. It might harm our baby."

Talia sniffled. "It can?"



"I'm sure she is listening and thinking I'm bullying you. That counts as emotional damage."

Talia was amused that Damon spoke about their baby as a 'she'. "Are you afraid that your son will think badly of you?"

"Daughter," Damon corrected Talia. "I want her to know I would never hurt her mother." He leaned lower and spoke into Talia's belly. "I won't allow anyone to put a finger on you. I will spoil you so that you know not to accept a man who will do less."

Talia felt him pressing his face into her stomach, and he mumbled something she didn't understand, but she knew that Damon was making promises about keeping them safe, and there were some kisses in there as well.

Talia's insides melted due to emotions that swelled within her, and she felt her eyes prickling again.

Damon looked up at her and his smile reflected in his eyes.

"Come. Let's relax in a warm bath." Damon said while carrying Talia into the bathroom.

Damon placed Talia stand next to the tub that was full of bubbles, and he started removing her clothes.

Talia was surprised that Damon was undoing the buttons and zipper carefully. He had a habit of tearing her clothes, no matter how expensive they were.

She was quick to work on the buttons of his shirt, and they undressed each other in silence.

A soft sigh escaped Talia's lips when she settled in the tub between Damon's legs while leaning her back on his chest. She was glad that he came up with this bubble bath idea because it was relaxing, and that was exactly what she needed.

Damon poured water on Talia's shoulders and gently massaged her arms. She enjoyed the pampering.

"What does Sapa say about us having a baby?" Talia asked after some time.

"He was so happy that I think he passed out."

"And you?"

Seconds passed, and Damon didn't respond. Talia turned so she could see his face, and her breath hitched when she saw his eyes sparkling with unshed tears.

"I am so happy that I ran out of words," he said.

Talia's heart tightened. It meant the world to know that she could make him that happy, and she was on the verge of crying again.

She cupped his cheek with her palm. "There is no need for words, Damon. Show me."

Damon's eyes darted to Talia's lips, and she could see the small frown forming on his handsome face.

"What's wrong?" She asked.

"Won't I hurt our baby?"

Our baby, Talia repeated in her mind. Their baby was probably smaller than a pea, yet Damon was so caring already, and Talia knew he will be the best father ever.

"You won't hurt our baby."

"How can you be so sure?"

Talia heard a lot about pregnancy from Yasmin. "Unless something is wrong already, you can't make it worse. Liseli told me that baby and I are fine, so... at most, our baby will be rocked to sleep." Yasmin also said sex was more intense since she got pregnant, but Talia kept that part to herself.

A whimper formed in Damon's throat. He wanted to rock much more than a baby. He wanted to rock Talia's world and show her how much he loved her in every way possible.

Slowly, very slowly, he moved toward her as if he was giving her a chance to change her mind, but he silently prayed that she won't.

Their lips connected in a deep, sensual kiss, and Talia turned to face him completely with her ankles connecting behind him.

Damon grabbed her ass and lifted her just enough so he could position her on the top of his cock that was hard and ready for her.

Talia's moan mixed with his groan when they merged completely.

The tub was somewhat cramped; the one they had at home was wider, but Damon managed to rock his hips and guide them to the ecstatic release.

Damon stood up with Talia in his arms, and he carried her to bed, bubbles and all, to continue their carnal dance.

Their hands were connected with their fingers interlaced, and Damon swallowed her every moan and sigh as their souls melded into one.

They were not making love; they were strengthening their bond, the bond so beautiful and sacred that the Moon Goddess blessed them with a new life sprouting. It was surreal.

With his every thrust, they exchanged emotions, relishing the fact that they worshiped each other with equal fervor.

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Talia was running through the forest. It was dark and damp, and even though she couldn't see any enemies, she was confident they were just a few steps behind and closing in.

The worst part was that she couldn't feel Damon. The bond was gone, completely. She was back to being alone, just how she was before he found her in the attic of the Red Moon pack.

The loneliness was suffocating, preventing her from running faster as doubts were paralyzing. Why would she run? Maybe she should stop and give up, and bad guys could catch her and end her misery.

Without Damon, there was no point in fighting. How can she live without her other half?

Her stomach was heavy, reminding her of pregnancy and that she needed to fight for her child even if Damon was gone from this world.

Talia gasped for air, and her eyes snapped open to see that the sun was high in the sky. It was close to noon.

The room was unfamiliar, and she was surrounded by the scent of the forest and the dark chocolate, but the lack of sparks told her Damon was not by her side.

"Damon?" She called. "DAMON!"

The bathroom door flung open to reveal completely naked Damon, who still had some shaving cream on his left cheek.

Damon sensed Talia's distress, and then he heard her calling, so he rushed out. Seeing that she was panicked, Damon looked around the room, and when he confirmed there was no one else, he was quick to climb on the bed and pull her into his embrace.

"What happened, kitten? Did you have a bad dream?"

Talia nodded into his chest as her hands moved around him, and she dug her fingers into his back, desperate to confirm that he was right there, next to her. He was not gone. She was not alone.

"A bad dream," she confirmed. "It was just a bad dream. I couldn't find you. I couldn't sense you. There was darkness and..."

"Shh..." Damon shushed her. "It's OK, kitten. Just a dream. I am right here. I'm not going anywhere."

Damon ran his fingers through her hair and kissed her face until she relaxed.

Damon confirmed that Talia's scent changed a bit. It was still sweet and citrusy, but something else mixed in. It was another layer of sweetness, and he thought it was her perfume, but now he confirmed it wasn't, and he didn't imagine it. Talia's scent was changing because of her pregnancy. His pup was announcing its presence!

Damon hugged Talia to press her further into him. Their pup!

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### Chapter 834: A new life (2)

"Yasmin has bad dreams since she got pregnant," Talia said to Damon. "It's because of hormones and unstable energy flows that are messing with the mind and amplifying insecurities."

Yes, it must be insecurities, Talia thought. Hormones made her think about the worst things that could happen... like Damon not being around and her needing to raise their child alone, surrounded by enemies. She tightened her hold on him.

"Good that you know," Damon said, and he took a mental note to talk to Travis and see if they could do something about it.

Feeling that Talia was desperately clinging to him, Damon assured her, "I won't leave your side, kitten. As long as you need me, I will be right next to you."

Talia looked up at him. "That means you will be right next to me for a very very very loooooong time."

He smiled. "I have no objections with that arrangement." Damon kissed her forehead and spoke without pulling back. "Mates are two halves of a whole. We are made to be together, to complete each other. It's the way it should be."

He moved away to see her face. "How are you feeling? Nausea? Hunger? Should I order something light with ginger tea?"

"Ginger tea?" Talia asked. She was never much into teas, and she never drank one made of ginger.

Damon smiled smugly. "I did online research about reducing nausea during pregnancy."

Talia's heart expanded. A mighty Alpha was finding nausea medicine because she vomited last night. While thinking about that, Talia hoped it was an isolated incident.

"The food last night was delicious. It was such a waste that I couldn't digest it."

Damon chuckled. "Don't worry, kitten. There will be plenty of delicious things in the future. How about now? Breakfast? What do you say?"

Talia refused. "Later. I just woke up."

Damon hummed in agreement. "Let me know when you are hungry, and we can order."

"When will we return home?" Talia asked.

Damon loved that she called it home. "First, we will eat. Until you are ready for food, we can relax and cuddle. But before that..."

He released Talia from his hold and slid down her body. "I want to say good morning to my baby."

Damon got down until his head was on the same level as her crotch area. He spread Talia's legs to position himself at the center and stared at her intimate bush.

Talia inhaled sharply when he licked her clit in one mighty stroke.

"Dam... Damon." She called shakily. "How is that good morning to the baby?"

She thought he would talk down there and not lick.

Damon grinned. "It's a good morning for my mate who is carrying my child." He kissed the inside of her thigh. "I will make you feel good, kitten, and I will do it every morning."

Whenever you feel good, our baby will be happy because she will know I adore you. Let me show you how much I love you."

He buried his face into her.

"Good morning, sunshine..." Damon mumbled; the vibration of his voice made Talia's body tremble in ecstatic quivers, and then he lapped at her, collecting her love nectar that was sweet and citrusy. His favorite.

Talia would laugh at Damon's silly antics, but the only thing she could do was moan. Damn, he was good.

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It was late afternoon when Talia and Damon returned to the packhouse.

Damon turned off the engine of his black armored Lexus SUV. He wanted to go out and open the door for her, but Talia held his hand firmly, indicating that she wanted to stay in the car a bit longer.

"Is there something on your mind?" Damon asked.

"It's about the pregnancy. I would like to keep this for ourselves." She had been thinking about it since they left the hotel. Now that she is pregnant, people will know she can't shift into her wolf form, and Damon will be extra-protective of her. She didn't want this to be used against them.

Damon thought for a moment before responding. "I want you to get a checkup, kitten. If not by Travis, we can go to the human town. But they are humans, so..."

"Travis is OK," Talia said. She trusted him. "And we can tell Maya and Caden."

Damon agreed. "Alright. We won't tell anyone else until you are ready."

Damon and Talia found Maya, Caden, Mindy, and Gideon in the living room. They were snacking on bite-sized appetizers, and the mood was good.

After they exchanged greetings, Talia asked, "What did we miss?"

"Three more people from the Midnight Guardians pack found mates!" Maya announced proudly. "We are down to six people. You should contact Axel and ask for more if you didn't already."

Talia was delighted to hear this news. After so much time without hope, fourteen people found their mates just like that. Normally, it would mean newly mated couples will go to the Midnight Guardians pack and stay there. It was exciting for those who needed to go,

but it was also sad because they would leave their friends and family behind. But now, it was different.

Axel, Talia, and Damon agreed to keep the newly mated couples in the Midnight Guardians pack until their abilities stabilize and they learn to control them. After that, they will get to pick where they want to live. It will strengthen the bond between packs.

"I will give Axel a call," Talia said. It's been more than a day since they left, and that would be a month for Axel. They probably went to the Silver Flame Coven and returned. Talia was curious to hear if more people found mates.

Talia glanced at Mindy and Gideon, who were sitting on the sofa so close to each other that any closer and Mindy would end up on Gideon's lap. Talia remembered that they had come out of their seclusion.

'Is she pregnant?' Talia asked Liseli.

'Yes.' One word response came.

Talia's lips lifted into a smile she could not suppress, and Mindy noticed.

"What?"

"Do you want to know?" Talia asked.

Mindy was confused. "Know what?"

"Oh, oh!" Maya got it. "Talia can sense pregnancy."

Maya was bouncing in her seat. If Mindy were not pregnant, Talia wouldn't bring it up.

Mindy and Gideon stared at Talia.

"Can you sense it now?" Gideon asked breathily, his face red from excitement.

Talia wiggled her eyebrows and responded with a nod.

All color drained from Gideon's face, and he became pale as a ghost.

"Ah!" Mindy shrieked half due to her delight and half because Gideon fell limply on the sofa. Was he about to pass out?

Mindy slapped Gideon's cheeks. "Why are you overreacting? I was in heat, and considering what we did, it should be expected."

"Hold me, princess. The world is spinning faster, and I might fall off from it," Gideon said.

Mindy giggled and hugged him with all her might. "Get a hold of yourself. If anyone sees their mighty Shaman in such a state, they will crack jokes."

"Shaman or not, I am just a man," Gideon said. "I waited so long that I lost hope I will find my other half and have a family, and..." He inhaled a shaky breath. "Then you showed up and proved that I was an idiot for thinking that the Moon Goddess forgot about me. She was taking extra time in creating you so that you are perfect inside and out."

Mindy smiled foolishly at Gideon. How could he talk so sweetly with all the audience?

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### Chapter 835: The secret is out

Talia, Damon, Maya, and Caden pretended not to see Mindy and Gideon kissing like no one was watching.

Gideon groaned and Maya rolled her eyes while suppressing giggles that were bubbling in her stomach.

"You are next," Talia said to Maya. "Are you making plans for your time off?"

"Caden has it all figured out," Maya said.

Maya was smiling, but the truth was that she was anxious. She had heat a few times since Caden marked her but a baby didn't happen. Maya and Caden told themselves that the timing was not right, the Dark Howlers pack needed them as their Betas, but those were just excuses after they found out that Maya was not pregnant.

Maya hoped that Talia had the power to fix whatever was wrong because most of the couples got pregnant during their first heat and by the second one nearly everyone had a baby. What if she can't have a baby? Will Caden love her less?

"Oy!" Caden exclaimed, and Maya jolted.

"Maybe you should take that home!" Caden grumbled.

Gideon's hand was under Mindy's shirt, and it was getting steamy.

Werewolves are licentious and without shame, but this was the living room of the packhouse with people right there!



Gideon groaned in displeasure when Caden popped their lovey-dovey bubble. He was hard and ready and... this was not the place!

"How about we move to one of the guest bedrooms?" Gideon said to Mindy like no one else was there.

Mindy giggled. She gave him a smacking kiss on the lips before straightening her shirt. "Now that we know I'm pregnant, we should see Doctor Travis. Can he do a checkup this early? I also want to call home and tell my family. Maybe we should do something special tonight?"

There was a silent promise of many pleasures in Mindy's words, and Gideon's throat went dry as his mood was fluctuating.

He wanted to make it special, but he also wanted to make it NOW! However, he couldn't disappoint his pumpkin-infused princess, so he released a long breath with, "We will do what you want. How about you contact Travis and your family, and I figure out something special for tonight?"

Mindy agreed.

She hopped on her feet and hurried to Talia to give her a hug.

"Thank you, for telling us about the baby," Mindy said.

"You are welcome," Talia responded with a smile while patting Mindy's back. "You probably shouldn't jump and rush like that. What if you trip and fall and get hurt?"

Seeing that Mindy didn't move, Talia asked, "Mindy? Are you OK?"

Mindy sniffed the air around Talia's head. "Why is your scent different?" Mindy inched away and narrowed her eyes at Talia. "You had your heat also. Are you pregnant?"

Talia gaped at Mindy. It was supposed to be a secret, but it seemed that an Alpha nose was not to be underestimated.

Talia couldn't lie. "Yes."

"What!?" Maya shrieked. "You are? When did you find out!?"

"Last night," Talia admitted guiltily. "We were having dinner and I got sick and... it was pregnancy sickness."

'CRASH!'

A loud clatter and glass breaking were heard from the door as Zina dropped the tray from her hands.

"What did you say? Who is pregnant?", Zina asked breathily.

"She is," Talia and Mindy said in unison while pointing at each other.

Talia exhaled helplessly. Now Zina knew also! So much for keeping secrets.

Zina was hugging Talia and Mindy, and Maya joined in the girly hug while Caden and Gideon patted Damon's shoulder.

"Alpha pup is a big deal," Shaman said. "We should..."

"Keep it a secret," Damon interrupted whatever Gideon was about to say next. "We have a lot of enemies, and Talia's condition is delicate. We want to conceal the truth about her condition as long as possible."

Talia stepped next to Damon and leaned on him. "We hope you will help us."

"Of course," Zina said right away and gestured like she was locking her mouth.

She was feeling guilty because everything pointed at her as the source of the information leak that reached rogues about Talia attending Tanya's party with Damon.

"No need to be so stiff," Talia said while looking at Zina. "We won't be able to conceal this for long, but even if we get a few weeks, we will be grateful." She hoped that she won't vomit randomly because then people will figure it out before her stomach starts showing.

"Did you think when we will have your Luna ceremony?" Maya broke the silence. "Now that you are pregnant, maybe we should get the ball rolling. If your belly is sticking out, we won't be able to conceal your pregnancy and there will be a lot of people in attendance..."

Talia's ears started buzzing. The Luna ceremony!

She didn't care about being a Luna, but she wanted people to acknowledge her as Damon's mate, and that meant as his Luna also.

"There is nothing wrong with having her ceremony after the pup is born," Damon said and he looked at Talia. "That's only a few months away."

Talia knew he was saying that because he picked up her anxiety.

"No. We can't wait five months, Damon." She turned to Maya. "How much time it will take to organize it?"

Mindy snapped her fingers, to get everyone's attention. "You will become the Luna in the largest pack in North America. It can't be rushed or shabby because people will wonder what we are trying to conceal." She touched her nose. "We can organize it in one month if we hurry. By then, your stomach won't show, and we can pick you a dress that has ruffles in the stomach area."

Maya shook her head in disapproval. "This is not about the dress, but about her shifting into her wolf after the Luna ceremony. Alpha and Luna will need to lead the pack run."

"Do we need to?" Talia asked and turned to Gideon. "We led the pack run once. Can that count?"

Gideon rubbed his forehead. "Elders won't approve. However, with Mindy being pregnant and Maya's upcoming heat, we can twist that into Luna standing with her friends, like you want to support them, while Damon leads the guys."

Mindy clapped excitedly. "That is a great idea. Let's come up with something special that can get females to stay in human form while guys run."

Zina's eyes flashed when she got an idea, "How about a competition where guys hunt and females need to bake something?"

Talia liked this. "If we go with that approach, we don't need to rush. I will pick a ruffly dress, and the ceremony can be held two months from now."

Damon frowned. "I thought you wanted it to be sooner."

She thought that also, but with Maya's heat coming, and Mindy being pregnant, Talia couldn't push her friends to focus on organizing her Luna ceremony.

Gideon cleared his throat before speaking, "First two months are critical for the pup to develop properly. Talia should avoid stress and straining herself."

Damon's frown deepened as he remembered how skinny Talia was when she arrived. Years of malnutrition and poor living conditions took a toll on her.

Talia hugged Damon. "I'm not saying that we should wait two months, but let's not rush it either. I will work with Maya and Mindy to come up with timelines on how much time we need to prepare everything, and then Gideon will pick an auspicious date."

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## Chapter 836: A warning

The next few days were busy.

Axel selected (and sent) another batch of people from the Midnight Guardians pack. He reported his success when four out of twenty people he took to the Silver Flame Coven found their mates. Axel suggested that Evanora comes next with a batch of witches to the Midnight Guardians pack, but she refused, so Axel was planning another trip there soon.

Talia was happy to hear that Yasmin's pregnancy was progressing well, and her stomach was visible now.

Maya was in charge of organizing events for the newcomers from the Midnight Guardians pack. She took them to the Shifters, and for an outing in Darkbourne, and some of them found their mates. However, keeping them in the territory of the Dark Howlers pack came with limitations on the pool of possible matches, so she decided to take them to other packs.

Since they couldn't publicize from where the new faces came, Maya decided to take them around for one-day trips where they would attend small-sized mixers with members of other allied packs. It was a slow process, but it still yielded results of a few more mates being matched after every outing.

Talia told Maya to take it easy, but Maya said it was not a problem. Maya had her reasons. With every passing day, Maya was more nervous about her upcoming heat, and she wanted to keep busy as a distraction.

Talia worked with Mindy and Maya to identify things that should be done for her Luna ceremony. Decorations, food, entertainment, and the initial guest list. They thought of everything. Next, they talked to Gideon to see about the good dates, and he came up with a few.

In the end, Talia decided on the next full moon which will be one week after James' birthday. Damon and Talia will spend that weekend in the Red Moon pack, and Talia wanted to use that occasion to reveal herself as Damon's mate. Talia hoped that she won't freeze in the place where she spent most of her life hiding, or when facing the bullies which were the reason why she was hiding.

Talia and Damon spent a lot of time in the packhouse of the Dark Howlers pack, handling work from the study or relaxing in the garden.

Damon enjoyed watching Talia plan for her Luna ceremony, and he would join often to see where they were and to ensure Talia was not overworking herself.

"We need to pick a present for Ashton," Talia said, pulling Damon from his thoughts.

He was imagining himself standing at the altar and Talia walking toward him in a beautiful white dress and diamonds in her hair and a dazzling smile that was just for him. It was how he imagined her Luna ceremony. Talia will be his queen, and he will treat her as such, and everyone will see that, and it will be perfect. Why did she talk about that snotty brat who announced that Talia will be his Luna?

"What present?"

Talia cocked an eyebrow at Damon. "It's his birthday in two days. We are going, right?"

Damon frowned. "Do we have to?"

"Don't tell me you are planning to avoid it. We said we will be going. Besides, it's just a small group of people, and they know we are mates, and..."

"Alright, alright," Damon said. He knew she was looking forward to this because it's an event only for allies and they won't need to pretend they are not mates.

It's not that he didn't want to go, but he enjoyed this peaceful time of just two of them. Going outside meant stepping into reality with rogues and Guardians and other enemies, but they couldn't stay inside forever either.

Damon checked the time and puffed his cheeks.

"The delegation from the Steelbite pack is coming with their tribute in an hour. I want to ensure they are not skimming us. After that, we can go shopping."

"I will join you," Talia declared.

...

The group from the Steelbite pack arrived in front of a big warehouse with two cars and three trucks.

It was a tribute they owed the Dark Howlers pack since Cassie caused a scene at Kalina's Luna ceremony. It was the first time when Talia showed her dominance, and Damon loved the memory of Talia standing tall in front of Cassie and Alpha Richard. He was also remembering that event as the one where he and Talia made love for the first time. Ah, the good times!

The tribute consisted of money and various merchandise that the Steelbite pack produced.

Damon didn't care much about that merchandise. This was about symbolism. They needed to come in person and bow to him while bringing gifts. It was a good feeling, and he was happy to share it with Talia.

It was Damon's way of showing Talia that he won't forgive the ones who dared to act against her.

People from the Steelbite pack were surrounded by warriors and Omegas from the Dark Howlers pack who helped carry the boxes and crates from trucks into a warehouse.

Damon and Talia were checking the manifest with information on the merchandise when a commotion ensued.

"I need to talk to your Alpha," a female voice was heard.

Talia looked that way to see two warriors blocking the path of the newcomer. Damon ordered that no one should approach them, he didn't want to risk Talia's safety.

The warriors were unyielding. "Our Alpha already spoke to the person in charge. Go back to work."

She groaned. "This is important."

"Let her talk," Talia said which earned her a cocked eyebrow from Damon.

"No one would dare to seek you without a reason," Talia explained to Damon. "It won't hurt to hear what she has to say."

The female wore baggy clothes that concealed her curves, but her short hair stood out.

"Thank you for hearing me out," she said.

"You should thank my Luna," Damon responded icily. "Speak. I don't have much time."

The female raised her gaze, and Talia and Damon had matching surprised expressions.

"What do you want, Cassie?" Talia asked sourly. She still remembered that Cassie was clinging to Damon while accusing Talia of stealing (food and a phone) and that Cassie slapped her. None of those were good memories.

Cassie glanced to the side nervously. "Can we talk in private?"

"This is the most privacy you will get," Talia said.

Cassie looked at Damon pleadingly, but his stern expression told her that there was no point in hoping he will treat her better than Talia.

"My father doesn't know I'm here," Cassie said. "I sneaked in order to see you. I want to deliver a warning."

"A warning?" Talia asked.

Cassie nodded and inched closer. "You are going to attend a party in a few days at the Spring Leaf pack. You shouldn't."

It was not a secret that Ashton will have a birthday party, and it was normal to think Damon and Talia will attend because their packs were friendly with the Spring Leaf pack. But Talia didn't think that Cassie would say such a thing without a reason. Or would she?

"Why?" Talia asked.

"Rogues are preparing an attack."

"How do you know this?" It was Damon who asked.

"Several Alphas are collaborating on this. My father is one of them. Rogues moved to another location and are being united. Their target is..." Cassie's voice trailed, and she looked at Talia.

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Chapter 837: A warning (cont.)

Damon and Talia agreed that Cassie's biggest problem was credibility.

'We can't deny that she knows things,' Talia spoke to Damon through their private mind-link. 'Did she get her hands on the report from the attack on the Blue River pack?'

'It's not a secret that rogues are not at their usual locations,' Damon said. 'Alpha Richard shouldn't know that rogues were after you during Tanya's Luna ceremony. Only a few of us knew about it, so Cassie's information might come from the rogues. At the same time, we can't dismiss the possibility of spies in the Blue River pack. Regardless of which one is it, Cassie wouldn't be here without an agenda.'

Damon was concerned about Cassie's motive. Did she come here to harm Talia?

Damon put his arms around Talia protectively before asking Cassie, "What's in it for you? Don't tell me you are here from the goodness of your heart."

Cassie pressed her lips into a line at the sight of Damon hugging Talia.

Cassie was not delusional. She knew Damon and Talia were mates, and she didn't stand a chance of getting back together with Damon, but Cassie and Damon shared many heated moments, and Cassie gave him her first time, yet he never held her like that. And even after all their history, he was still doubting her. It hurt.

Cassie swallowed her grievances before speaking. "There is no point in me talking further since you don't believe me. Unless you confirm that my information is valid, you won't negotiate."

Talia cocked an eyebrow at Cassie. "You want us to negotiate?"

Cassie shrugged. "Isn't that how things work? You have something I want, and I have information that can make your life easier."

Talia didn't like this. Assuming they believe Cassie and they miss Ashton's birthday, then what? Why would Cassie prevent them from going there? Were rogues planning to attack the Dark Howlers pack? Or did she come here to swindle Damon into believing her, and then she will harm him?

Talia wrapped her arms around Damon protectively.

Cassie's expression turned sour when Talia hugged Damon, and he adjusted his arms to accommodate her there. No matter what Cassie and Damon did in the bedroom, Damon never allowed Cassie to hold him in public.

"I'm confident that you predicted this outcome," Damon said to Cassie. "You wouldn't be here if you didn't have a way to convince us to collaborate. What do you suggest?"

"I suggest you believe me, but then... you probably won't." She didn't think this far. Cassie fished a piece of paper from her pocket and gave it to Damon. "You can reach me on this number. No one knows I have this phone. Once you confirm I was telling the truth, give me a call, and we can negotiate. There is more." Cassie gave him a meaningful look. "Much more."

Damon snorted. "If you have such information, what gives you the confidence I won't interrogate you right now?"

Cassie's face paled. "You won't do that. I am much more useful as your ally. If you harm me and I am lying, you will provoke the Steelbite pack for no reason."

And with that, Cassie turned toward the trucks and headed to get another box to carry into the warehouse. It was tough work, but at least no one was scolding or beating her.



"She could be here on Alpha Richard's orders," Talia said.

Damon puffed his cheeks. "I agree. However..."

"We can't dismiss Cassie's warning either." Talia finished Damon's thought. Talia's hand subconsciously moved to her belly. "What will we do?"

"First, we will warn Cristian about this."

It was not unusual for rogues to target packs during an event where members from other packs were among guests. Rogues would use the celebratory mood and the fact that outsiders were in the pack to sneak in and cause damage. It was normal to have occasional fights that ended up with injured on both sides. However, now that rogues started grouping together, the situation was serious.

Talia looked at Damon. "We should see what rogues are up to. Did you hear anything about Steph and Lisa?"

Damon didn't want to talk about it. Talia was pregnant, and she shouldn't get upset, yet here she was, looking at him with concern while thinking about the bad stuff.

They had a peaceful few days of handling administrative work and enjoying each other's company, and now this. If he knew that coming here would bring them back to the topic of rogues and other nasty things, he would send Caden to watch over this tribute delivery.

"Let's talk to Maya about this tonight," Damon said dejectedly.

Talia looked up at Damon whose expression didn't conceal his displeasure.

"Damon?" Talia called. "No matter what it is, we will handle it."

Damon smiled, happy to see the determination in Talia's gaze. "Yes, we will. I won't allow anything to happen to you or our little bean sprouting in your belly."

Talia's eyes clouded with tears. There was a life growing within her, and it was Damon's and hers, and she couldn't be happier.

Damon gave her a soft kiss before suggesting, "Let's go to the packhouse and do something to improve the mood." He didn't want to watch people unloading things anymore.

Talia had a different idea. "Did you forget we need to buy a present for Ashton? Afterward, we can go to the sweetshop and eat some yummy cakes."

...

Talia and Damon returned to the packhouse later that afternoon. They finished shopping and eating sweets, and they even brought some cake to keep in the fridge, for later.

Talia was pleased with the present they got for Ashton. It was a model of a plane that needed assembling, and it could fly while operated remotely (assuming the assembly was done right). It was complicated, but Talia remembered how Ashton was acting like a little adult, so she thought that he would like this gift that's for older kids.

Damon and Talia still didn't discuss if they would go to the party, but even if they didn't, they would send their gift.

Talia saw Cinna falling on the floor when Damon knocked it down with the bag he put on the sofa.

"You are doing that on purpose," Talia called him out. Once or twice might be accidental, but Talia already found Cinna on the floor numerous times, a few times too close to the trash bin, while Blackie was always right where she left him.

The only one coming here was Rosa, and she wouldn't dare throw their stuff around. That left Damon as the culprit.

"Doing what?" Damon asked like he had no idea what she was talking about.

Talia went to pick up the plush toy from the floor. "Don't spoil our child's first toy."

Damon paused as he realized what Talia was talking about. "You will give that thing to our daughter?"

"That THING is my first toy. It's a beautiful plush puppy. I want to give her to our baby."

Damon was glad that Talia was considering giving that wretched toy away, but to their child!? He didn't like it. "Why don't we give Cinna to Ashton?"

"He is six years old boy. Plush toys are probably boring for him."

"My daughter's firsts will come from me," Damon squeezed through his teeth with more venom than he intended to let out.

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Chapter 838: Planning mixers

Talia couldn't believe how stubborn Damon was. Sure, Cinna was just a plush puppy, and it was just a toy for their baby, but it was important to Talia as well.

"Why can't I give something to our child? And why are we talking about me and you like we are separate? And..." Talia paused when it dawned on her. "This is because Keith gave me Cinna. Isn't it?"

Damon's silence answered Talia's question.

Damon knew he was petty and that it didn't make sense. Talia was his and his alone, and she never thought about any other guy, but... he couldn't help it. That toy reminded Damon of Keith's ghost that hovered over them, and the fact that Talia was so caring toward that toy was infuriating and, at the same time, preventing Damon from trashing it.

Talia put Cinna on the sofa and hugged Damon. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you, what?"

"That you don't approve I kept a toy that Keith gave me?"

"It's not that I don't approve, but..." He didn't know what to say next. Should he lie and pretend that he didn't have a grudge against a plush toy?

Talia felt her insides tightening. If Damon kept in their bedroom an item from another female, Talia would be livid. And this was from Keith, who looked at Talia as more than just his Luna.

"I'm so sorry, Damon," Talia said. "I will be more considerate of your feelings."

Cinna was important because it was Talia's first toy.

Talia played with Cinna and Blackie, like they were brother and sister, and she completely forgot that Keith had given her that toy. And she didn't think it would hurt Damon's feelings.

"Don't be sorry, kitten," Damon spoke into her hair, feeling guilty that he ended up burdening her.

"Give me some time."

"For?" He asked.

"To fix things," Talia said, and before he could ask what that meant, she got on her toes and kissed him.

Talia couldn't throw Cinna, but she was determined to find her a good home. It was her first toy, and she loved it, but nothing compared to Damon's peace of mind.

...

Talia and Damon were having dinner with Maya and Caden.

As usually when they didn't have guests, Maya and Caden were giving updates about the current status.

The Beta duo had Erik, Zack, and Petra following them during the day to learn and help. Caden was happy to report, "They are smart kids. Fast learners. When Maya and I leave, they will be able to handle several tasks independently, and I will tell them to ask for your input when in doubt."

"It would be good if you give us a list of things the kids did so far," Talia said.

Damon was feeding Talia while recollecting how for years, it was just him and his Betas. The fact that Talia was at this table, participating in the conversation as an equal, warmed his heart.

An image of Cassie in Talia's place flashed in Damon's mind, and he quickly shook it away. Cassie would be a horrible Luna. She was bossy and condescending, and if he made her his Luna, she would only get worse.

Between Damon, Caden, and Maya, they had too much temper at the table, and Talia was like a calming balm that made everything better. No matter how heated things got when their opinions clashed, no one could raise his (or her) voice at Talia.

Another image flashed in Damon's mind; this one was with Marcy sitting on his left. That was when Damon was under the effect of the dark magic, and he didn't remember Talia, yet he still knew that Marcy being there was wrong. Only Talia belonged there.

"Damon?"

Talia's voice pulled Damon out of his thoughts.

"Yes, kitten?"

"Are you alright?"

"I am happy you are here." He admitted his thoughts.

Talia's face exploded into a bright smile. She didn't expect those sweet words, especially not in front of an audience, but that made it much better.

She leaned to give him a smacking kiss on the lips.

"There is no other place I would rather be," she said, and this was the truth.

After dinner, Caden and Damon went to the study to discuss rotations of patrols for the next month. With Caden's upcoming long vacation, Damon wanted to ensure they don't leave any openings.

Maya and Talia lingered in the living room while snacking on cookies.

Talia wanted to ask Maya more about the rogue situation because Damon kept her in the dark. Talia knew that he did that, so she didn't get upset, but not knowing was making her nervous.

Before Talia could ask anything, Zina came in bringing tea and cake.

"I saw the cake in the fridge, and I thought you might enjoy this," Zina said while putting a cup of ginger tea in front of Talia.

Talia smiled at the thought that Damon had asked Zina to bring her tea that eases nausea. He was busy working, yet he still thought of her. How can she be mad at him because he was shielding her from things that might upset her?

"Why don't you join us?" Talia asked Zina. "There is plenty of cake for everyone."

Zina was happy to join. With Dawn gone, Zina's evenings were uneventful. Sure, there were other Omegas she could mingle with, but Zina missed her bestie.

Maya's eyes sparkled while picking which slice of cake to eat first. There were so many options, and they all came from the best bakery in Darkbourne. Chocolate cake, mocha, vanilla, lemon, strawberry, and mixed fruits, each moist, fragrant, and tempting.

Talia and Zina shared a slice of mixed fruit cake because there was only one slice, and they both wanted it.

"How are mixers going?" Talia asked Maya.

"Good, good. Everyone knows about Malia."

Talia couldn't believe this. "Malia?" What was Maya talking about? "I'm not even there."

"But your presence lingers. The members of the Midnight Guardians pack are worshipping you already. One more boon won't change things."

Talia exhaled helplessly. There was no point in arguing. "Tell me about the upcoming events."

Maya started with the closest one, and Talia was impressed with how Maya came up with various themes to keep things interesting. There was a day at the beach, picnic on

the meadow, mixer in a bar, hiking through the forest, an outing in the town, barbecue by the pool... Maya said how she needed to come up with different things because some people didn't find their mates for a while, and she didn't want them to get bored by attending the same-themed events. They would also change locations to accommodate members from other packs.

"Wait, wait..." Talia interrupted Maya when she spoke about one of the upcoming events.

"Isn't that one day before you go on your vacation?" Talia asked.

Maya confirmed.

"Don't you need to pack?" Talia asked. And there were probably other things Maya should do.

"I do, but this is with the Blue River pack, and Tatiana said that she can't make it sooner because she has some fashion show to prepare for. The problem is that I still need to pick a theme for this one."

"Why are you taking everything on yourself?" Talia asked Maya. "You are doing a great job, but you can't put others in front of your needs. With your heat coming, I'm sure you can find a better use for your time." Before Maya could object, Talia looked at Zina, "The two of us can do it, right?" And they can probably involve Mindy as well.

Zina's eyes widened. "Sure, I will be happy to help." With Talia's mate-matching-mojo, maybe Zina will find her mate also!

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### Chapter 839: No cake for guys

Talia was happy to hear that Zina would help organize this mixer. Talia loved parties, but she had no idea how to organize one. Luckily, with Zina's and Mindy's help, it shouldn't be too difficult.

Talia went to the side table and got a notepad and a pen, ready to write down stuff.

"What do you have so far?" Talia asked Maya.

"Nothing for this one. The idea is the most important part, but I exhausted everything I had, and I fear we will need to repeat something."

Talia tapped her chin while thinking. She didn't want to simply repeat what Maya already did. This was her party, and Talia wanted to give it her personal touch. But what could that be?

Talia remembered events she attended, and one stood out as fantastic.

"How about a fair?" Talia asked.

Maya paused. "A what?"

"A fair." Talia had many fantastic memories from the Summer Solstice festival. The day was full of ups and downs, but the evening was unforgettable. She watched fireworks with Damon, he held her hand, they ate delicious food, played games, she danced around the bonfire... and it all ended with her giving him the garland and then... their first kiss. Wasn't that perfect for a mixer where werewolves should find their mates?

Seeing that both Maya and Zina looked at her in confusion, Talia explained, "We can set up a few stalls for food, have an area with outdoor seating, and organize games like a ring toss, balloon pop, bobbing for apples, and spin the wheel."

"Oh, yes!" Zina exclaimed. "We can add cute prizes for games, call a band, and have an area for dancing."

Maya pouted. "If the two of you are so motivated and full of ideas, why don't you help with other events also?"

Talia stuck her tongue out at Maya. "Because you do everything on your own without asking for help. If you need our assistance, you only need to ask. Now, for this event, do you have a location set, or can we pick?"

Three females started sharing their thoughts, and quickly they had a list of things to do. Maya suggested a few spots, and Zina and Talia said they would check them out to pick one.

Talia said that Mindy will take care of decorations, Zina volunteered to deal with whatever was needed for the games, and Talia was responsible for securing food items.

Talia pointed her fork at the now nearly empty plate with cakes. "We should get sweets from this bakery."

Maya clicked her tongue. "You are thinking small. If the word spreads that Luna is organizing an event, every restaurant in Darkbourne will rush to set up a stall."

Talia thought of something. "Zina, can you help me talk to Chef Page?"

Zina froze. That was Lulu's father, and Zina felt responsible for Lulu's untimely death.

"Sure," Zina said stiffly.

"You want him to participate at the fair?" Maya asked.

Talia confirmed. "Damon and I visited him, and he seemed... not good. I hope that giving him something to do might cheer him up." And she also hoped that Zina would feel less guilty about everything if she talked to the man.

Talia put her hand on Zina's.

"Hey," Talia called. "You need to stop blaming yourself. It was just a lot of innocent things that piled up into something no one could predict. None of us knew the rogues will attack, and none knew that Lulu..." Talia couldn't finish that. "But it happened, and we are all grieving. Let's help each other move on while honoring memories of those who died so that we can live in peace."

"Oh..." Maya sighed while wiping the tears that suddenly swelled in her eyes. "That was beautiful. Why don't you make that a theme for the fair?"

"What?" Talia asked.

"Every fair needs a theme. You can make this fair's theme be honoring fallen heroes."

Talia sniffled and looked at Zina. "What do you think?"

"I think it will be wonderful," Zina said.

"I will ask Tanya to see if they want to join," Talia said. "They lost a lot of people recently as well." Keeping people busy will be a welcome distraction, and everyone could use some cheering up.

Zina was collecting the empty plates when Damon and Caden joined their ladies.

Damon slid onto the sofa next to Talia and wrapped his arms around her. "Did you miss me?"

"Of course," Talia said while leaning on him. "Are you done with work?"

"Work is never done," Caden said as his eyes followed plates that Zina carried away. "But it seems you girls finished something tasty. Without us."

Talia would laugh at Caden's grumpy expression, but she also felt guilty for eating so much cake and not leaving anything for the guys.

"Your Luna is pregnant," Damon said sternly. "I won't allow anyone to make her feel guilty for eating. She is feeding the next Alpha."



Caden spoke sorrowfully, "I wanted some cake also."

Maya hugged him and patted his back. "There, there... do you want us to go to the sweetshop now? They are still open."

Caden pouted. "I don't feel like going out now, but you can give me some sugar." He winked. "Later."

Maya giggled and gave him a smacking kiss on the lips. They all knew Caden was talking about sex.

Talia was desperate to talk about something else.

"What did you do?" She asked Damon.

"Normal stuff and..." Damon paused. "I looked at the guestlist for your Luna ceremony."

Talia blinked. "Was it not good?"

"No, no."

Talia knew he wouldn't bring it up without reason. "But?"

"I noticed that those are all either my connections or high-ranking people related to the pack. What about you, kitten?"

"What about me?"

"Don't you want to invite someone?"

Talia didn't expect this question. "Uhm... I have no one. All my friends are here."

"What about your enemies?" Maya asked from the side.

"Why would I invite my enemies into my house?"

Maya smiled maliciously. "To rub it in, of course! Think of people who looked down on you while you were in the Red Moon pack. Think of the ones who called you names because they thought you were sticking to Damon."

Talia was not interested in such things, but... "There is one person."

Damon perked up. "Who?"

"I told you about Olivia," Talia said to Damon, and then she turned to Maya and Caden. "She was my friend while I was in the Red Moon pack."

"Oh, great!" Maya exclaimed. "We should put her on the guest list. Alpha Edward will go nuts to see that you made friends with someone from his pack, and you are ignoring him."

Talia's face fell. "Olivia left the Red Moon pack a while ago when she found her mate."

Maya didn't think that was a big deal. "Do you know where she went?"

Talia shook her head. Maybe Olivia mentioned it, but Talia forgot. However... "Her father is the pack doctor in the Red Moon pack."

"We have a lead," Maya said. "With Cornelia coming here daily, we can tell her to find out for us. Someone should know where Olivia is now."

Talia's heart rate picked up. She liked the idea of reuniting with her friend. Her only friend at that time.

Talia hoped she could meet Olivia and show her that she was not a scrawny girl in the attic anymore. Will Olivia be happy for her? Talia surely hoped so.

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Chapter 840: Malia strikes again! (C&T)

Lunchtime the next day...

Maya was looking at the messages on her phone while entering the dining room after Caden.

Damon and Talia were already there.

Maya greeted Damon and Talia before saying, "It seems we heard back about your friend sooner than expected."

"You did?" Talia asked, guessing that this was about Olivia.

"Mhm," Maya confirmed with a hum and she was reading the text message while taking, "I just got a text from Dawn. She asked Omegas from George's villa, and some of them heard that..." Maya's voice trailed.

"What is it?" Talia asked anxiously. Did something bad happen to Olivia? Was she dead?

"I will ask them to verify this," Maya said.

"Tell me," Talia demanded.

"They said that Olivia's mate is a warrior from the Shadowbite pack."

Talia noticed that both Damon and Caden frowned at this.

Talia tried to remember what she knew about that pack. It was a smaller-sized pack that kept to itself. They didn't have the power or status to attend important gatherings, and they didn't host outsiders either. It was not unusual for smaller packs to stay isolated; it was their way of preserving independence. No matter how bad it was, it was theirs.

"Is something wrong with that pack?" Talia asked.

"That is my pack," Maya said. "I can tell you, as a female, that is not a good place to be."

"What do you mean?"

Caden responded, "It's a patriarchal place, and they don't put much value on females. It's like... all females are Omegas by default."

"But that doesn't mean Olivia is mistreated," Maya quickly said. "It's just... a delicate situation."

Damon rubbed his forehead with force. He thought that bringing up Talia's old friend would be a good thing and not that it would make her emotions unstable.

"Let me take care of this," Damon said to Talia. "Caden, get me a meeting with the Alpha of the Shadowbite pack. I want to talk to him in person."

"I want to be there also," Talia protested.

"It will be a phone call," Damon said, and his cut-off tone told Talia that she won't be present and that was non-negotiable.

Damon's expression softened. "Do you trust me, kitten?"

Talia nodded right away.

Damon looked into her eyes seriously. "I will make sure your friend attends your Luna ceremony."

...

~ the Spring Leaf pack ~

Damon and Talia arrived with Keith and Caleb at the packhouse of the Spring Leaf pack.

The packhouse was a two-story home, surrounded by bushes and tall trees. There was a small garden filled with flowers in front.

If that house were placed in a suburb of a human city, it wouldn't stand out.

There was no fancy driveway, and it was not a mansion with many guest bedrooms. It was simple.

'Are you sure we are at the right place?' Talia asked Damon through their private mind-link as he helped her get out of the car. She didn't want to risk someone overhearing her and thinking of her as impolite. She was genuinely curious.

Damon chuckled. 'In this pack, people have their own homes, and that includes their Alpha and Luna. They have an event hall nearby, where they gather.'

Talia's eyes flashed with understanding, and Damon added, 'After greeting Cristian and Michelle, we will go to one of the guest houses.'

Before Damon could say more, their attention was drawn toward the main door that flung open, and a petite brunette rushed out.

"I'm sorry for not greeting you immediately, but the sauce was..." Her voice trailed, and her eyes moved to a figure behind Damon.

Talia put her hand over her chest. It was happening again. Mates! Keith and Caleb were right there, but which one was it?

Damon and Talia turned to see that Caleb and Keith were standing with their heads in the trunk of Damon's black armored SUV.

Damon sucked in a sharp breath, and a smile slithered on his face. Was it possible that Keith found his mate?

'THUNK!'

A loud sound was heard when Caleb hit his head on the trunk lid.

"Dude!" Keith called. "Did you crack your skull?" That was quite a hard hit.

Caleb's arm moved to hold onto the spot that was aching, but it froze halfway as he returned the dazed stare of a petite brunette that was standing there.

Talia tugged Damon to move to the side as the brunette and Caleb walked toward each other as possessed.

Caleb reached to touch her face, and they both jolted when the tips of his fingers made contact with her jaw.

The intensity of the sparks took them by surprise, and they broke into matching smiles.

Caleb took a deep breath, filling his lungs with the scent of rosemary that reminded him of roasted beef his grandmother would make every Sunday. This rosemary was much more seductive, making him crave a taste of the woman in front of him. She was beautiful.

The brunette smiled dreamily while basking in Caleb's sweet scent of cookie dough. She always loved stealing a bit of cookie dough before baking it, but now she feared that just a bit wouldn't be enough because the man in front of her looked delicious.

His black hair, flawlessly deep brown skin, precisely trimmed Balbo beard... it was all perfect.

"Caleb," he said.

"Trisha," she responded.

She took his hand and paused to relish the addictive sparks that flared upon contact.

"Will you come with me?" She asked.

"Anywhere," Caleb responded dreamily.

Damon, Talia, and Keith didn't move until Caleb and Trisha disappeared into the bushes.

"Crap!" Damon cursed under his breath. He really hoped that the petite brunette was for Keith.

"Are you upset Caleb found his mate?" Talia asked.

"No, no," Damon was quick to deny it. "This is a happy thing. But the timing is off. He came here to protect you, and now he is useless."

Damon blinked innocently while hoping that Talia had bought the story. Well, it was not completely false.

Talia stifled a giggle. "It will be fine, Damon. We are prepared for the worst, aren't we? Sure, Caleb is a capable warrior, but he is just one person."

"Why are you standing there?" Luna Michelle spoke from the door. "Didn't Trisha come to show you inside?"

"I believe you lost her," Talia said.

Michelle frowned in confusion. "Lost her?"

Talia pointed in the direction where Caleb and Trisha disappeared. "She saw Caleb, and they went all goo-goo before disappearing that way. Oh, and you will need someone else to look after the sauce. It sounded important."

Michelle put her hand over her lips which were lifted into a smile. "Trish found her mate. How lovely. But what will I do without my main helper in the house?"

Talia grinned. "Your loss is my gain." If Trisha was working in the house where Alpha and Luna were, it meant she was reliable and trustworthy, and Talia needed such people in their packhouse. Zina was lonely, and Talia hoped that Trisha might fill a portion of the gap that Dawn left behind.

Cristian also showed up, and he was shaking hands with Damon when...

"Yes!" A small voice was heard from the door, and a child-sized bullet dashed toward Talia.

Ashton was fast, but Damon was faster.

"Ah!" Ashton cried when Damon grabbed the back of his shirt, lifting him up like he was a chicken.

"Let me go!" Ashton shouted while wiggling his little arms and legs in an attempt to reach Talia.

"That is my Luna you are trying to cling onto," Damon squeezed through his teeth.

Talia looked at Damon helplessly. Why was he the biggest child here?

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Author's note: You can see the pic of Caleb and Trisha in the comments.

Bookmark this website to update the latest chapters.