

Alphas Bride 141

Chapter 141 - Coach Keith Is Busy [Bonus]

Talia was sitting on Damon's lap and relishing the feeling of his firm arms around her.

They were on a bench in the closet, yet she felt content like they are in the most romantic place on Earth.

Her sight moved to the left side of the closet, and she smiled a little. The willful Alpha really moved her clothes into his room. Doesn't this mean that they are living together? Officially.

"Are only my clothes here, or...?", Talia's voice trailed, and she waited for Damon to respond.

"Your toiletries are in the bathroom and everything else is on the sofa in the sitting area, waiting for you to find its place.", he responded, and she could hear that he was smiling.

"Does that mean that the room across the hall is unused again?", Talia asked.

Damon hummed in confirmation while thinking how that could be the perfect nursery. Yup, he will impregnate Talia and that room will belong to their son or daughter, just how it was his when he was a child.

But he didn't want to tell that to Talia now. It was too soon and she would either not believe him or freak out.

There was another thing he wanted to say.

"Later today, another desk will arrive in my office so that you can have your workspace in OUR office."

Yes, there were plenty of unused rooms in the packhouse that could turn into Talia's study, but Damon wanted to have her in his visual range, so... this will work.

Talia looked at him and blinked. "What if you have an important meeting?" Will he chase her away then?

Damon smiled and shook his head. "I have no secrets from you, kitten." Other than them being mates, but he will tell her that. Soon.

Talia's heart swelled, rejecting any sprouting negativity. She didn't want anything to ruin this happiness that came with a sense of belonging.

Yes, this bliss is temporary, but is there anything in life that's forever? No.

Talia's arms circled around him, and she sank further into the comfort of Damon's embrace while telling herself that right now, this moment with Damon is perfect and it's enough. It has to be.

Damon kissed her temple and Talia let out a satisfying sigh.

He could feel that Talia lulled herself into peaceful enjoyment and he was happy about it.

This was the most skin-to-skin contact they had so far, and he relished all the sparks that penetrated into his system, urging him to get closer.

Talia was his drug.

Damon realized that what he felt for Talia was not an ordinary love. She was the center of his world, and he didn't remember how he survived before Talia entered his life.

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Damon held Talia's hand and led the way down the hallway of the main floor of the packhouse.

Talia was distracted by his body that was covered only with a tank top and training shorts. Damon's physique is impressive and no matter how much she sees the tight landscape of his muscles, it's never enough.

When Damon opened the last door on the right, Talia understood why he asked her to wear clothes for exercise.

The room had two walls covered with mirrors, and there were two treadmills, two rowing machines, two ellipticals, two benches with weights on the side, two sandbags, and an area with an exercising mat.

All machines were facing a wall that had mirrors and big television, just below the ceiling.

"I didn't know that the packhouse has a gym.", Talia said.

Damon smirked mysteriously. This was not a gym before yesterday.

He ordered Omegas to set up this room as soon as he realized that Keith is Talia's personal trainer.

Damon has no issues with Talia training, but he won't allow that wretched coach anywhere near Talia and those horny werewolves (aka his pack members) are not worthy of watching Talia's scarcely dressed form.

Talia looked around before turning to Damon with a smile. "This is fantastic." And very convenient. Like this, she doesn't need to go to the training center, and she can shower nicely in her room.

Talia's thoughts halted when she realized that she is now staying in Damon's room.

He didn't move into his room only her clothes, but her toiletries, the flowery garland that she is drying for him, the Cinderella book, and even Blackie and Cinna are now in Damon's room.

Talia wondered, why was Blackie on the sofa while Cinna was on the floor? But she just assumed that Cinna fell accidentally because whoever transferred things didn't pay attention.

While thinking about the new living arrangements, Talia smiled because this confirmed she will sleep with Damon every night, and she could imagine them doing their morning routine side-by-side in the bathroom.

Will they share a toothpaste?

Ah! Will they shower together?

Well, considering what Damon did to her in the closet earlier, it's only a matter of time before they get frisky under the shower. Talia's cheeks heated at that thought.

She forced herself to focus on the present.

Gym.

Training.

"Will Keith come here to train me?"

Damon looked at Talia's bashful expression while asking about Keith and his mood worsened.

"I will train you.", Damon said stiffly. "Coach Keith is busy."

Talia didn't get it. "Busy with what?"

"The whole soccer team left for a month-long survival training in the mountains. As their coach, Keith is with them."

Damon thought that maybe he overreacted by sending them all to live for a month in harsh conditions, but after seeing Talia's expression, he regretted not making it longer.

The moment Damon received Keith's detailed plan on training Talia, Damon informed Keith that he has one hour to pack a backpack of necessities and wrap up any loose ends before going for a month-long training.

"Oh...", a sound escaped Talia's lips and she frowned while thinking that just yesterday she saw Keith in the training center, and he didn't mention anything.

Damon couldn't handle the jealousy that bubbled inside him.

"Tell me, Talia... do you miss him that much?"

Talia didn't get it. "What?"

Damon walked to her in slow steps, and she couldn't look away from his icy-blue orbs that locked her in place.

That was not Damon she knew.

That was a vicious predator stalking his prey.

Talia swallowed a mouthful of air while wondering what possessed him this time.

"Coach Keith...", Damon said in a dangerously low voice. "You seem to like spending time with him. Are you sorry that you won't see him for a month?"

Talia was not sure how to respond to this. Does she like spending time with Keith? "He is a nice guy, and my trainer and..."

Damon's face darkened and Talia realized something.

"Are you jealous?"

"Of Keith? Don't joke like that." Damon had no intention of admitting it and Talia calling him out took him by surprise.

No one EVER called him out like that.

Damon denied it, but somehow, Talia knew he was lying.

Her heart swelled at the thought that this was not an intimidating Alpha. This was an insecure one.

Talia couldn't believe that a guy like Damon would be insecure about her.

He is handsome, powerful, influential, confident, and she is none of that. But then... Damon is a werewolf, and they tend to claim things (and people) and it's not unusual to hear about a fierce fight over a favorite t-shirt.

Something inside Talia stirred, urging her to comfort him.

Talia closed the distance between them and gingerly wrapped her arms around Damon.

"Didn't you say that I'm yours?", Talia asked in a small voice. "I remember you saying how you had many firsts with me. I can say the same about you. I gave you my first kiss. How could I be thinking about any other man?"

All negativity dissipated from Damon in an instant, and he hugged her back with urgency.

This was the first time for Talia to initiate a hug and she kind of said that she is his. And she confirmed that he got her first kiss.

"Mine. Don't forget that.", he mumbled into her hair, and she nodded in agreement.

Chapter 142 - Talk About Scent

After an unknown measure of time, Talia and Damon separated and they focused on why they came to the gym. Training.

Talia was impressed to see how prepared Damon was. In a matter of minutes, he dispelled her doubts that he won't be able to train her as well as Keith.

Talia wondered, is there anything Damon won't excel in?

They started with stretching and then he put around her upper arm a device that will measure her vitals in real-time, similar to the one Keith put on her at the training center.

Talia picked a movie to play on the TV and Damon set a timer for half an hour with, "We will start with thirty minutes-long sessions, and work our way up gradually. When the time is up, we will stop the movie, and continue during our next session."

It was a day for building her stamina, so Talia started with the treadmill, and then she moved to the elliptical machine.

All machines came in pairs, and Damon was exercising next to Talia, albeit at a much faster pace with more resistance and incline, but she enjoyed the company and the movie helped in distracting her from the ache that was swelling in her muscles.

Other than exercising, Damon was occasionally taking notes on Talia's performance.

They ended their session with another round of stretching that will prevent sore muscles.

At some point, Talia stood straight and lifted her arms above her head, and Damon instructed, "Imagine there is something you want to reach, and you can almost touch it... almost. Get on your toes. Feel the stretch. Hold this for ten seconds. Don't forget to breathe."

Talia closed her eyes and focused on breathing while counting slowly to ten.

Damon looked at the little woman wearing only tight shorts and a sports bra, both red in color, and he swallowed hard at the sight of one bead of sweat that was sliding down her upper arm.

Talia counted until seven when she jolted in fright. Something strange touched her armpit.

Talia looked in disbelief at Damon who was standing right next to her, and she saw his tongue darting a bit. Did he just lick her there?

"What did you do?" Talia asked while holding onto her violated armpit.

Damon had no intention of denying it. "You taste amazing, kitten."

Talia made a face. Amazing? She is sweaty, for crying out loud!

Damon moved closer to Talia, and she took a step back on instinct.

Damon cocked an eyebrow at her. "Am I repulsing because I'm sweaty?"

Talia blinked at his enchanting visual.

The tank top clung onto his muscular body like a second skin, but it was not unpleasant. Not even a little bit.

She shook her head.

"What is it then? Do I smell bad?", he continued probing.

Talia frowned a little. How can he say that he smells bad? Damon always smells good, and the sweat somehow only increased his deliciousness, urging her to lick him all over and maybe take a bite as well.

If Talia was not so shy, she would probably clean him completely with her tongue and he won't need to shower.

He asked her about his scent, and she hesitated for some time before responding, "You smell like the forest and the dark chocolate."

Damon paused. "That's very specific. Was your sense of smell always so good?"

He assumed that her wolf is enhancing her sense of smell just like her superior eyesight.

"No. It's only with you.", Talia admitted.

Damon felt his heart racing. "What did you say?"

Talia thought for a moment before responding. "I can distinguish scents of things and people, but with you is different."

"How different?", Damon continued probing.

"I know your scent in a crowd. It's much stronger than the others. It's like..."

"Like?", he urged her to finish.

"Like it's calling for me."

Damon's face lit up. His scent is calling to her? Doesn't that mean she can feel the bond, at least to some extent? And if she can feel the bond, that means that her wolf is close!

"Was that from the first time we met or did it start recently?", he asked excitedly.

'From the first time we met?', Talia's mood fell.

Isn't that when she saw him with princess Marcy between his legs? At that time, Talia was flustered by the scene in front of her and her survival instincts kicked in, and she fled.

Did he really think that she will stop to sniff the air? Maybe he was enjoying the moment, but Talia feared for her life.

"Uhm... Why does that matter? I'm sure that many she-wolves told you that you smell good." Of course, with so many women chasing after him, they must be attracted to his scent and not only to his good looks, power, or position.

Damon saw that Talia's expression was changing and he swiftly pulled her in his embrace.

He smiled when her arms wrapped around him in return.

"This is the first time I heard that my scent is inviting someone. Werewolves have a keen sense of smell, but when you feel the attraction, it has a special meaning."

Talia looked up at him, unsure where he was going with this.

Damon had the word 'mate' at the tip of his tongue, but then he swallowed it back when he realized that Talia's mood is off. Did he do something?

Damon was oblivious that his mentioning of the first time they met invoked for Talia mental images of him and Marcy. From Damon's perspective, he remembers Talia standing at the door and running away, and he completely filtered Marcy out from that memory.

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"Do you like my scent?", he asked.

Talia nodded.

He buried his face in the crook of her neck and took a deep breath.

"I love your scent, kitten...", he murmured. "It's sweet and citrusy, and it reminds me of colorful flowers that my mother used to plant in the garden. Freesia. I can't say that your scent is stronger than the others, it's quite the opposite. If you are not nearby, I can't track you."

Talia bit her lower lip guiltily. Should she tell him that it's because of the herbs she is taking?

What if he tells her to stop taking them?

That's her failsafe, in case she needs to hide or run away so that others can't track her.

Why would she run or hide? She wanted to be with Damon, no matter how much it lasted, and no matter how many she-wolves were eager to get between his legs, like princess Marcy.

But what will happen when Damon gets bored of Talia and finds someone else? Will he discard her or want to keep her as backup? Will she be willing to be his backup? What if...?

Her thoughts were interrupted when Damon spoke again, "I am addicted to your scent."

Talia's skin flashed in goosebumps when he licked her neck.

"And I love how you taste, kitten."

He licked her again and Talia fisted his sweaty tank top because her legs became wobbly.

She didn't understand why her body reacted like that to him.

Why were Damon's small acts of affection able to dispel her dark thoughts?

She was absolutely defenseless in his embrace which had the power to shut down all the alarm bells that are normally always active in the back of her mind.

It didn't make sense. Logically speaking, she should run away from the unstable Alpha as far as her legs carry her, yet her legs were willing to take her only to Damon.

Damon let out a long breath and pecked her lips.

"We should tidy up. Lunch will be ready in fifteen minutes..."

Talia nodded in agreement. She knew that Stephanie mind-linked Damon about the food and Talia was not sure if she should be grateful for this interruption or not because something told her that if they continued, within minutes, she would be down on the exercising mat panting and moaning Damon's name.

Chapter 143 - Talk About Scent (cont.) [Bonus]

When they reached the master bedroom after training, both Damon and Talia needed a shower.

Talia was nervous while thinking that Damon will ask her to shower together. After all, they were sharing a room and a bed and Stephanie said that the lunch was in only fifteen minutes.

Talia was getting panicky while wondering if she can go through it. It means that both of them will be naked, in a tight space... oh, gosh!

"You go first, kitten. I need to take care of something first."

Talia was sure that her ears malfunctioned. "Eh?"

Damon cocked an eyebrow. "Did you want us to shower toge..."

"No, no!", Talia interrupted him and dashed into the closet to grab fresh clothes before going into the bathroom.

Isn't this what she wanted? But why was she disappointed?

Damon looked at the closed door of the bathroom with a complex expression. Should he join her? No. That can wait because there was a pressing matter.

'Did you hear what Talia said about my scent?', Damon asked his wolf expectantly.

Damon was itching to discuss this with his wolf from the moment Talia said how his scent is different from all others, but he didn't want to call out to his wolf when Talia is nearby because his wolf amplifies Damon's instincts, including the one to mark his mate.

Damon was already craving for Talia, and with his wolf present, he was afraid that he might lose control and do something that will stain their budding relationship.

Talia was opening up to him wonderfully and waiting a bit longer could be the difference between Talia loving Damon's mark on her and cringing whenever she sees it.

'Yes', his wolf responded. 'I heard that.'

'Doesn't this mean she can feel the bond?'

'Maybe. But it doesn't give any guarantee that her wolf is waking up.'

Damon knew that his wolf was interested in Talia's wolf the most. After all, only with Talia's wolf, their bond can be complete.

Damon heard from several people (Caden included) that other than wolf identifying the mate, the scent and the sparks also play important roles.

Damon had a wolf, and Talia's was unavailable. Damon could sense the sparks, and Talia couldn't. Talia could pick up Damon's unique scent and Damon could barely pick up Talia's.

Is this the Moon Goddess's idea of a joke?

But Damon's sense of scent is the best in the pack. He is the Alpha for a reason. Why was her scent so faint the moment there is some distance between them?

Sure, when Talia was nearby, Damon was like an addict, craving for a whiff of her scent, but he clearly remembers how more than once he failed in tracking her. Alphas have extremely sharp senses, and Damon could track anyone... anyone other than Talia.

All these uncertainties were driving Damon nuts.

Damon wanted to talk to Travis about this. As a doctor and a werewolf, Travis should know a thing or two about these things. But how can he explain the situation without disclosing that Talia is his mate?

'You can talk to Gideon.', his wolf said.

Damon frowned. Gideon is the shaman of the Dark Howlers pack, and as much as Gideon is needed for the spiritual guidance of the pack members, in Damon's opinion, the old guy is full of gibberish.

Shaman believes in the will of the Moon Goddess, karma, the power of prayer, magical crystals, and unseen energies, while Damon believes in things he can see and touch... you know, science.

The relationship between Damon and Gideon is not simple. There is an enmity between them which started many years ago.

When Damon's parents died, Damon stormed into the shaman's house and trashed it in rage.

"If you are so powerful, why didn't you see the danger? Why didn't you save your Alpha and Luna? Why didn't you stop it!?"

Gideon bowed his head in submission and didn't say a word while Damon demolished everything in sight. The old shaman knew that this was the way for the young Alpha to mourn the loss of his parents.

It was a big scene because many pack members were gathered at Gideon's place, seeking guidance in times of uncertainty.

Damon was helpless and angry, and his venting estranged him from Gideon and several other Elders of the pack who worked closely with Alpha and Luna.

As Damon gained his footing as the Alpha without mending his relationship with the shaman, the pack members started distancing themselves from Gideon. No one dared to openly support Gideon when he was shunned by the Alpha.

Gideon doesn't have children who would inherit his calling, and he had three disciples. However, due to the feud between Gideon and Damon, the three disciples left Gideon because they didn't want to risk their families being ostracized.

And that is how the relationship between Damon and Gideon cooled to the point of them ignoring each other's existence. When they meet for some functions, they talk, but not more than absolutely necessary.

Damon's wolf knew how Damon felt about the shaman, so he started throwing ideas, 'You can talk to Gideon with a pretense of you being unsure how to identify your mate. Tell him that the Elders are pressuring you to marry some random women, but you want to find your mate, and you suspect I'm flawed, so you want to know about other signals. He will support to have a fated mate as a Luna because that's what the Moon Goddess intended...'

Damon thought that this might work. Maybe.

Ah, he really didn't want to see that guy! There must be some other way because going to Gideon and asking for guidance is the same as asking for a truce.

In the world of werewolves, the person who seeks a truce first is a loser.

Damon's wolf snorted when he sensed that Damon was not willing to reach out to the shaman. 'You can wait until mate's overall condition improves and see if that will wake up her wolf. Or you can mark her, and your Alpha DNA will give her the necessary boost.'

At that thought of marking Talia, Damon became hard instantly.

Yes, marking is technically a bite where one injects his venom into the mate's system, but in order to commemorate the moment, loving couples do it while two bodies are connected as one passionately, and Damon really wanted to connect with Talia.

'Marking her could give her a boost, or it can cripple her', Damon responded dejectedly while looking at the closed door of the bathroom. The sound of water running told him that Talia was in the shower.

'And that's another thing you could discuss with Gideon...'

Damon groaned in frustration.

Maybe he can talk to Maya? With Caden gone, Maya is the only one who knows that Damon and Talia are mates. But... what can she tell Damon that he doesn't already know?

Yes, there is Stephanie, and several other people, but Damon built a reputation for himself as someone who is not interested in relationships and is looking down on a mate bond and if he starts asking about it, it will be suspicious.

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"Damon?", Talia called with concern when she got out of the bathroom.

Damon was sitting on the sofa with his hands over his face. He looked distressed.

Damon raised his head and in a few quick steps, he was in front of Talia, pulling her in his embrace.

"What are you doing?", Talia asked while squirming out of his hold. She was frustrated. His embrace was not forceful, yet she couldn't budge. Actually, it only made her rub on him more.

"I just showered, and you are sweaty. Everyone will pick up your scent on me.", Talia cried.

"That's fine.", Damon said. "Since your scent is barely noticeable, I will give you mine, so that I can find you when you are not in my sight."

He noticed that Talia lowered her gaze and he quickly let her go. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you."

Talia felt guilt washing over her. He did so much for her, yet she was keeping secrets from him.

"About that...", Talia spoke, her voice barely above a whisper. "I am taking a mixture of herbs to suppress my scent."

Damon sucked in a sharp breath. "What? Since when?"

"Uhm... I don't know exactly. For years? You know how I lived at the Red Moon pack. I was able to move around the packhouse undetected because I learned not to make noise when I move, and I found this mixture to suppress my scent. When you brought me to the Dark Howlers pack and we walked through the forest the first time, I saw that herbs are available here and..." Talia's voice trailed at the sight of Damon's unreadable expression. "Are you angry?"

Was he angry? "No, kitten. I am not angry."

He was sad while thinking about what she went through before coming here, and proud that she managed to survive on her own without her wolf, and relieved that he finally uncovered the mystery of Talia's faint scent... but not angry. Definitely not angry.

"Are you willing to share that mixture of herbs with me and my warriors? It would be useful to suppress one's scent when he is on a scouting mission."

Talia's eyes widened in surprise. She thought that Damon will tell her to stop taking it or blame her for keeping that secret, yet he asked if she can share it with him.

Talia never felt so accepted before. It was another first that she had with Damon.

"OK.", Talia responded with a smile.

Damon inched closer and pecked her lips. Once, twice... and then he groaned in frustration. "Lunch is ready. I need to shower..." He gave her one more quick kiss before heading to the bathroom with urgency.

Chapter 144 - A Temporary Patch Of Happiness?

Two days passed...

"Good morning, kitten...", Damon greeted Talia the moment she stirred out of her sleep.

"Good morning...", Talia mumbled back drowsily and snuggled next to him.

Talia is used to Damon's topless proximity, and she doesn't mind sharing the bed with him while wearing only his t-shirt (without underwear). Damon's hands wander over her body occasionally, but he keeps the rest of him in check.

Between working as Damon's assistant, studying, training, and steamy make-out sessions, the time is passing like a flash.

It's the day of the Luna announcing event at the Lightclaw pack!

Instead of being excited about this upcoming party, Talia wished that she can avoid it somehow. If they can stay in bed all day and cuddle, that would be perfect.

Talia had no idea how much Damon was struggling against his urges to devour her completely.

He wants to touch her everywhere and to do much more than touching, but at the same time, he wants to take things slow, at least until he finds a way to disclose they are mates.

Unfortunately, no matter how much Damon was planning to set the mood and to stir the conversation in the right direction, with Caden gone, there was more workload, so he was busy, and the days passed faster than intended.

The good thing in all this was that Talia was in Damon's visual range during the days, and they spent the nights holding each other. They were inseparable and he wouldn't want it any other way.

Talia was aware that Damon was busy. She tried to help him how much she could, and when she couldn't, she read Travis's book and tried not to disturb Damon.

Talia is almost done with the book and Damon promised to accompany her for another health checkup with Travis where she can also return the book and seek further guidance in learning about medicine.

Damon kept his promise. No matter how much work he had, he wouldn't leave the bed until Talia woke up.

He starts the day by demanding his morning kisses and cuddles, then they get ready for the day together and head to their office. It is THEIR office because Talia has her desk which is nearly identical to Damon's, and she has her chair and a laptop and a desk phone and everything.

Their original plan for this day was to work in the morning and after lunch to head to the Lightclaw pack, but last night Damon decided on some changes.

"After breakfast, you will go with Maya and Stephanie to a spa.", Damon informed Talia.

Talia blinked. "A spa?"

Damon hummed in confirmation. "In the evening, we will attend the party. I heard that girls go to a spa before such functions. It's a must."

Talia exhaled helplessly. "I never went to such a place. I am already nervous about the party, and now you are adding a spa as well."

Damon pushed a lock of hair from her face and looked at her lovingly. "There is nothing to be nervous about, kitten. Spas are for pampering and relaxing, so I want you to not think about work or studying or training. Use those few hours to unwind. It's in the human town and those people are paid to serve you and make you feel good. Maya and Steph will be with you."

Damon also demanded all-female service, making a point that no guy gets to massage, beautify, or touch Talia in any way.

"As for tonight, I won't leave your side. Treat this party as if it's just the two of us, and feel free to ignore everyone else. If anyone dares to give you a hard time or just look at you the wrong way, they will need to deal with me."

Talia's heart swelled.

So far, the unpredictable Alpha treated her kindly with respect, and she couldn't prevent herself from falling for him more by the minute.

"Won't you join me in the spa?", Talia asked while drawing invisible patterns with her finger on his bare chest.

Damon frowned a little. "Spas are not for men."

"But I am going to miss you."

Damon's heart skipped a beat. Did she just say what he thinks she said?

In one swift move, Damon rolled them over, placing himself on top of Talia.

"How about this, kitten...", Damon murmured. "I am going to kiss you thoroughly so that you can feel me on your lips until you return."

"What if the feeling wanes sooner?"

"Count every minute, and I will make it up to you when you come back."

"With interest?", Talia asked cheekily.

"With whatever you want."

Talia's smile reached her honeyed eyes, and she welcomed Damon's morning kisses that made her toes curl.

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Talia noticed Stephanie's absence during breakfast.

After Talia waved goodbye to Damon and got in the car with Maya, she finally addressed the topic, "I thought that Stephanie will come with us."

"Something came up and she had to leave."

"I see...", Talia said. "I hope it's nothing serious."

But if it was not serious, why would Stephanie leave on short notice? Stephanie was always in the packhouse, making sure there is food and that Omegas are performing their duties, and Talia couldn't imagine what would make Stephanie just leave.

Maya saw that Talia was concerned and she said, "Don't worry, Talia. It's about Lisa."

Talia didn't meet Lisa, but she was aware that Lisa is Stephanie's daughter. "Did something happen?"

Maya was not sure how much to say.

This was the third day of Caden's absence and Maya started suspecting that this is Damon's way of punishing her.

The only reason why Maya was not a hundred percent certain that this was Damon's punishment was because this was not Damon's style.

Damon is a straightforward guy. He either ignores problems or deals with them head-on while this was a tricky situation where Maya felt wronged, but there was nothing she could point her finger at.

Just in case, since Caden left, Maya is keeping a super-low profile in an attempt not to poke the bear (aka the Alpha) and that also includes watching what she will say in front of Damon and Talia.

"Is it a secret?", Talia asked when she saw that Maya was silent.

"Not really. I guess you will find out sooner or later...", Maya paused before explaining, "Anthony, the future Alpha of the Lightclaw pack found his mate, and tonight you will attend her Luna announcing ceremony. What you don't know is that for the last few years, Lisa was dating Tony. Until he returned from his last trip with Kalina, Lisa hoped that she will be Tony's Luna."

Talia's lips formed an 'O' as she realized. "So, Lisa is upset, and Stephanie went to comfort her."

"Not just comfort her. This morning Steph got a call from her sister because Lisa was hysteric, and Steph went there with the intention to bring Lisa home. If Steph is successful, you will meet Lisa when you return tomorrow. Lisa is a good girl, about your age, I'm sure you will get along well."

Talia frowned a bit. Did Maya just say that she will get along with a hysteric girl?

"Will Stephanie force Lisa to leave the Lightclaw pack?"

"I wouldn't use the word 'force', but yes.", Maya responded before quickly adding. "You need to understand that Lisa is obsessed with Tony and if she stays there, it's only a matter of time before she offends Tony or Kalina, and that will bring disaster. Alpha Magnus, Tony's father, is very traditional. Even if Tony wanted to mark Lisa as his mate, his father would not allow it because he believes that only if fated mate becomes Luna, the pack will prosper."

Talia listened to all this with concern obvious in her face and Maya cursed internally while wondering if she let her mouth flap again.

Was Talia drawing a connection between Tony-Lisa's story and Talia's situation with Damon? Probably.

Maya scrambled to get herself out of this pickle.

This would be so much easier if Talia knew that she is Damon's mate! But if Maya blurts that out, Damon will skin her alive!

"Don't take it to heart, Talia. Lisa knew for more than a year that Tony won't make her his Luna because he was looking for his fated mate, just like other unmated Alphas..." Shit! Why did I say that!? "I mean... Your situation is nothing like Lisa's."

Maya bit her tongue so that she stops blabbering.

Talia let out a long breath. Is her situation like Lisa's? Of course, not.

As much as Talia is in love with Damon, she never gave into the delusion that she will be his Luna.

If Talia could have any wish in the world, she would wish that Damon is not an Alpha, and not that she can be his Luna.

Talia accepted that whatever is going on between her and Damon is her patch of happiness, and she is grateful for it, no matter how temporary it is.

"Don't worry, Maya. I'm fine."

"You should be. I know Alpha Damon for years and I can tell you that he is different with you. He is not playing."

Talia didn't want to talk about it. In the end, no matter what Damon feels about her, once he finds his mate, it will be over.

Maybe he never finds his mate? Does he even need a mate in order to dump Talia? There are many other she-wolves who are better than she is.

Talia shook those thoughts away. She shouldn't wish this for Damon. He deserves to find his mate and be happy, even if that means she will be heartbroken.

Talia decided to change the topic.

"I am anxious about the spa. I've never been into one. What should I expect?"

Maya was happy to talk about anything other than Damon and mates. "First, we will undress and put fluffy robes on..."

Talia listened with great interest about massages, facials, manicures, pedicures, scrubs, and cocktails. It all sounded fancy.

Chapter 145 - Teasing Damon [Bonus]

Talia returned to the packhouse from her spa outing with Maya who was in a rush to change clothes and resume her duties.

One refugee family was about to enter the territory of the Dark Howlers pack, and Maya was in charge of welcoming them, dealing with the paperwork, and helping them settle.

Talia wanted to go with Maya and see how all that works, but she needed to prepare for her upcoming trip, so after bidding goodbye to Maya, Talia went up to the third floor, straight to her (and Damon's) bedroom.

Talia dropped several purple bags full of cosmetic products on the floor before plopping on the bed.

Yes, manicure, pedicure, massages, facials, and scrubs were relaxing, her skin was glowing, her nails were sparkly, and everything was fantastic while lasted, but now that she arrived home, Talia realized that she was drained, like someone sucked the energy out of her body.

Without moving a muscle, Talia started thinking about packing.

Luckily, Damon and Talia will return tomorrow, so other than toiletries and a dress for the party, she needs to pack one change of clothes and that's it. She will sleep in Damon's t-shirt, so there is not much to pack, and Talia estimated that she can collect all that into one pile in less than ten minutes.

What about the suitcase? Damon should have a spare one. A little one will do. Maybe a backpack?

A deep chuckle got Talia's attention.

"Should I take this as, you enjoyed at the spa?"

Talia lifted her head a bit to see Damon standing at the door of the closet.

Damon was leaning on the doorframe lazily, wearing black pants that fit snugly over his firm ass, and a light blue shirt with the top two buttons undone, giving her a glimpse of his toned chest. His icy blue eyes smiled at her and those few unruly raven-black strands that stood out of his otherwise perfectly groomed hair made him irresistible.

Talia gaped at him. How can a man be so handsome?

Damon was watching Talia with a half-smirk, starting with her hair that was spread on the bed around her head like a majestic crown. His sight paused on her honeyed eyes that were looking at him, and then he went down her lips, neck, collarbones, following her enchanting frame that was covered in a cream-colored short-sleeved summer dress that flared from her waist down all the way to her knees, and Damon was sure that he never saw a girl more beautiful in his life. And that was his mate. His. Only his.

Talia was flustered. She was properly clothed, but his intense gaze made her feel naked.

"Yeah, the spa was good.", Talia responded when she found her voice. "It was relaxing and now I only feel like lazing."

"Feel free to. I'm almost done packing and there is time until lunch.", Damon said.

Talia rolled her eyes. "You are done packing. What about me?"

"I packed for both of us, kitten.", he said with a smile that made her heart skip a beat.

Talia couldn't believe this. Did he say that he packed things for both of them? Her stuff included?

What dress did he pick for her to wear tonight? Talia decided not to ask. It's not like she knows about fashion anyway. She can match colors and that's about it.

If someone told her that the unpredictable Alpha would pack her things for an overnight stay with him, she would call that person a liar, yet here she is, only hours away from going to a fancy party with Damon, as his date, and they will stay overnight in the packhouse of the Lightclaw pack like important guests.

Amazing.

Talia felt like pinching herself, just to confirm that she is not dreaming.

WAAH! Does that mean he packed her underwear also? How embarrassing.

Damon stalked toward Talia and glanced into purple bags that were next to her legs. "It seems you got some stuff. Is there anything for me?"

Talia blinked. She really didn't think about getting anything for Damon. Actually, she didn't get anything at all.

"These are freebies that the people at the spa packed for us.", Talia responded in her defense. "They said that it was fully paid for three people, and since Steph didn't come, they gave us these goodies. Maya also got a few bags."

Seeing that Damon pouted in displeasure, Talia quickly added. "From what I've seen, there are facemasks, moisturizers, rejuvenating creams, gel peels, and some other stuff. We can use them together."

Damon cocked an eyebrow. "Do you think I need such girly things?"

Talia couldn't believe his I-don't-do-girly-stuff attitude. Massages and skincare have nothing to do with gender.

Talia thought of teasing him a bit. "A man of your age should think about his skin."

Damon's face fell. "A man of my age? What does that mean?"

"Nothing.", Talia mumbled and started getting up from the bed while hoping that she will be able to hide the laughter that bubbled inside her. His expression was comical. She didn't know that the scary Alpha is conscious about his looks. Shouldn't he be about muscles and strength and other manly stuff?

Damon was quick to block her escape route and push her back down with his body. "That didn't sound like nothing, kitten."

Talia wondered if she should tease him a bit more or not. She knew that it was a bad idea, but he was right there, and she went for it.

"Now that I look at you closely, I can see some fine lines around your eyes. If you start using good products now, you can slow down the aging...", Talia's voice trailed when Damon's nostrils flared in anger.

Damon narrowed his eyes at her. "It seems that only a few hours away from me made you forget who you are, Mrs. Blake."

Talia realized that she reached the invisible line. Actually, she probably crossed it.

This required change of tactics.

"Well, maybe next time you shouldn't send me without you.", Talia said sweetly. "It was wonderful and relaxing, but I was missing you."

In an instant, Damon's fury sizzled away.

He looked at her in awe with a smile that reflected in his icy-blue eyes.

"Talia... Talia...", he called her name like a prayer. "You have no idea what you are doing to me."

Talia put her hand on his cheek and smiled. "I know what I could do to you."

Damon's curiosity was piqued. "What?"

"One of those bags has sweet almond and lavender oil that's great for massaging. I'm not really skilled, but I could..."

The rest of her words were swallowed in a fiery kiss, and a second later she forgot what she was about to say.

Damon broke the kiss and spoke into her lips, "Only if I get to massage you in return."

"OK." Talia couldn't believe that she agreed immediately. What were they talking about? It didn't matter.

With one touch, one kiss, she was completely under his spell, willing to say 'yes' to any demand he might have. It was that good.

Damon closed his eyes and exhaled slowly while wondering if one can die from arousal. Just the idea of Talia's slick skin under his palms made him hard to the point of madness.

And she will massage him as well.

But there was one problem. The event.

Yes, they had a few hours, but once he gets his hands on Talia, a few days won't be enough.

"I look forward to our massage, after we return home.", Damon said with a wicked smile.

The scent of Talia's arousal told him that she was looking forward to it as well.

The suspense was maddening.

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Before lunch, Damon took Talia to their study.

He told her to sit on the sofa and moved with a spring in his step toward his desk.

"I've got you this...", Damon said while placing a rectangle-shaped box into her hand.

Damon sat on the sofa next to Talia and based on his anxious expression, Talia guessed that it's something important.

"Thank you", she said sweetly and opened the box.

Her eyes widened in surprise when she saw the cell phone. It was flashy and sleek and even though Talia didn't know much about cell phones, she was confident that this is the latest model.

"Is this for me?", Talia asked, and a big smile bloomed on her face when Damon confirmed with a nod.

"As my assistant, you should have your own phone."

"Wow...", she said under her breath while processing this.

A cell phone. Her very own cell phone.

Damon looked at Talia's lit-up expression and he felt a sense of accomplishment.

He didn't expect that she will like it that much, but he didn't hate it.

From his point of view, Talia didn't really need a cell phone as his assistant. That was just an excuse.

Damon was thinking of gifting her something that would be useful and practical and solve a few ongoing issues, and the cell phone fit the requirements perfectly.

He got it customized so that his phone always shows Talia's GPS coordinates.

Considering that he can't track her scent and that she doesn't have the mind-link, this cellphone will be useful and practical because now Damon CAN track her, and he can also contact her anytime.

Chapter 146 - Damon's Jealousy

Damon was satisfied with Talia's reaction as she examined her new cell phone.

With this, incidents like the one at the festival when Damon couldn't find Talia won't happen again.

It's not that he plans to let her out of his sight, but it will be inevitable that they separate sometimes, and during those instances, Damon wanted to have the assurance that Talia is only one phone call away.

Immersed in figuring out how to operate her new cell phone, Talia took the small booklet that was in the box and started flipping through it.

"I'm glad you like it."

Damon's comment pulled Talia out of her daze.

"Yes, yes. Thank you.", she said earnestly. "I was thinking about asking how to get a cell phone, and this is amazing."

Damon was surprised by this. Talia is quiet and doesn't express her desires, but she wanted to ask about getting a cell phone? He wanted to know the reason.

"Why did you want a cell phone?"

The phone was already powered up and Talia was checking the options while using the booklet as a guide.

"I have phone numbers and I wanted to save them as contacts and to give my number in return."

Damon's brows came together. "Whose phone numbers do you have?"

She hummed before responding, "Axel, Maddox..."

Damon's ears were buzzing, and he didn't hear the rest.

Did she just name some random guys?

How come she didn't think about getting HIS number?

And did she call Maddox by his name casually without his title? When did they become so friendly?

Unaware of the storm brewing inside Damon, Talia was still talking, "...Kai and Tyler. Oh, I'm sure that Doctor Travis and Keith have numbers also..."

At the mentioning of Keith, Damon's jealousy reached its peak, and he saw red.

Damon grabbed her chin roughly and made her look his way.

Talia's eyes widened when she saw that Damon was angry. What happened? Only a minute ago he gave her the cell phone happily, yet now he was looking like he wanted to throw her into the dungeon.

Did he change his mind and will take the phone away? Surely, they can negotiate this. She can keep the phone and work for some time as his assistant to earn it. Yeah, that should work. Or so she thought.

"Did you forget about my existence?", Damon squeezed through his teeth.

Talia didn't get it. "Huh?"

"It seems I need to remind you that you are mine."

Before Talia could figure out what's going on, Damon's lips crashed on hers with urgency.

This kiss was not gentle. It was possessive and demanding and the sting in her lower lip told her that he drew blood.

"Damon... what are you doing?", Talia rasped while trying to adjust to the current situation. Why was he pushing her down on the sofa? And why the hell was she hugging him?

"Mine... Mine...", Damon mumbled while kissing her sloppily all over her face, and then he moved lower.

"Ah!", Talia cried when Damon bit her neck and her whole body shook in ecstatic waves when he licked the spot.

She gasped for air as his hands moved over her body.

"This... lunch...", she struggled to talk between kisses.

Damon's hand moved under her skirt, and he gripped the edge of her panties, ripping them in one smooth move and Talia couldn't believe the intensity of arousal that swelled inside her.

What lunch? It was just the two of them and this need for him to touch her.

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Talia let out a whimper when his fingers reached between her drenched folds.

"Fuck, Talia!", he cursed under his breath. "You are perfect!"

In one swift move, Damon pushed himself lower and his head was between her legs, hovering only an inch above her intimate bush.

Talia gaped at the image of Damon looking at her flower hungrily, like it's the best delicacy in the world. It was embarrassing and scandalous and she couldn't stop staring at him.

She tried to pull her legs together, but Damon was quick to press on her thighs and push them further apart.

"You need to learn your lesson, kitten.", he said in a dangerously low voice. "You are mine."

Talia's mouth was open in a silent scream when he licked her there. Once, twice... his tongue moved over her clit in mighty strokes and Talia threw her head backward unsure if these are her last moments on Earth because it felt like her soul was about to leave her body.

Damon pressed his face into her while he kissed her deeply between her folds, his tongue moved from her clit down to her entrance and then back up, and his every move sent cataclysmic sensations through her body.

"Say my name, Talia...", Damon demanded. "Say that you are mine."

Talia's mind was a mess and she gasped when she felt his finger inside her.

"Say it!", Damon growled and he squeezed her ass with his free hand.

"Damon...", Talia breathed.

"Whose are you?"

"Yours..."

She could feel him smiling against her flesh, and then he attacked her pleasure centers with renewed vigor.

Talia stared blankly at the ceiling as her whole body shook uncontrollably in ecstatic quivers.

This is it. This is how she will die. Right now, with Damon between her legs... Will she have any regrets? Probably not.

And just when she thought that this is as good as it gets, Damon's lips latched around her clit, and he started sucking.

She fisted his hair, unsure if she wants to push him away or keep him there forever.

"Ah!... Damon! Ah!...", lewd sounds escaped Talia's lips, and she would never admit that those were hers.

Against all reason, Talia's hips moved, asking for more, and her moans became louder as she fought to catch the smallest of breaths.

Damon growled as her arousal was all around him and he could taste her on his tongue. She was soft and wet and she tasted of heaven and honey and her breathless cries were the most seductive music he ever heard.

Every stroke of his tongue pushed her closer to the ecstatic edge, and his finger moving in and out of her only intensified the pleasure.

Damon skillfully increased the pressure and pace, and there it was...

The whole room was spinning while Talia dissolved into a mass of cries and gasps with her legs up in the air, shaking like leaves in the storm.

She breathlessly begged for mercy while Damon showed none.

He was lapping her juices like a parched man, unwilling to let go of the sweet honey her body released.

Talia was panting heavily when Damon climbed on top of her.

Damon leaned his forehead on Talia's and stared into her unfocused honeyed eyes.

"Mine!", he growled.

Talia smiled. "Yours."

Damon was pleased with her response. But he was even more pleased by the way her body reacted to his touch. She was ready.

He really wanted to remove his clothes and go all the way, but they were in the study, on the sofa... and there was the lunch, and the event... Damn it! He will need to hold back... again. But not for long.

Damon kissed her and she tasted herself on his lips.

He carefully licked the spot he bit previously, using his saliva to help her heal completely.

Damon was already aroused to his limits, so after a few kisses, he helped her to sit up.

"You ripped my panties...", Talia complained when she saw what used to be her panties on the floor.

Damon smirked. "That's your punishment for thinking about other men."

Talia blinked as it dawned on her. "You were jealous because I mentioned Axel and Maddox and Kai and..." She stopped talking when she saw that Damon's expression darkened again.

"I was not jealous.", he lied.

Talia stifled a laugh.

Damon made a face. Is she making fun of him? "What's funny?"

"If this is how you will punish me, I might make you jealous more often."

Damon's eyes flashed in disbelief. Was this his shy Talia? No, this was a different Talia, but he didn't hate this side of her. Not even a little bit.

"There is no need to make me jealous, kitten...", he said with a sly smile while his palm moved up her thigh, under her skirt slowly. "Just say the word, and I am at your service. You will see how good I will make you feel when I'm the only man on your mind." He ended with a squeeze high on her thigh, nearly touching her flower that was still throbbing numbly from his previous ministrations.

Talia's face exploded in blush, and she didn't know where to look.

Yes, his head was between her legs only a few minutes ago, but somehow this right now was more scandalous.

Doesn't he know that he is the only man on her mind already? She didn't want to say this. The cocky Alpha probably knew already. At least that's what Talia thought.

"Let's go and grab lunch...", Damon told Talia. "Steph is not here, but she instructed Omegas to prepare food for us to eat and to pack us snacks for the road."

Talia squirmed in place. "I need to get new panties first."

"No.", Damon rejected right away.

When he saw her bewildered expression, he explained, "This is also your punishment. No panties."

"For how long?"

Damon smirked. "Until I say so."

Talia couldn't believe it.

She was wearing a dress and without panties, it will be breezy down there.

He must be joking. Right? RIGHT!?

Chapter 147 - Flight To The Lightclaw Pack

"Are you doing alright, kitten?", Damon asked Talia when he helped her buckle the seatbelt of the front passenger's seat of a small jet.

Talia nodded in confirmation. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes while reflecting on the last few hours.

Was she doing alright? Considering what all happened and what this day still has in the store for her, Talia was fairing rather well.

She spent the morning in the spa with Maya, and when she came home, Damon was packing things for both of them and he gave her a brand new cell phone.

In a fit of jealousy, Damon ripped her panties and gave her the wildest ride she ever had, but the most outrageous thing was that he forbid her from wearing panties.

Why did she agree to that? Talia was not sure. Maybe she wanted to show Damon she is not weak, and lack of panties can't phase her, or maybe she was enjoying the perverted game where only the two of them knew she was butt-naked under that dress.

Talia went to the kitchen to check if Zina and Dawn packed food for their trip, and she was not sure if they can smell remnants of what Damon did to her in the study. Damon licked her thoroughly, so technically, if they could smell anything it would be only Damon on her, but just thinking about that made Talia aroused again.

"You are going on a trip with the Alpha?", Dawn asked while waggling her eyebrows suggestively and Talia did her best to make it sound like it's not a big deal while wishing for Damon to appear next to her as soon as possible.

Damon went up to get their things and Talia was surprised to see him returning with only one suitcase. The knowledge that their clothes and toiletries were in one place warmed her heart. Aren't they like a couple?

Damon held Talia's hand as they walked to his black armored Lexus SUV, and Talia could feel Zina's and Dawn's eyes burning into her back.

Talia likes those two women, but they are too gossipy, and Talia knew that she will face an inquisition of million questions when she returns, assuming that Zina and Dawn can catch her without Damon or Stephanie around.

Talia expected that Damon will drive all the way to the Lightclaw pack, but after about fifteen minutes long drive, Damon turned the car onto the side road and after a few minutes, he parked next to the hangar that had a private landing strip on the other side.

"Are you OK with flying?", Damon asked when he noticed Talia walking toward the jet robotically.

"I don't know.", Talia said honestly. She has never flown in a plane before.

"If you are afraid, I can always offer...", he licked his lips that were lifted into a wicked smile.
"Distraction."

Talia knew very well what distraction he was offering. The breeze at the cradle of her thighs was a reminder of what happened in the study. And she hated that she was aroused again.

She wondered, can she ask Doctor Travis for some anti-arousing medicine? Because this can't be normal.

Talia didn't understand. She was a decent girl for nineteen years, but the moment this Devil entered her life she became lewd! OK. Maybe not at that moment, but sometimes in the last two weeks, definitely. And it was all his fault!

And here she is... still panty-less and strapped into a seat at the front of a jet and Talia was not surprised to see Damon starting up the engines.

Of course, he can fly a plane.

She watched Damon as he expertly pushed buttons and picked options on the touch screen, and Talia was convinced that this unstable Alpha can do much more than just flying a jet. He can do anything. He is amazing.

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The jet took off smoothly and Damon entered coordinates and set it on the cruise before turning to Talia.

"How are you feeling? Any nausea? Dizziness? I know flying might be uncomfortable, but we will be there in about an hour. If we took the car all the way, it would take at least five hours. I didn't tell you in advance because I didn't want you to freak out.", he explained.

"Don't worry about it. I'm fine.", Talia said, touched by his concern. She would go with him anywhere, regardless of the type of transportation. "I'm just nervous about the party."

Damon chuckled and undid his and her seatbelts.

In one swift move, Damon scooped Talia and put her to sit on his lap.

"Why are you nervous, kitten?", he asked with a smile. "Don't tell me that you think those people are better than you are."

Talia gave him a complicated look. Maybe that's easy for him to say but for her... "I don't know if they are better, but they are powerful. They all have impressive backgrounds, while I came from an attic."

"No, kitten.", Damon said while caressing her cheek. "You are coming from the third floor of the packhouse, representing the Dark Howlers pack, with me."

Talia made a face. "If you were planning on comforting me, it's not working. Actually, you are making me more nervous." What if she embarrasses herself? What if she embarrasses him?

"Don't look down on yourself only because you don't know who your parents are or how some shitty people treated you when you were down. Regardless of your background, I know you are amazing."

Talia felt there was something behind his words. "How can you be so sure?"

Damon thought for a moment before responding. "Be honest with yourself, do you think you are Omega?"

Talia never really thought about it, but based on how everyone treated her, she assumed that she is at the bottom, with Omegas. Even Omegas bullied her. "What am I if not Omega?"

Damon didn't know what Talia is, but he knew what she isn't.

"Every werewolf is a slave to his instincts. Our wolf side can boost our abilities and steel our willpower. It's rare to see a werewolf off the ground because we feel unease without firm ground under our feet, yet look at you, up in the air, without any discomfort. That tells me you are special."

"Do you feel discomfort when flying?", Talia asked.

Damon nodded. "I practiced to face my fears and not succumb to them. I can tell you with confidence that any Omega would either pass out from anxiety or cry until we land."

Seeing Talia's puzzled expression, Damon thought of giving her another example.

"Let's talk about those two in the kitchen.", Damon said, and Talia nodded, knowing that Damon was talking about Zina and Dawn. "What do they do in my presence?"

Talia frowned in confusion, Damon answered, "They bow their heads in submission."

"Everyone bows their head in front of you."

"Not you, kitten.", Damon said with a smile. "And that's not because we are sharing a bed. Hierarchy and submission are part of who we are. You, not submitting to me, means that you are not below me."

"Not submitting?", Talia asked more herself than him.

Damon chuckled. "You didn't even notice. That's how amazing you are, kitten. When my temper flares, every head in the room goes down in submission, Caden's and Maya's included, yet you are standing straight and even talking back. Do you know what that means?"

"What?"

"I told you, kitten, only Luna gets to talk back to her Alpha."

Talia swallowed a mouthful of air. She told herself to ignore any 'Mrs. Blake' and 'Luna' nonsense coming from him, but when he looked at her like that, it was hard.

Facing Talia's bewildered expression, Damon was not sure if he should laugh or cry.

Damon wanted Talia to gain confidence and boldly claim her place as his Luna, but at the same time, he enjoyed this modesty and unspoiled innocence. Can he have both? Damon was not sure.

"What will we do if Alpha Edward and Marcy are there? What if they recognize me?", Talia asked questions that were weighing on her. And there was also Luna Layla and the future Alpha of the Red Moon pack, James.

Damon understood why Talia singled them out, after all, she suffered for nearly two decades under their roof.

Part of Damon hoped that Marcy and her family will do something scandalous and give Damon an excuse to escape that engagement-to-be for good. His contacts in Europe didn't find any dirt on Marcy so far, and the time was running out.

Damon didn't want to say that most of the people there will be hostile in one way or another. It's just the way it is in the world where power and position matter and Damon is at the top of the largest pack in North America.

No matter how anyone feels about him or his date (aka Talia), Damon hoped that they won't cause a scene. It's not that Damon couldn't deal with them, he was ready to fight anytime, but he feared how an incident will impact Talia's mood.

Talia was opening up to him wonderfully and they were making amazing progress. This event can give her a boost, but there was also a chance that it could backfire and shatter what they built so far.

Chapter 148 - Being Close [Bonus]

Damon could feel Talia's insecurities and he hoped that his words will give her the boost she needs to stand proud.

"If anyone from the Red Moon pack approaches you, you should treat them the same as you would anyone else. Remember that you grew up with your grandparents and you were never in the Red Moon pack. Even if they say you look familiar, stay cool. They don't have evidence to support any claims about your background. Don't let anyone bully you, Talia, and don't be afraid to stir trouble. I know you can talk back, and if it takes more than talking, I will be right next to you."

Talia nodded, but Damon knew that his words didn't produce the desired result.

Of course, those people bullied her for nearly two decades. How can it be easy for Talia to face them?

He got an idea.

"If you fear that they might recognize you, pretend you are someone else. Use a different name so that no one connects who you are."

Talia's brows furrowed. "A different name? That's not necessary. No one called me Talia since Olivia left, and even when she was around, we never went out in public, so..." Talia's voice trailed.

Damon was curious. Talia told him that Olivia left a few years ago. How is it possible that no one addressed Talia by her name? "Did you use a different name?"

Talia shook her head. "No one bothered to ask what my name is. They would call me 'slave' or 'roach' or 'rat'."

Damon felt rage rippling through him. How dare they treat his mate like that!?

Damon has a habit of ignoring things he doesn't deem important. While they were at the Dark Howlers pack, it was like an isolated bubble, with only Damon and Talia, but now that they are out of his territory, Damon became aware of other existences and how they are impacting them.

Damon took a few deep breaths, filling his system with the addicting scent of freesia and he was not sure if he will be able to keep his cool if Alpha Edward, Marcy, or anyone from the Red Moon pack comes in front of him.

He silently swore to make them eat their words and to suffer the same treatment Talia did. Maybe they were not directly mistreating her, but the fact that they neglected Talia, enabled others to bully her. Bastards!

"It won't be easy to see them, but I hope you won't give them more importance than they deserve.", Damon said after he calmed down. "Regardless of who you were, you are going with me, as my partner. No one can touch you. I will guarantee your safety and you can do whatever you want. Feel free to ignore them, curse them, or punch them in the throat, I've got your back."

Talia shook her head while remembering the killer move he kind of taught her, but there was no teaching because cheeky Alpha wanted to cuddle in the middle of the training center.

"It's nothing like that. I don't want to cause trouble."

"Do you know who I am?", Damon asked sternly.

"Alpha Damon", Talia responded.

"That's right. I am the Alpha of the Dark Howlers pack, the largest pack in North America, and no one will dare to mess with me unless they have a death wish and because you are going with me, they will be stupid if they come after you." His gaze softened. "You are so much more than just my date, kitten. This will be the first time for me to attend an official function with a date. Many will wonder who you are and don't be surprised when you hear questions related to becoming my Luna because Alphas don't

bring with them dates that are not important. I am concerned only about one thing..." He licked his lips nervously. "I hope that I won't disappoint you."

Talia blinked while processing Damon's words. He said so many things... and it all sounded important!

Did he say that this is his first time to bring a date? And did he say that she is important?

Talia told herself to ignore any Luna nonsense, but this somehow touched her heart and she ended up smiling at the insecure Alpha.

Talia was unaware when she moved closer to Damon, or when she kissed him, but they were definitely kissing.

It was a slow and gentle kiss full of emotions she would never put into words and Damon was high on the fact that she kissed him first.

This was the first time that Talia initiated a kiss, and he couldn't be happier about it.

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When Damon landed the jet on a private strip that was surrounded by a scarce forest and rock formations, he turned off the engines before helping Talia unbuckle.

Talia peered through the window to see that a black Cadillac XTS limousine was waiting for them, with a driver standing in attention next to it.

It really looked like they are a major delegation from a foreign country. Well, in the world of werewolves, they were.

"Put these on.", Damon said before they exited the jet, and Talia blinked at the sight of panties that were in his hand.

She snatched the panties and quickly shimmied inside them while pulling the skirt lower so that she doesn't expose herself to Damon's amused gaze.

When her bottom and her most intimate area were covered with that small piece of fabric, Talia looked at Damon with a smile. "Thank you. I feared that you will make me stay like this all day." Or longer. Maybe Damon doesn't wear underwear, but she definitely felt the loss of that important piece of garment.

Damon's face turned serious. "I will never allow strangers to get a glimpse of what's going on between us. Do you know why?"

Talia pressed her lips into a line. Why? Is it because of privacy? No, that was too obvious. "Why?"

Damon crossed the distance between them and held her chin with his thumb and index finger, making her look up at him, but what really locked her in place was his intense gaze that threatened to swallow her.

"Because you are mine.", Damon said with all the possessiveness in the world and Talia felt strength seeping from her legs.

Did she get aroused just now?

Damon's smirk told her that he can smell her. Damn it!

Talia couldn't believe this. What's wrong with her?

Damon said that Talia is not submitting to him, but he was wrong. Sure, she didn't feel the impulse to bow her head to him, but Talia was ready to give him whatever he wanted.

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Talia and Damon sat in the back of the limousine for a ride to the packhouse of the Lightclaw pack which shouldn't take more than fifteen minutes, based on the information driver gave them while putting their suitcase in the trunk.

Inside, plush carpet covered the floor, two rows of comfy leather seats were facing each other, each wide to sit three people for a total of six passengers in the back. There was also a minibar and a remote to control the AC, music, windows, lights, and several other functions Talia didn't understand.

Damon's hands were around Talia in a loose embrace, and she leaned sideways on him while observing the landscape of reddish rocks, low bushes, and scarce trees that were occasionally interrupted by small creeks.

The afternoon summer sun was heating the land mercilessly and it was very different from the scenery at the Dark Howlers pack which is filled with tall and lush trees that are blocking the sun and providing thick shade.

"Where are we?", Talia asked Damon without removing her gaze from the window.

"Colorado.", Damon responded.

Talia turned to him and raised her eyebrows questionably, silently telling him that she needed more information.

Damon chuckled and got his phone. "Let me show you on the map..."

His arms were around her and he rested his chin on her shoulder while fiddling with his phone in front of her.

"Here...", he said while pointing at the map, zooming in and zooming out as needed. "We are here, and our home is here. With a car, we would need to take this highway, and then this one..."

His breath splashed close to her ear, and she took a shaky breath. It was difficult to focus on what he was saying because he was so close, and the butterflies in her stomach were going crazy.

Talia turned to face him, and their noses nearly touched.

"You are doing this on purpose, aren't you?", Talia asked breathily.

"Doing, what?", he asked innocently. "Being close to you?"

Talia nodded.

"I don't have a choice, kitten. I can't stay away from you."

"Then... don't.", she said.

Damon smiled. "I won't, kitten. You will never get rid of me."

Their lips connected, initiating a steamy make-out session, and neither of them noticed when the driver lifted a divider so that he doesn't see or hear what's going on in the back of the limousine.

As the seasoned driver of the Lightclaw pack, he knew when privacy is needed.

Chapter 149 - Arriving At The Lightclaw Pack

~ the Lightclaw pack ~

Damon helped Talia straighten up her dress before getting out of the car and she assisted him in tucking his shirt properly.

They were just kissing, but somehow with all the hugging and squeezing, their clothes got disheveled.

Talia remembered how about two weeks ago she was in the back seat of a car with Damon, leaving the Red Moon pack, and she was stiff while he held her to lean on him with an order to sleep, yet now she couldn't get enough of him. At that time, she thought that Damon smells nice, but now she was painfully aware of his taste. It's the dark chocolate... smooth, rich, mysterious, and extremely addictive, fitting Damon's image perfectly, and Talia feared that one day she might eat him for real.

The driver opened the door for them when Damon knocked on the window, signaling that they are ready, and one Omega was already waiting with their suitcase in his hands.

"Please, this way Alpha Damon and Miss...", the Omega said with a low bow and gestured toward the packhouse that was down the gravel path.

There was no paved road that would lead all the way to the packhouse, and this last stretch had to be crossed on foot.

Damon alighted first and gave his hand to Talia. She put her hand into his naturally and she was surprised to see the male Omega dressed up neatly in a white short-sleeved shirt and black pants.

Normally, female Omegas will help around the packhouse while Omega males do dirtier maintenance jobs.

The moment Talia put both of her feet on the ground, Damon's left hand snaked around her waist, pulling her closer to him in a possessive hold until their hips touched, and Talia's heart skipped a beat.

They never walked this close, and there were people watching.

She looked up to him to see his unreadable stern expression directed toward the packhouse and she bit the inside of her lip while wondering if she is the only one impacted with this unexpected closeness in public.

Talia was not sure what to do with her right hand. A few steps later, she decided to hook her thumb at the back of Damon's pants, and he hummed in approval.

Damon told Talia that Alpha Magnus is an old-fashioned man, and the scene in front of them confirmed it.

The main entrance was in the middle of a two-story-high brown brick building that had curved corners and some areas were sticking out asymmetrically, looking almost like it was created by mashing several dwellings together and then repainted in brown to look like one. There was a long one-story high building stretching on the right that looked like an extension that was added later.

Damon saw Talia observing the building curiously, so he explained, "The main building is for common areas and office space." He gestured toward the one-story high extension. "Bedrooms are there."

Talia was surprised by this. "Alpha's family is on the ground floor?"

Damon gestured toward the roof. "The attic level has several suites for the Alpha's family."

Talia realized that Damon was knowledgeable about this packhouse, so she continued probing, "Where are Beta and other high-ranking members staying?"

"There are other buildings in the back. The rumor is that there are underground passages connecting important buildings around the packhouse, but only the main figures in the Lightclaw pack know if that's really true..."

Talia found this interesting. Every pack had a different style of living, and she was eager to see how others are managing it.

She wanted to ask Damon if she can go and visit Alpha Maddox and Axel, but she had a feeling that Damon might flip, so she took a mental note to ask him later when the timing is better. Besides, there was still much to discover about this place.

The neatly trimmed lawn was on both sides of the narrow path they walked on, and the moment they stepped inside, they were greeted with a lot of wood. Dark red wood was covering the floor, ceiling, walls, everywhere.

The lights were electrical but shaped like candles. All that paired up with tan-colored heavy curtains draped at the top of the windows gave the interior of the packhouse a vintage feel.

On the far end of the entry hallway, Talia could see numerous Omegas, males and females, moving busily while carrying plates, flowers, balloons, streamers, and some had dusters and cleaning cloths in their hands. It was obvious they were preparing for the party that will start in a few hours.

They were all wearing white shirts and black pants (or skirts) and Talia understood those are uniforms the Omegas of the Lightclaw pack are wearing, at least in the packhouse, while on duty.

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"Alpha Damon!", an older man greeted them enthusiastically and his hand was extended for a handshake from five steps away. "I am so glad you could make it.", he said while shaking Damon's hand.

"Thank you for inviting us, Alpha Magnus.", Damon responded.

"It's our pleasure." Alpha Magnus glanced at Talia. "And who is this beauty by your side?"

Damon puffed his chest, like a peacock when showing off. "This is Talia."

"Nice to meet you, Talia.", Alpha Magnus extended his hand toward her, and Talia shook his hand gingerly.

"Same here, Alpha Magnus."

Alpha Magnus cocked an eyebrow. "Not big on flattery, are you, girl? When I heard that Alpha Damon is coming with a date, I thought you might teach him some manners, but I guess I was wrong."

Talia glanced at Damon nervously. Was she supposed to flatter the man? Why didn't he tell her in advance? Did she mess up something? And why was the old guy still holding her hand? She tried getting it out discretely, but the old man's grip intensified, and Talia couldn't budge.

Damon narrowed his eyes at Alpha Magnus. He knew that the old guy was testing him.

For werewolves, everything is a competition, especially for Alphas who have a need to always be at the top.

Damon put his hand over Magnus's and pried Talia's hand out of his hold.

"I reached an age where it's difficult to learn new tricks.", Damon said stiffly while patting invisible dirt from Talia's hand. "You should know not to touch my woman for longer than necessary. Did your eyesight worsen with age, and you can't see that she is not a little girl? What will your wife say?"

Alpha Magnus stifled an awkward laugh. "It was just a handshake."

"I will trust you this time. But I won't be so forgiving if it happens again.", Damon's voice was dangerously low.

Talia pressed her lips into a line while wondering what's with this situation. Didn't Damon tell her that he and Alpha Magnus are on good terms? Why did it look like they were about to fight? She didn't

understand the reasons, but she was definitely feeling the stiffness. If this was a good relationship, Talia didn't want to see how Damon was interacting with his enemies.

She saw Damon with Alpha Maddox and Axel, and even though they were not bosom buddies, the atmosphere was much lighter than this.

Alpha Magnus looked at Talia inquisitively and it appeared like he was about to say something, but then he turned to Damon. "I'm glad you are here early. Can you spare some time to talk with Tony and give him some tips? Now that he found his Luna, I will start the process of handing him the pack, and I'm sure you have loads of valuable experience to share with him."

Damon didn't believe that Alpha Magnus was ready to let go of his position as an Alpha.

His son just turned twenty years old, and the old guy still had a lot of vigor in him. The Lightclaw pack was stable and pack members followed their Alpha. Why would he give it up and become no more than an Elder?

But the biggest reason why Damon doubted Alpha Magnus's words was that the old guy enjoyed the position he had.

Every Alpha thrives on power, however, Alpha Magnus is one of those old-school guys whose eyes lit up in delight when others bow to him. Standing above others who are submissive is like a drug, nearly impossible to let go of.

In Damon's opinion, even if Alpha Magnus was willing to step down so that his son takes over as the Alpha of the Lightclaw pack, Damon was confident that Alpha Magnus would be pulling the strings and his son would be an Alpha only in name.

The problem with this is that werewolves don't do democracy. Two (or more) people at the head of the pack would create factions and weaken the pack.

But that was none of Damon's business.

Damon had no issues chatting with Anthony, but he didn't want to leave Talia. "We just reached here. Give us some time to rest, will you?"

"Sure, sure." Alpha Magnus gestured toward Omega who was standing on the side and holding the suitcase. "Follow him to your room and let me or Tony know when you are ready."

Damon hummed in agreement and paused. "The thing I asked you for. Did you arrange it?"

"You will need to ask my Luna about it..."

Chapter 150 - Anthony And Kalina [Bonus]

The hallway on the right provided access to the one-story high building, and Omega opened the door of the guest bedroom, letting Damon and Talia enter first before he got the suitcase inside. He wished them a pleasant stay and reminded them that the event will start at six o'clock and to contact any Omega if they need anything in the meantime, and then he left.

Talia looked around the room. Wood everywhere, just like in the hallway, but here the portion of the floor was covered with a massive dark red carpet.

A desk with a chair, a sofa, an armoire, a dresser, a four-poster queen-size bed, and a door on the right that was leading to the bathroom.

The cover on the bed had dark red flowery designs that matched decorative pillows on the sofa.

Brown and red tones dominated the room, making it appear smaller than it actually was, but still cozy.

Talia peered through the window to see a well-maintained lawn with topiary trees and patches of colorful blooms, and among them, Omegas were setting up tables and decorations.

Further in the back were massive rose bushes and evergreen trees, and Talia remembered that Damon told her how there are other buildings in that direction, but the view was obstructed.

Talia wondered if Stephanie was still here. She dismissed that thought as unnecessary. Even if Stephanie is in the Lightclaw pack, she wouldn't come to this party. Damon told Talia that only Alphas, their families, and high-ranking members of other packs will get to attend this event, and Stephanie doesn't fit into any of those categories.

Talia observed cheery expressions of Omegas outside, and the optimism reflected on her as well, making her feel tingly inside, eager for the party to start.

She remembered event preparations at the Red Moon pack. Omegas were tense and focused on finishing their tasks as soon as possible, and Omegas of the Lightclaw pack were relaxed. Based on that, Talia concluded that Alpha Magnus is a much better Alpha than Alpha Edward. Or maybe this was Luna's department.

Talia's enthusiasm about the party fell a little when she remembered Lisa. Of course, she never met Lisa, but Talia knew Stephanie and she heard that Lisa was like Damon's little sister, and Talia sympathized with the feeling of being abandoned. Lisa probably dreamed that this party will be set up for her, yet some other woman will get this special treatment; it's not just about the party, but about the man and the rest of her life also. It must be hard.

Talia praised her resolve not to make plans for the future.

It's not that she will be passive. Talia was determined to continue learning as much as she can, but she will impact things that are within her abilities and leave the rest to fate.

By not having expectations from others, she can't be disappointed, and whatever life throws at her, good or bad, she will deal with it as it happens.

"Come here, kitten...", Damon called, and Talia turned to see him lying on the bed with his arms outstretched toward her.

Talia smiled while looking at her handsome Devil. Yes, she will enjoy right now and right here, and not worry about tomorrow.

Talia flicked her shoes off and a second later, she sank into Damon's embrace.

"If anyone makes you uncomfortable, feel free to tell them off. Even if that other person is an Alpha.", Damon said, and she knew that he was referring to their previous encounter with Alpha Magnus.

'Easy for you to say', Talia thought. But she didn't want to bicker, so she responded with, "I will try."

She looked up at him. "I thought that you and Alpha Magnus are friends."

"On friendly terms, yes. Friends, no.", Damon responded. "He doesn't mean harm, but if you show weakness, he will take advantage of it. It's best to keep your guard up against everyone."

Talia thought how all that is complicated. She divides people into good ones and the ones that should be avoided. But it seems that the world of Alphas is more complex than that.

Now that they arrived here, the whole party seemed more real. Talia didn't think about it beyond spending time with Damon, but what if they can't be together?

"Will you go and talk to Tony?", Talia asked.

Damon tilted his head and nudged Talia's nose with his. "Not without you, kitten."

Talia looked into his icy-blue eyes that were gentle, and just like that, Talia's anxiousness disappeared.

No matter what awaits her tonight, Talia knew that it will be alright, as long as Damon is by her side.

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Talia and Damon walked toward the back of the garden, following a path that snaked between tall rose bushes and rows of evergreen trees, stopping next to the semi-circular seating made out of rocks and concrete and there was a firepit as well.

A couple sitting there was making-out and too engrossed in each other to notice Damon and Talia approaching.

The moment they stopped there, Talia realized that they reached their destination and those two are Anthony, the future Alpha of the Lightclaw pack, and his future Luna, Kalina, the star of tonight's party.

"If you are too busy, we can go back.", Damon said with amusement in his voice and the couple froze.

Talia noticed that the man's hands were under the woman's tank top, and Talia quickly looked down. What seemed to be just kissing was much racier now that she saw them from close range.

Talia was happy when Damon asked her to join him, but she still told him that he should go ahead without her.

"I have nothing to talk about with the future Alpha and I don't want to be a burden.", she said. "I will wait here for you to return. I still didn't have a chance to explore all options my cell phone has."

The truth was that Talia feared she will embarrass Damon, or that maybe there will be another weird hand-holding situation and she really wanted to avoid those.

"Then... I'm not going either.", Damon said casually.

"Eh? But you will offend Alpha Magnus. You told him you will go."

"I told you first that I won't leave your side. If I keep my word to that old fart, I will break my promise to you. Unless you join me, I will be forced to break one of the two, and considering that I'm living with you while I see him five times a year, the choice is obvious...", Damon responded, and Talia caved in.

She was prepared to stand next to Damon and smile, like a vase, but she had no idea that they will be interrupting this steamy situation.

Talia looked on the side, to see Damon's hand hanging over her shoulder loosely as his forearm pressed lightly on her shoulder.

Compared to how possessively he held her when they reached the packhouse and while they talked to Alpha Magnus, Damon's posture now was more relaxed and she concluded that the couple in front of them is not a threat, at least not to Damon.

Talia was curious if she was reading Damon's body language correctly and she was eager to confirm it.

Tony straightened his posture and made sure that Kalina's tank top is pulled down before turning to Damon and Talia.

"Alpha Damon...", he said while clearing his throat. "I assume my father bugged you enough until you gave in."

"He is an elder, Tony.", Damon responded. "I can give him an inch if it's no loss for me. It's called tactics." Damon glanced at the woman. "I assume this is Kalina?"

Tony and Kalina stood up and shook hands with Damon.

"Kalina, this is Alpha Damon, the Alpha of the Dark Howlers pack..."

Talia observed Tony who was tall and muscular. He had a shirt on, but it was obvious that his physique paled in comparison to Damon's. Tony was a handsome man, with a full head of brown hair and chocolate eyes, but what stood out the most was his smile which was not characteristic to any Alpha Talia met so far. Tony was just... happy.

The woman next to him had a matching smile. Kalina was slightly shorter compared to Tony, with a toned body and short dark brown pixie haircut, and Talia's eyes lit up at the sight of the woman's numerous tattoos.

Kalina was wearing a tank top that revealed her tattooed arms, and there were designs on Kalina's chest, and some ink was peering under her armpit also.

Tony was observing Talia with curiosity while talking to Damon. "How unusual of you to come with a date."

"Not unusual. It's the first time.", Damon corrected him. "Talia is special."

"Talia... Nice to meet you. Call me Tony.", Tony said while shaking Talia's hand and he glanced at Damon. "Will there be another Luna announcing ceremony soon?"

Talia gulped softly. Damon mentioned that there might be questions related to her becoming his Luna, but she thought that he was teasing her.

She turned to Damon, thankful that this question was directed at him.

Talia's breath hitched when Damon said with a shrug, "We didn't get a chance to talk about it."

Talia was not sure if she heard him right. Why did it sound like they are going to talk about it in the future?