

Alphas Bride 151

Chapter 151 - Girl Talk With Kalina [Bonus]

Kalina nudged Tony's hip with hers and he chuckled while letting go of Talia's hand. "My mate is possessive. She doesn't let me shake hands with other girls."

"That's how it should be.", Damon responded right away. He was one second away from slapping Tony's hand away from Talia's.

Talia and Kalina shook hands and Kalina said, "Please, call me Lina. Can I call you Lia?"

Talia confirmed with a smile. "Sure."

Internally, Talia was screaming. She just got a nickname! Isn't that something that friends do?

Kalina noticed that Talia was looking at her tattoos.

"What do you think? Not really a Luna look, is it?", Kalina spoke with a heavy Eastern European accent.

Damon also noticed Talia's gaze trained on those tattoos and he remembered that Talia was looking at Liam's tattoos in the Shifters nightclub.

Damon wondered, should he get some ink on him? He really wanted Talia to look at him like that.

When his generation was exploring the wild side of life (tattoos included), Damon was juggling between studying, training, and being an Alpha and there was no time for body art.

Unaware of Damon's thoughts on how to make his body more pleasing to her, Talia was contemplating the best way to respond to Kalina's question. She saw several Lunas and all of them were gracious with long flowy hair, shiny nails, and designer dresses, like they came out of a high-end fashion magazine, and this shorthaired girl in jeans and a tank top with tattoos covering her skin was not fitting that image.

"It's unique.", Talia said.

Kalina's eyebrows shoot up. "I like you. You didn't lie. Maybe you can give me some pointers about how things work here because so far everyone I met was either avoiding me or kissing my ass."

Anxiousness swelled within Talia. How is she qualified to give pointers to the future Luna?

Before Talia could respond, Tony spoke, "Lina is from Poland, and this is her first time in the States. We met four days ago. I went to visit my friend, Chad, in Canada, and she was visiting Chad's sister. When Lina entered the room I could swear that all lights went off, leaving only one spotlight directed at her, and the rest is history."

Kalina looked at Tony with a smile that reflected in her eyes. "And to think that I nearly missed him. I was planning a trip with my oldest sister to Spain, but I decided to head to Canada at the last moment."

Tony hummed ambiguously. "The Moon Goddess knows what she is doing."

They were about to kiss, but before that happened, Damon grumbled, "If you start making out, the two of us will go about our business."

Damon was already in a bad mood because this outing cut into his cuddle time with Talia, and he definitely didn't want to watch some other people kissing.

Tony gave Kalina a quick peck on the lips and turned to Damon. "Alright. I don't want to upset you, Alpha Damon. I know your time is precious. How about the two of us chat somewhere else, and leave girls here to bond?"

Talia froze. What bonding?

Oh, right. Kalina wanted Talia to give her some pointers. Talia hoped that Kalina forgot about it.

Kalina will be asking questions, and no matter if she is from Poland or from Mars, if Talia needs to talk about anything other than living in the attic and sneaking through the packhouse, Kalina will figure out that Talia is ignorant.

But she couldn't just bail out either.

Think, Talia. Think!

Kalina wanted someone who will talk openly. Someone who won't suck up to her or shrink because she is the future Luna... Someone knowledgeable... Someone who has seen places... Someone like... Mindy!

Talia looked at Kalina. "I'm not sure if I'm the right person to give advice related to the lifestyle of werewolves because I grew up isolated with my grandparents, but there is one person who fits the bill perfectly." Talia turned to Tony. "Is Mindy from the Blue River pack here?"

Tony's eyes were unfocused for a second before he responded, "Yes. She arrived just a few minutes ago. But... Mindy is high profile. Will she be willing to spend her time with Kalina?"

Tony is the son of the Alpha, but his father didn't give him a chance to stand out. Tony attended schools and mingled with a small circle of friends without being exposed to high-ranking members of other packs. It was how Alpha Magnus kept Tony on a tight leash.

Tony doesn't have many relationships with influential people, and that's why Alpha Magnus asked Damon to talk to Tony, instead of Tony asking himself.

Damon looked at the little woman by his side in awe.

He was ready to oppose Tony's idea of leaving girls on their own, but Talia managed to surprise him again.

Talia could refuse to talk with Kalina; she already mentioned that she grew up with grandparents. Or she could just bluff her way out of it. Instead, Talia admitted her lack of knowledge and found a solution. She really is selfless and caring... a true Luna.

Damon was proud of Talia, and he backed her up with, "My Talia is a good friend with Mindy, she won't refuse."

Talia smiled at Damon's words. He said, 'my Talia'.

Tony's eyes went out of focus again as he mind-linked someone and Damon pulled Talia to the side.

"You don't need to do this, kitten."

Talia knew that he was talking about Talia indulging Kalina's request for a girl chat. But Damon needed to talk to Tony in private, and even though Talia was not sure what advice she can give to Kalina, she was confident that Mindy is very capable.

"Don't worry about me, Damon.", Talia responded. "I can take care of myself. If anything goes wrong, I will leave. If I can't find you, I will go to our room." And there was also the cell phone in which he grumpily entered his number as the first contact.

Why did Damon look anxious? She put her hand over his cheek in an attempt to comfort him. "Didn't you say that I am representing the Dark Howlers pack? How can I shy from this? I will make you proud."

"You have no idea how proud I am to have you by my side.", Damon murmured and leaned for a kiss, pecking her lips once, twice... "You are representing our pack wonderfully." And then his arms wrapped around her, and he gave her a long deep kiss that made her mind spin.

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Damon and Tony walked away with Tony saying that Mindy is on her way.

Kalina patted a spot next to her on the semi-circular seating, indicating to Talia to take a seat.

Talia's cheeks were still flushed after kissing Damon. She couldn't believe that Damon's world-dissolving ability was activated, and she completely forgot that they had an audience.

Talia looked at Kalina gingerly and met Kalina's smiling gaze.

"Don't worry, they won't go far.", Kalina said. "It seems you have a hard time staying from your mate, just how I have from mine."

Talia's eyes widened. "Mate? Damon is not..."

"Are you sure?", Kalina interrupted Talia and then shrugged. "You fooled me."

Talia's heart was racing. "What made you think we are... mates?", Talia said this last word with difficulty.

"The way you look at each other. I'm coming from a small pack but during my travels, I saw a number of Alphas and I heard many stories. Alphas don't care about females for more than a night of entertainment. Only when one finds his mate will he show his caring side, and Alpha Damon cares about you." Kalina said matter-of-factly and then she cocked an eyebrow at Talia. "Why do you look confused? Your wolf should tell you if you are his mate or not."

"My wolf... is gone.", Talia said, and when she saw Kalina's puzzled expression she quickly explained, "It happened years ago, an accident."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be. I'm used to it."

"You are very brave.", Kalina said. "The only indispensable person in my life is my wolf. And now Tony also, so that makes them two. But even if you don't have your wolf, Alpha Damon has his. Didn't he tell you?"

Talia started shaking her head and then she froze. He never told her that they are mates, or that they are not, but... what's with all that talk about Mrs. Blake, and Luna, and the only girl on the third floor, and the only girl in his bed... was it all teasing or was there more to it?

Kalina noticed Talia's confused expression and she stifled a giggle.

"Maybe you should ask him."

Ask him? There was no way Talia would ask such a question. She shook those thoughts away. How could someone like her be Damon's mate?

Talia reminded herself to stay present. This was not the time to get lost in daydreaming or self-loathing.

She was sitting in the presence of a future Luna, and this was Talia's chance to leave a good impression, as a representative of the Dark Howlers pack.

Chapter 152 - Mindy Is Here

"I thought that they got the wrong person, but then... how many Talias are in this world?", Mindy spoke enthusiastically while approaching Talia and Kalina. "I didn't expect that you will be here, Talia. What a pleasant surprise!"

"Hi, Mindy!", Talia greeted cheerfully. "Thank you for coming."

"Oh, no. Thank you!", Mindy exclaimed while pulling Talia into a hug. "They took me to one of the side houses, but the moment I accepted to come here, I got an upgrade and now I'm in the main house. You have strong connections, Miss MVP of the tournament, Miss Alpha Damon's assistant, Miss Alpha Damon's date.", Mindy said and giggled when she saw Talia's cheeks flushing.

Talia couldn't believe how well-informed Mindy was.

Mindy was right that the room upgrade was because of Talia. Actually, Tony instructed Omegas that if Mindy agrees to see Kalina, they should upgrade her room. After all, the most important guests are staying in the main house and if Mindy could become Kalina's friend, she will definitely become very important.

Talia introduced Mindy to Kalina, and Mindy asked, "You were talking about something when I arrived. What was that?"

Talia swallowed a mouthful of air. She didn't want to bring the point of mates, and she remembered one other thing that was mentioned, "I was telling Lina that my wolf is gone. I'm not really human, and not a werewolf either. I'm an odd one, not fitting anywhere."

Mindy gave Talia a complicated look. Mindy could see that Talia is on the skinny side, but her senses are not as sharp as her brother's. Maddox told Mindy that Talia was abused and that she is different, but there was no mentioning of Talia's wolf.

Mindy put her hand on Talia's shoulder. "Being different is a good thing. Look at me. Maybe we can start our own pack of oddballs who don't fit anywhere else."

"I don't think Alpha Damon will agree. Lia fit into his arms just fine.", Kalina added teasingly, and Talia's face exploded in blush.

"Lia?", Mindy asked and when Kalina gestured toward Talia, Mindy connected that Lia is Talia's nickname. She liked it. "Can I call you Lia also?"

Talia nodded sheepishly hoping that this will change the topic from her fitting into Damon's arms, but she realized that she hoped for naught because Mindy was eyeing her with a sly smirk.

"Alpha Damon hugged you..."

"And kissed.", Kalina chimed in.

Mindy's lips formed an 'O'. "I'm not sure if that's good progress or a slow one. When I saw you last time, you were only holding hands under the table."

Talia felt the ground spinning under her feet. What did Mindy say?

Their hand-holding was supposed to be sneaky!

Waah! It seems that everyone knows!

"They were holding hands under the table? How sweet!", Kalina cooed.

"Can the two of you bond over something that's not teasing me?", Talia asked Mindy and Kalina.

Mindy pinched Talia's cheeks. "But you are so easy to tease."

"I thought you are into charities and helping the ones in need. How is this helping?", Talia complained while rubbing her aching cheeks.

"You don't look needy.", Mindy said with a smirk.

"I need you to stop teasing me! That makes me needy."

Kalina looked at this banter between Talia and Mindy and she enjoyed it very much. At the same time, it reminded her of her sisters.

Kalina is the youngest among five sisters, and even though all five of them traveled across Europe from their early teens, they all gather at their parent's home during holidays and the atmosphere is very lively.

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Eventually, Mindy paid attention to Kalina. "So, you are the new Luna of the Lightclaw pack, Tony's mate. You met days ago, right? How come you are not marked?"

Kalina reached reflexively for the left side of her neck, where Tony's mark should be.

When two mates recognize each other, the bond clicks and they indulge in carnal pleasures. By morning, they have each other's marks (unless there are some obstacles).

"Tony wanted to introduce me to his family first, and then his father insisted on this ceremony. There are too many formalities and people here are not exactly... friendly.", Kalina responded with a sour expression.

Mindy frowned. "What about Tony?"

"Tony is great.", Kalina said with haste. "But he can't be with me all the time and..." Kalina let out a long breath. "I grew up in a loving family with not many rules. For the last eight years, I'm traveling and doing my own thing, and all this is suffocating. Honestly, I don't know if I can fit in here."

"You should know things about this pack. Can you give her some tips or insights?", Talia asked Mindy.

After a brief silence, Mindy asked, "Can I speak openly?"

"Please.", Kalina urged her.

"Tony was not a womanizer. Actually, how much I know, he dated only one woman. High school sweethearts. His relationship status changed when he met you, so it's very fresh, and she is from this pack. Some pack members thought of her as their future Luna, and maybe still do.", Mindy said with a meaningful look.

Kalina paused for a moment and then nodded in slow motion. "They see me as an impostor."

Kalina was irked. Why didn't Tony bring up this obstacle? But they met only four days ago and so many things happened since then, so she can't blame him for not talking about his ex-girlfriend. After all, Kalina didn't talk about her ex-boyfriends either.

"I'm not sure if the impostor is the right word, but yes.", Mindy said. "She had years to win them over, while you are new. Things will be better after this ceremony when Alpha Magnus introduces you to everyone officially."

Kalina was not sure how much effect this ceremony will have because if Tony's ex won people's hearts, that will be difficult to change.

Kalina wondered if she can do this. Just until a few days ago, she was a free spirit, Kalina... yet now she is the future Luna, and she needs to make a bunch of strangers like and respect her. What a bother.

But leaving all this meant leaving Tony and she couldn't do that just how she couldn't put Tony in a position to choose between her and everything else which includes his family, his pack, his duty, and everything else he knew so far.

Kalina glanced around, seeing only foliage around them, yet feeling that there are invisible eyes directed her way. "Do you know who Tony's ex is? Will she sabotage me or something?"

"Her name is Lisa." Mindy responded right away, "I don't know how far she will go, but she-wolves are jealous."

"She is not here now.", Talia chimed in. Damon told her that Stephanie persuaded Lisa to go home and they left already. "Lisa is from the Dark Howlers pack, and she came here after her father died. I believe that she is back home with her mother now, but I don't know for how long."

Kalina relaxed visibly. "Good. If she is not here tonight, I can relax. As for later, I will see."

"Don't relax so easily.", Mindy said and Kalina froze. "I don't want to rain on your parade, but..."

"It's already raining.", Kalina said stiffly. "Just tell me how it is."

"Alpha Magnus is known for strict rules, and that's not all bad. I mean, the fact that you are Tony's fated mate means that he will accept you no matter who you are, but this...", Mindy gestured at Kalina. "He will try to change. It's up to you how much you will allow him. Prepare for a war against a guy who is not used to others opposing him."

Kalina pursed her lips. "No matter how much he wants to meddle, that's only while he is Alpha. After he gives his position to Tony, Tony and I will set the rules."

"You are assuming that he will step down easily.", Mindy said, and when she saw that Kalina's face dropped she reached and patted her hand. "I'm sorry to be the bringer of bad news..."

"No.", Kalina interrupted Mindy. "I need to know the truth. What you said was not pleasing to hear, but now I understand why people around me behave the way they do." She glanced at Talia. "And now I understand why you said that I should talk to Mindy. Is there any other hidden dirt I should know about? Will everyone be staring at me tonight and hoping I trip and break my neck?"

Mindy bobbed her head. "If I think of something else, I will let you know. But don't be too tense because this flower here will take some of the heat tonight from you.", Mindy gestured to Talia.

"What do you mean?", Talia asked stiffly.

"This is the first time for Alpha Damon to bring a date with him.", Mindy said meaningfully. "Tony is not a womanizer which is unusual for an Alpha, but Damon is the one who not only fits the mold of a promiscuous Alpha, but he actually expanded that mold so that it accommodates all of his escapades. You should be aware that most of the females of the younger generation either slept with him or want to sleep with him, so you better hold onto him tightly or they will snatch him away."

Talia's face was frozen into an ugly frown. What did Mindy say?

There was so much information squeezed in those few seconds that Talia was not sure if she should be happy to be Damon's date, or repulsed that he is a man-whore, or cling to him so that another woman doesn't snatch him.

Chapter 153 - Talia Is Special

Kalina waved to get Mindy's attention. "Don't confuse Lia. I met Alpha Damon this afternoon and I don't know how he usually behaves but I know what I saw. He was looking at Talia like she is the only woman in the world. He is head over heels for her."

"Really?", Mindy asked in exaggerated disbelief.

'Really!?', Talia asked in her mind, grateful that Mindy said that aloud because Talia wanted to hear more on that topic.

Kalina nodded earnestly. "I'm confident that he is not playing. To prove my point, Tony asked about Lia's Luna ceremony and Alpha Damon didn't dismiss it."

Mindy glanced at Talia while reassessing her.

She met Talia only a few days ago, but since then, Talia's image morphed from an underage girl forced to work, to an abused young woman, the MVP of the tournament, someone Alpha Damon put under his protection, and it's not only him, but Alpha Maddox and Axel were also unusually attentive toward Talia... and now Talia is Alpha Damon's assistant, and not only his assistant by his love interest as well?

Sure, Damon brought Talia here as his date and they were sharing a room, but in the world of werewolves, indulging in carnal pleasures is quite common. If Talia and Damon are rolling in the sheets, no one would bat an eye at it, Mindy included. But if Alpha Damon is really into Talia, that's different. That makes Talia special.

Mindy's eyes widened as she remembered... "Let me tell you what happened at the recent festival. We were watching the game from the VIP booth and a bunch of soccer players surrounded Talia and were kissing Talia's hand, and Alpha Damon lost it. At that time, I had no idea why he broke the table with snacks but now it makes sense..."

Talia thought that she heard something unbelievable. Damon was jealous during the tournament to the point of making a scene? Because of her?

At the sound of Mindy and Kalina giggling, Talia wished for a power to shrink and turn invisible. Why did those two women band together to tease her?

But Talia didn't sense a single bit of malice, and somehow... she was happy. Was it because she was making friends? Or because they were saying how she is special to Damon?

"I hear that you are Alpha Damon's assistant.", Mindy said at some point and Talia confirmed with a nod.

"Don't let him boss you around too much. You can always come and work for me. I need an assistant."

Talia cocked an eyebrow at Mindy. "You want me to work as your assistant? So that YOU can boss me around?"

Mindy pursed her lips and Kalina burst into giggles.

"She got you there.", Kalina said.

Mindy lifted her chin proudly. "I don't know how my bossiness compares to Alpha Damon's, but I am confident that I'm more fun than he is."

"That totally depends on the type of fun you are talking about.", Kalina chimed in while waggling her eyebrows and Talia felt the urgency to change the topic because her mind was overloaded with images of her sprawled on the sofa in the study with Damon's head between her legs.

Ah, if she gets aroused now those two she-wolves will definitely smell her!

"Did you come on your own or with a date?", Talia asked Mindy, relieved that she stopped the avalanche of improper thoughts that involve a certain Devil.

"Why would I need a date? I don't need a man to define me." Mindy took pride in being single and having her own accomplishments.

"That's what I was saying before I met Tony.", Kalina said. "He doesn't define me. He complements me."

Mindy bobbed her head. "When I find my mate, I will let you know if my opinion changes. Besides, I didn't come here on my own. My brother is here."

"Who is your brother?", Kalina asked.

"Alpha Maddox. The Blue River pack."

Kalina's eyes lit up. "Tony thinks highly of Alpha Maddox, and he was hoping to talk to him tonight."

Mindy didn't think that's a problem. "I can introduce you when we go back. Or do you want us to go now? He should be in his room."

Kalina liked this idea. Meeting someone in private is always better than in the middle of a party where everyone is watching them. Once she meets Alpha Maddox, she can help Tony get closer to him also.

The three of them stood up and walked toward the packhouse while chatting.

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Damon was not at ease after leaving Talia with Kalina. Yes, Mindy was set to join them in a bit, but Damon was not sure if that will be a good thing or not.

Mindy is known as a spunky woman who does her own thing, and Damon hoped that Mindy influences Talia positively. Well, so far, Mindy didn't do any offenses and Talia has a good opinion of her, so... Damon told himself that he shouldn't overthink it.

Talia will spend some time with two confident non-Omega females, and he should be supportive.

Damon didn't give importance to the talk with Tony, but he thought that this is a great chance for Talia to make some girlfriends (emphasis on GIRL-friends).

However, with every step that increased the distance between him and Talia, Damon's anxiousness swelled, and he had to take deep breaths and force his legs to move because he was close to snapping and rushing back to where Talia was. Only with Talia in his visual range, in touching distance, Damon can be at peace.

Tony and Damon took seats at one isolated table that was set up for the upcoming party and Damon was glancing in the direction where Talia was. He was frustrated that evergreen foliage was blocking his view.

What if something makes her uncomfortable? What if some guys start buzzing around her? It wouldn't be the first time.

Damon hoped that this talk will end as soon as possible. He didn't notice that he was rapping with his fingers on the table nervously.

Tony assumed that Damon was not eager to talk to him, and he was right in some way, but they were here already, and Tony wanted to clear the air first.

"I want to apologize."

"For?", Damon asked.

"I know that Lisa is like a sister to you, but she is not my mate."

Damon's fingers that rapped against the surface of the table stopped moving. "There is no need to apologize, Tony. You were treating her well while it lasted, and she knew that this is coming. It's hard on me to see her in this state, but I know that in time she will realize you did the right thing and she will get over it."

Actually, Damon didn't care about Lisa's love life, but if he said that outright, it would be letting Tony off the hook, and in this way, Damon appeared magnanimous. It's always good to have someone owe you.

Damon and Lisa grew up in the same packhouse and he treated her as his little sister, but with eight years wide age gap they were not really playmates. Lisa was the daughter of Damon's parents' Betas, they ate in the same dining room, and attended pack events together, but that's it.

Besides, for the last ten years, Lisa is living with her aunt and visiting the Dark Howlers pack only for some school breaks and holidays, so Damon and Lisa are not really close.

There was a time when Damon would hold Lisa's hand when they walked on the streets of Darkbourne, first to support a wobbling toddler, and then out of habit, but that was a long time ago.

Sure, if Lisa is in distress, Damon would help her, but that includes real danger and not her romantic life.

Seeing that Damon was not upset about Lisa, Tony exhaled in relief.

Tony didn't dare to disclose Alpha Magnus's plan which included Tony marking Lisa and making her his Luna with the hope to establish a better relationship with the Dark Howlers pack. Of course, this was in the case that Tony didn't find his fated mate within the time that Tony's father found acceptable.

"I didn't get a chance to talk to Lisa after...", Tony's voice trailed, but Damon understood.

"It's probably better that you stay away from now. Let her cool off."

Damon didn't see Lisa, but he heard from Stephanie that Lisa is hysteric.

Damon knows a thing or two about dealing with unhinged women who got ditched.

In Damon's opinion, there should be an isolated island for those women; a self-sufficient island with a tall fence, surrounded by an endless ocean full of sharks and mythical monsters so that none of those women can escape. Other than Cassie, Damon could think of at least a dozen more names to send to that place.

With the topic of Lisa out of the way, Tony could relax. "Thank you for introducing Mindy to Kalina. This is Kalina's second day here and she has trouble making friends."

"If you want to thank someone, thank Talia. Mindy and I are not close."

"Talia.", Tony repeated. "She looks like a nice girl.", Tony said cautiously while gauging Damon's reaction.

"She is special.", Damon responded mysteriously without any intention to elaborate on it.

Damon decided to stir the topic away from Talia, "Did you bring me here to talk about my love life or...?"

Chapter 154 - Advice For The Future Alpha

Tony sensed the weight of Damon's presence pressing on him.

Damon is not much older than Tony, both of them are in their twenties, but Tony felt like he was sitting with a seasoned veteran.

"To be honest, I'm not sure from where to start.", Tony said. "It's not a secret that my father didn't treat me as his heir so far. I am clueless about how to lead the pack or how to do politics. Tell me some bits that might be good for a total newbie to start with but keep it low level so that I understand."

Damon thought how Tony's behavior is not befitting an Alpha. Yes, Tony has Alpha blood in him, but his father suppressed him for such a long time, that Tony looked like a toothless pup.

"It is good that you are aware of your shortcomings.", Damon said bluntly. "Start with three things. First, increase your training regime. Future Alphas have intense training from the moment they hit their teens, some earlier. When did you start?"

Tony was embarrassed to admit. "I didn't."

He exercises regularly, but there is no combat training and whenever he asked his father about it, Alpha Magnus would say that there is plenty of time and that Tony should focus on academics first. Eventually, Tony stopped asking.

"If you don't have trustworthy people, you can come to my pack for guidance. My generals can show you the ropes."

Tony picked up something from Damon's words. "Are you saying that I shouldn't trust my pack members?"

"Ask yourself if they are yours or your father's. Soldiers don't serve two Alphas. The fact that you asked me that question tells me how sheltered you are. Werewolves follow the strong one. You have the Alpha gene working in your favor, but if that's the only thing you are relying on, people will challenge your position openly and ridicule you behind your back. And that brings me to my second point. Trust. You need to find people who will watch your back through thick and thin."

"How do I do that?", Tony was really clueless. He has a bunch of friends, but will they risk their safety for him? Tony was not sure.

"Everyone is different. Only in a time of need, you will confirm who will come to your rescue. Be prepared to be disappointed by people you pinned on, and also to get unexpected assistance."

Tony nodded in slow motion while his heart turned heavier by the moment. Alpha's standing is determined by his power and support of his pack, and Damon just told him that he has neither.

"And the third point?", Tony asked.

"Open your eyes. Keep in mind that person you consider as your enemy can't betray you."

Tony didn't like this. "Are you saying that people close to me will backstab me? Are you talking about my father?"

"That's not what I said." But, yes, your father. "You need to use your eyes and your head, all the time. Ask yourself, what kind of an Alpha do you want to be? Who is helping you and who is hindering you? If the day comes that you get your father's position and you don't have your Beta by your side, it will be too late to pick one because the moment you ascend that position, everyone will suck up to you with the hope to gain benefits..."

Damon didn't have problems sharing some of his experiences with Tony, but he didn't want to do the work for him. If Tony doesn't see that his father is using him, that will be Tony's downfall.

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In one of the supporting buildings, behind the packhouse...

Nora plopped on the bed and looked around the room.

There were two twin beds, one for her and one for Marcy, one dresser, two armoires, and a table with two chairs.

The view from the window was just pointing at some trees and rocks, and Nora could see two more buildings that were the same as the one she was in.

The good thing was that the room came with a private bathroom.

Nora was not happy. Not because the room was subpar, or because she needed to share the room with Marcy, but because Alpha Edward and Luna Layla got a room in the main building (aka the packhouse), and also because... "Are you fine that Alpha Damon is here with some slut?"

Marcy rolled her eyes. Of course, she was not fine! With everyone believing that she is going to be the future Luna of the Dark Howlers pack, and Damon coming with another woman to this event, it will only stir rumors that her engagement plopped, or that he is cheating and there is not a damn thing she can do about it.

But what were Marcy's options? To stay home and hide? How will that help?

By showing up, at least she can feign that his behavior doesn't impact her.

As a Luna, Marcy needs to be above pesky quarrels and trivial events.

Any woman warming Damon's bed is insignificant compared to Marcy being his Luna, and Marcy will need to swallow her grievances for another week (give or take a day), and once the engagement is official, she will push for the Luna ceremony to happen as soon as possible.

Once Damon's mark is on her, the bond will form, he will stop sleeping around, and then she can start openly claiming what's hers. At least that's the plan.

Besides, Marcy knew that Nora was provoking her, and she didn't want to give Nora the pleasure of seeing Marcy losing her cool.

"You heard my father, Nora. If I stir trouble before the engagement is finalized, it will only explode in my face. I don't want to risk angering Alpha Damon now. With his temper, he might back out of it. This is my chance to show Alpha Damon that I am levelheaded, and I know my place. If he brought a woman, as an Alpha, that's his right. Alpha Damon bedded many women, why is this one different than any other?"

Nora narrowed her eyes at Marcy. "You know that he never came with a woman. Alpha Damon is a lone hunter; he finds a woman, gets a taste and moves on. This time he came WITH someone. The WW Magazine will be here and if they snap a photo of Alpha Damon and his date, they will become a viral item. How can you be so calm about this?"

Marcy shot her a side-glare. "And why are you so hyped up about this? If I don't know better, I would imagine that you are trying to claim him as yours."

Nora laughed nervously. "Nonsense. I am only upset for you. That's all."

Marcy plastered a smile on her face. Yeah, right.

"Well, I am thankful to have you for a friend, Nora. But I have no intention of going against my father's orders. I am here to make friends with the future Luna of the Lightclaw pack. It will benefit the Red Moon pack and my future husband. Who knows? Maybe WW Magazine snaps a photo of me and Alpha Damon talking? As for you..."

Marcy narrowed her eyes at Nora. "You are here because you wanted to accompany me. Be good and don't cause trouble. If we bump into Alpha Damon, with or without his date, we are to greet him politely and move on. Since you know so much about him, you should also know that he doesn't like clingy women."

Nora exhaled sharply in frustration.

"I am overjoyed that you are so concerned about me, Nora. However, it is not necessary to lose sleep over trivial matters. Once Alpha Damon marks me, I will be the only woman in his eyes and none of these bed climbers will have a chance. He will look only... at... me."

Nora's face was blank, but on the inside, she was boiling.

Marcy's smile was irritating, and Nora wished to scratch her face. But she also knew that Marcy was right.

Nora hoped that Marcy will get close to Damon and Nora takes advantage of that, but it was true that after they mark each other, Damon's interest in other women will wane.

Where does that leave her?

With every passing second, Nora's fury swelled, and she couldn't stand it anymore. If she allows her facade to crumble in front of Marcy, it will all be over. Nora scooted off the bed with urgency.

"Where are you going?", Marcy asked when she saw that Nora was heading for the door.

"Out. There are almost two hours until the party starts. I will take a walk. Maybe I meet someone I know."

"Don't cause trouble.", Marcy warned her.

"I'm not a baby. I will be back in time to get ready..." And with that, Nora left the room.

Marcy wanted to stop her or maybe join her, but then she gave up. Marcy was tired of pretending to be friendly with Nora. Like this, at least she can relax on her own in the room, and if Nora causes an incident, Marcy can say that Nora did it on her own. Besides, Nora is not a baby. Those were her words.

Chapter 155 - Scandalous Scene [Bonus]

Talia, Kalina, and Mindy made their way through the hallway of the packhouse while chattering and giggling. The mood was good.

Talia was happy to see that Kalina and Mindy clicked right away, and she was even happier that somehow she was part of that lively group. Like equal. It was surreal.

"I think this is the one.", Mindy said when she stopped in front of the certain door. "My room is all the way in the back, but I'm not complaining. Just being in the packhouse is an honor considering who all is in attendance."

"Where are you staying?", Mindy asked Talia.

Talia pointed backward. "We passed my room."

Mindy nodded in understanding. Well, Talia is with Damon, so it's normal that she is staying in the main building, and considering Damon's status, they probably got one of the best rooms available.

Mindy knocked twice at the door of Maddox's room, and she tried mind-linking him, but she got no response.

"Are you sure this is OK?", Kalina asked when Mindy put her hand on the door handle.

"Yeah, yeah. Max is probably in the shower or busy playing a video game. He shuts down mind-link when he is relaxing.", Mindy responded with confidence and pushed the door open. "See? It's not locked..."

Mindy's eyebrow twitched at the scandalous scene in front of them.

Some pillows were obstructing the view of the most important parts, but even with that, they could see a side view of Maddox on the bed, in a position like he was doing pushups and two female legs sticking in the air around him.

Talia's eyes widened in shock, and she nervously looked down only to see a black skirt. A bit further was a white shirt tangled with a lacy bra, and then black thongs.

The female under Maddox moaned, and Talia's eyes snapped back toward the bed.

"Yeah, just like that. Ah! You are the best, Alpha Maddox!"

Maddox groaned. "Enjoy the ride, baby... Call me Maddox when I'm inside you..."

Mindy put her index finger in her mouth and stuck her tongue out, like she was gagging before turning to Kalina and Talia. "I should have known. As you can see, my brother is busy. I apologize, but the introductions will need to be postponed."

"Mindy!?", Maddox exclaimed in outrage.

At first, he thought that he imagined his sister's voice, but then he looked up and saw that it's real.

It's not the first time for Mindy to intrude on his activity, but why did it look like she was giving a tour?

"What the fuck, Mindy!?" He was upset but he didn't stop thrusting into the woman below him.

"Yeah, Max.", Mindy said sarcastically. "What. The. Fuck. Literally." She waved dismissively. "Focus so you don't go soft. We will talk later."

Nakedness and sex are no big deal for werewolves, so Mindy and Kalina were not shocked, but Talia stood rooted in place. She knew that it's improper and outrageous, but she couldn't stop staring.

Every time she tried to peel her eyes away from Alpha Maddox and the woman below him, the woman would moan and that was like a magnetic pull for Talia's attention, and she was back to staring at the duo.

Suddenly, everything turned black, and Talia felt something pressing against her eyes.

Talia was about to panic, but then the scent of the forest and the dark chocolate entered her system, and she relaxed.

"Maddox!", Damon roared. "Don't you have no shame?"

Damon and Tony finished their talk and went to join their girls but then one Omega told them that Talia, Kalina, and Mindy went into the packhouse, and Damon and Tony saw them standing in the hallway and entering the room and Damon was not sure what to expect but this... he definitely didn't expect this.

"Unless you plan to join us, get out!", Maddox growled.

Maddox couldn't believe this. What kind of a place is this?

It's all Mindy's fault! He is never bringing his sister to events anymore!

Maddox cursed Mindy silently. Why was she still lingering? What is she doing? Is she selling tickets?

How can he enjoy sex when the audience is increasing? He is an Alpha and not some X-rated performer, damn it!

Damon pulled Talia out of the room without removing his hand from her eyes, and the moment they stepped into the hallway, Damon scooped Talia in his arms and carried her into their room without a word.

Mindy, Kalina, and Tony exchanged nervous glances, all three of them were sweating due to Damon's icy Alpha aura.

In the garden, Kalina thought of Damon as another handsome guy and she was confident that Tony was exaggerating when he said that Damon should not be crossed, but now Kalina realized that Damon is a bringer of calamity. She never felt so oppressed by just standing next to someone.

"Will Lia be OK?", Kalina asked while trying to shake off the fear which entered her bones.

Mindy's frown eased when she saw that Talia put her arms around Damon's neck. "She will be fine."

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Damon slammed the door to close with his leg and threw Talia on the bed.

Talia looked at Damon who was pacing through the room, occasionally stopping to look at her with a frown or to shove his hand into his hair, and then he was back to pacing.

Talia was getting dizzy how much Damon walked back and forth, but she didn't dare to look away or say anything. She never saw him this upset.

Damon was more than upset. He was enraged and in disbelief. What's with this horrible luck?

How is it possible that every time Talia slips out of his sight he finds her in a compromising situation? First, the soccer players kissing her hand, and then in the Shifters nightclub a drunkard having his hands on her, wretched coach next to the lake, and now Alpha Maddox... naked... fucking some random Omega he picked up. That girl probably came to bring him snacks and the horny Alpha ended up snacking on her, and Talia was watching!

How much did she see? Did she enjoy the show?

"Damn it, Talia!", Damon said eventually. "Every time you leave my sight I end up finding you with some guys!"

Talia blinked. "What guys?" She was clearly just with Mindy and Kalina.

Damon frowned. He wanted to talk, but his anger rendered him mute.

He stood next to the bed and narrowed his eyes at her. "Why were you staring at Maddox so intently?" And it was not only Maddox. It was Kalina's tattoos and Liam's also, and who knows how many more!?

Talia was not sure how to respond to this. Well... Maddox was naked, doing stuff, and there were sounds and... how can she not look? But she couldn't say that.

Talia's eyes widened in shock when Damon started undoing the buttons of his shirt.

"What are you doing?", Talia squeaked.

"I don't want you to remember his naked body.", Damon said. "Look at me until I erase his image."

Talia would laugh if not for the extreme anxiety that crashed on her.

Damon's shirt was on the floor, and he was unbuttoning his pants.

"Are you serious?" He can't be serious, right?

Damon let go of the buttons and crawled on the bed toward Talia.

"You don't understand, kitten. How can you look at anyone else's body? Do they have something I don't? Don't answer that. I want you to look at me. Only me. You are mine."

By the time Damon finished talking, he was above Talia, on his arms and knees, his hands on each side of her head, and his knees were at the level of her hips.

Talia stared in his icy-blue eyes that stirred with unfathomable emotions and she forgot to breathe while his words echoed in her head.

Is it possible that under that harsh and unapproachable facade Damon was insecure?

Talia remembered Mindy's story about Damon trashing the table in jealousy when he saw her surrounded by soccer players. And she remembered that Damon lost his parents as a teen, and then he lost his friends, and she realized that he has abandonment fears and for some inexplicable reason, he feared that she will leave him.

Doesn't that mean that he wants her in his life?

Talia cupped his cheek with her palm and smiled. "I am looking at you, Damon. Only at you." She repeated silently that as long as he treats her well, she won't leave him, and then she lifted her head and kissed him on the lips and Damon visibly relaxed.

He returned her kisses with desperation and passion that made her toes curl involuntarily.

"Say that you are mine, kitten...", Damon murmured between kisses.

"Yours", she said, and he hummed in approval.

"Again.", Damon demanded.

Talia smiled. "I am yours."

And then he kissed her again.

Chapter 156 - Unexpected Visitor

Talia got out of the shower, and she realized that she had nothing to wear in the bathroom.

She was dazed from all the kissing and when Damon told her to get ready first, she just went with it robotically.

Now that she was clearheaded, Talia frowned at the thought that she had no idea what dress Damon packed for her to wear tonight. What if he forgot to pack something fancy?

Ah! She will need shoes and some makeup also. The only makeup she has is a lip gloss that Maya gave her. This will be a disaster!

Well, no point in dwelling on it now, she will work with what she has.

Talia took the bathrobe and put it on, tightening the belt around her firmly before stepping out.

Talia froze at the sight of Damon and two young women in the room. What the...?

When did he manage to pick up women? And two of them? Scandalous images of Maddox and a woman under him flashed in Talia's mind and she frowned while thinking that Alphas really don't have any issues finding women to serve them.

"These two will help you get ready.", Damon said while taking a large plastic garment bag, and only then Talia noticed that two women stood in attention while staring at their feet.

Both women were wearing black pencil skirts and white shirts. Omegas.

Talia released the breath she was holding. Why did she allow her imagination to run wild? Was she jealous?

Damon stopped next to Talia and pecked her lips. "I can't wait to see you in the dress.", he murmured.

Damon glanced at two Omegas and spoke sternly, "Serve her well. You have twenty minutes."

"Yes, Alpha Damon!", two women responded in unison.

Damon nodded in approval and gave one more kiss to Talia before walking into the bathroom.

"This way, Mrs. Blake...", one Omega said while gesturing toward the chair.

The room had a table with three chairs, tucked next to the wall with one figurine of a deer on it, so Talia didn't pay attention to it before. But now the table had on it a mirror and some makeup and brushes, and Talia understood that she will get a makeover.

Talia's eyes wandered over the table and then she glanced at women to see that both of them had dark brown hair pulled into a neat bun, and they had similar features. Talia wondered if they are sisters...
Wait!

Did she hear that woman right?

"How did you call me?"

"Alpha Damon said to address you as Mrs. Blake.", she said.

Seeing that Talia froze, the other woman added while gesturing to the blow dryer in her hand, "Don't worry, Mrs. Blake, we know what we are doing. Alpha Damon said to treat you as his Luna..."

Talia's mind was spinning. What Mrs. Blake? What Luna? How much more misunderstandings will Damon cause? Was he getting a kick from her misfortune? But... was there any need to explain to these two? Forget it. Talia wouldn't know from where to start explaining.

"Can you call me Talia?"

"Yes, Ms. Talia!", they responded in unison.

"What are your names?"

Two Omegas exchanged glances before responding with, Lily and Ivy.

Talia didn't know that Lily and Ivy are working at the packhouse for years, taking care of guests and their needs, and this was the first time that anyone asked them about their names.

Talia sat on the chair and Lily immediately started drying her hair while Ivy applied moisturizer on Talia's face and worked her way down toward the neck and shoulders, pushing the bathrobe to open more with each stroke.

Talia closed her eyes and sank into the chair. It was not as good as the spa that morning, but she could get used to this pampering.

"Damon mentioned a dress...", Talia remembered.

"Yes, we brought it.", Lily answered while gesturing behind her.

Talia craned her neck to see a headless mannequin wearing a golden sleeveless floor-length dress that had a shiny sequined bodice and a light flowy skirt that looked like it was made out of several layers of see-through silk. Talia really wanted to touch it and confirm if it's as soft as it looks.

Talia's insides fluttered. She never wore anything so fancy.

This was definitely not from her closet.

"Did you say that you brought the dress with you?", Talia asked.

"Yes, Ms. Talia.", Lily responded. "It arrived earlier this afternoon and Luna Alicia told us to hold it until Alpha Damon calls for it. It arrived with shoes and matching jewelry."

"You are very lucky, Ms. Talia...", Ivy chimed in. "I've never seen an Alpha doting on his Luna this much..."

Talia smiled awkwardly but she didn't want to correct the misunderstanding. Maybe for tonight, she can be Damon's Luna.

Talia confirmed that Damon organized all this, and she was amazed at how he could think about the little details. It reminded her of how he prepared her an outfit for her first day of work as his assistant, and even though she said how it's not necessary, he continued doing that every day.

She never expected that a scary Alpha will be so attentive. From clothes to food and making her comfortable and safe, and above all that, Damon made her feel needed, important.

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Lily was flat-ironing Talia's hair and Ivy was applying foundation when a knock sounded from the door.

It took a moment for Talia to realize that she should answer, and she started scrambling to tighten the bathrobe around her.

"Ms. Talia, do you want me to get that?", Ivy offered, and Talia nodded gratefully.

Talia hoped that whoever it is, got the wrong door or maybe it's some delivery and Ivy will handle it.

"Can I help you?", Ivy asked after opening the door.

"I'm here to see Alpha Damon", a female voice drifted into the room and Talia pressed her lips into a line as her insides tightened. The woman sounded official. If she is from the Lighthclaw pack, Ivy should know her, right?

"Alpha Damon is busy.", Ivy responded. "Can I take a message?"

"Why are you here?", the female voice responded with a question, and Ivy turned to look at Talia helplessly.

Talia glanced at Lily to see that she already released her hair and Talia took a deep breath before standing up.

Talia's eyes widened at the sight of Nora who was looking into the room around Ivy who was blocking her sight.

Talia's mind worked a million thoughts a second.

Why is Red Moon Beta's daughter here? Is Marcy here also? Did she recognize her? No... Talia saw Nora many times and she knew who Nora is, but Nora never paid attention to Omegas.

Talia swallowed a mouthful of air when Nora looked at her with a frown.

It took Talia a moment to gather her wits and to remind herself that she is here with Damon. Not as someone he rescued, not as his assistant, but as his date and these two Omegas think of Talia as Damon's Luna. She should act like it.

Talia straightened her back and responded to the question that Nora asked Ivy. "Ivy and Lily are here to help me get ready for the party. Who are you and why are you looking for Damon?"

Nora stared at Talia in disbelief.

Nora wanted to see Damon, to remind him of Marcy's existence and of hers as well, and she knew that Damon brought a woman with him, but she didn't expect that the woman will act like she owns the place, and even have helpers to get ready.

Talia tilted her head while looking at Nora who was standing there stupidly.

The proud Miss Nora that Talia knew from her time at the Red Moon pack was nowhere to be found. This was just some random nobody who wanted to disturb her peace with Damon.

Talia felt anger bubbling inside her. Did Nora want to snatch Damon?

"Did you forget to speak?", Talia snapped at Nora. "You have five seconds to respond, or I will call security. How did you find this room?" Talia turned to Ivy. "Rooms of the VIP guests shouldn't be disclosed. Alpha Damon won't be pleased that a random person disturbed us. Can you find who leaked this information?"

Ivy nodded rapidly. "Yes, Ms. Talia. I will do my best." And then Ivy's eyes lost focus while she was mind-linking someone.

Talia turned her attention back on Nora. "Well? If you have something to say to Damon, I will be happy to convey your message once he is out of the shower, and if you wanted anything more than talking..." Talia narrowed her eyes while allowing her fury to wash over her. "Damon is taken."

Nora was not aware at what point she took a step back. She jolted when Talia slammed the door in her face.

Nora reached for her forehead and wiped it. Why was she sweaty? Why was she unable to speak? Nothing made sense, but she was alarmed by the fact that the woman with Damon is not just some random nobody. Did Omega call her Ms. Talia? What was with all that respect and special treatment? And did Talia call her a nobody? She is Beta's daughter! How is that a nobody!?

Chapter 157 - Talia's Makeover

After slamming the door in Nora's face, Talia plopped on the chair and released the breath she was holding.

Ivy was still frozen while mind-linking, so Talia spoke to Lily.

"If that woman doesn't leave, just call security. Damon has no meetings scheduled today, and we don't know who she is. Can anyone come here?"

Lily looked at Talia apologetically. "I can confirm that she is not from the Lightclaw pack. We have a lot of guests in the packhouse, and it seems that she slipped through the cracks. Our security is focusing on keeping uninvited people outside. Considering that all guests are high-ranking members, this kind of behavior is unexpected."

Lily continued flat ironing Talia's hair. "You handled her well, Ms. Talia."

Talia hid her trembling hands in the sleeves of her bathrobe and glanced up at Lily. "Really? To be honest, I didn't expect that someone will show up like that."

"It's unfortunate, but some women will go after Alphas who are married with kids. Nothing is off-limits for them. Alpha Damon is a handsome man. You are lucky that he cares for you."

Talia blinked. "What makes you think he cares?"

"If he doesn't dote on you, he wouldn't ask us to style you for the party, Ms. Talia. I noticed the difference between how Alpha Damon talked to you and how he spoke to us. I know a bit about fashion, and that dress is the latest model from a popular designer... I forgot his name, but I remember that the queue for his works is months long. Together with jewelry, I'm sure it costs a fortune...", Lily blabbered while working on Talia's hair and Talia felt warm and fuzzy feeling swelling in her chest.

"Security is looking through surveillance footage, Ms. Talia.", Ivy said when she resumed applying foundation on Talia's face. "That was Miss Nora from the Red Moon pack. They saw her coming in and no one stopped her, because they assumed she came here to speak to her Alpha. Security will talk to her and clarify the issue..."

Talia's insides tightened. This means that Alpha Edward is here.

What about Marcy? Alpha Edward wouldn't bring Nora to such an event, not without Marcy. Talia overheard Omegas at the Red Moon pack talking about how Nora and Marcy clicked from the moment Marcy returned from Europe, and they probably came together.

Facing Nora was one thing because Talia never interacted with Nora directly, but Marcy beat her up twice and Talia's body still remembers it even though bruises healed.

Talia was concerned. Will she be able to face Marcy and not fall apart?

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"All done!", Ivy exclaimed while putting the contouring brush on the table victoriously.

Talia leaned closer to the mirror to see her face.

A bit of a blush on her cheeks... mix of brown and golden eyeshadow created a smokey-eye effect... mascara and reddish lip gloss enhanced Talia's features and made her polished, yet it was not over the top.

Talia stood up in front of the full-length mirror. She couldn't recognize herself.

Her hair was nicely sleeked back to come together in an elegant low ponytail, and she had dangling circular golden earrings that went great with the golden floor-length dress which fit her like it was made for her. The golden sequined bodice was separated from the delicate golden skirt by a black belt that had intricate golden details on it, perfectly accentuating Talia's narrow waist.

There was a golden necklace in the set, but Talia refused to wear it.

The bodice of her gown was sparkly, and Talia thought that if she wears a golden necklace, it would be too flashy.

When Talia was barefoot, her gown was touching the floor, and Talia hummed in approval to see that it was just right after she put on heeled black shoes with golden details that came with the dress.

Talia twirled on her toes and a giggle escaped her lips at the sight of the flowy skirt that opened in layers, like delicate butterfly wings.

She felt like a princess after this makeover and it reminded her of the Cinderella story.

Talia took a mental note to hold onto her shoes because those must be expensive. Will she be able to cover the cost of damaging or losing a shoe? That came to her mind because Cinderella found her prince

after losing a shoe. Actually, Talia had no need to relinquish a shoe because her prince was only one door away, getting ready to attend the party with her.

Mental images of Damon wearing various clothes flashed in Talia's mind and she was confident that Damon will be dashing no matter what he wears, as always.

Talia thought how life was not fair. Why does the prince look good in anything, while Cinderella needs a makeover?

"You will be the most eye-catching lady at the party tonight.", Ivy's compliment reminded Talia that she was not alone.

Lily hummed in agreement. "You look like a fairy, Miss Talia."

Talia smiled at the compliments. Maybe they were just polite, but it still felt good to hear something like that. Eye-catching. Fairy.

What will Damon think?

Ivy and Lily were packing makeup and hairstyling gadgets, and their movements stopped when they heard noise from the bathroom which announced that Damon will come out any minute.

"We will take our leave.", Lily said and gestured to the lip gloss. "Keep this in your purse to retouch it through the evening. Feel free to call us if you need anything else, Ms. Talia."

Lily's words reminded Talia that her outfit came with a matching purse. It was black with golden details, just like her shoes and belt on her gown.

"Don't you want to stay? You did a great job, I'm sure that Damon will praise you.", Talia said.

Ivy was tugging Lily's arm toward the door. "We need to leave. It was an honor to serve you, Ms. Talia."

Talia exhaled helplessly. "Thank you for helping me get ready. I really appreciate it."

Ivy and Lily bowed and scurried out of the room.

The main door closed and a second later, the bathroom door opened.

Talia turned to see Damon standing frozen and looking at her from head to toe several times. His expression told her that he approved. He approved very much.

Damon was wearing black trousers and a black shirt. There was no necktie and the top button of his shirt was undone. At first glance, it was nothing fancy about his outfit, because Talia saw him wearing similar clothes before, but then Talia noticed golden details on the collar of Damon's shirt and along the strip that covered the buttons.

The designs matched the ones she had on her purse, belt, and shoes, and the colors matched her outfit with the difference that she had more golden while Damon had more black.

Her heart fluttered at the thought that they were wearing couple's outfits.

Damon ran his hand through his hair that was still damp from the shower. "I don't think we are going to the party, kitten."

Talia looked at him in disbelief.

"You are kidding. Why did I suffer through this styling session?", she whined.

Damon chuckled and stalked toward Talia, stopping only an inch from her. The scent of his aftershave splashed on her, but she could still clearly distinguish Damon's scent of the forest and the dark chocolate.

"If you go out like this, I will end up killing guys who are gawking at you."

This reminded her. "And what will you do if one of those guys comes knocking on the door of our room and demands to see me while refusing to say why?"

Damon frowned. That was oddly specific. "Did we have a visitor?"

Talia was impressed that he got it right away. "Nora. Beta's daughter from the Red Moon pack."

Knots formed in Damon's stomach when he remembered a brunette following after him. He couldn't recall her face clearly, but he definitely remembered taking her from behind.

Why did he feel so guilty about it? Is it because that happened after he met Talia? Or is it because he imagined Talia's coppery hair bunched in his hand instead of Nora's?

Damon shook those thoughts away. There was no point in regretting anything. Besides, it's not like he was cheating. He didn't even know Talia's name then!

But it was undeniable that something gnawed his insides.

Damon bedded more women than he could count, but that incident with Nora was the only one he really wanted to scrape from his memory.

"What did she want?", Damon asked stiffly.

"To see you. She didn't say more than that."

One knot in Damon's stomach was undone. At least Nora didn't cause trouble. For now. But there was another thing. "Did she recognize you?"

"No.", Talia said and glanced toward the mirror. "To be honest, I don't recognize myself."

Damon touched Talia's chin, making her turn to look at him. "You are beautiful, as always."

Talia blushed. "This is not how I normally look. This is definitely an upgrade. Thank you for getting Lily and Ivy to help me get ready and for the dress and... everything."

Talia wouldn't call herself beautiful, but she was definitely more sophisticated and sparkly.

Damon leaned closer and pecked her lips. "No dress is doing your wonderful body justice, kitten. If you want an upgrade to your appearance, you should get naked, but don't forget... that's only for me to see."

Talia thought that the air in the room was getting thin. Why else would she get this breathy?

Chapter 158 - Ready For The Party

"Why would Nora come here?", Talia asked Damon, feeling that visit from someone that belongs to the Red Moon pack shouldn't be skimmed over. "Nora was confident that you will see her."

Damon shrugged. "I don't know. I barely spoke to her at the Red Moon pack." Well, they were doing something else, but there was not much talking involved.

Talia thought how Nora's behavior was odd. What was she missing? Even if Marcy sent her, Nora was too courageous. Or was she brave only because Damon was not in sight? Who would know how Nora's brain is working?

Talia recollected Nora's visit while talking, "Nora wanted to see you, and then she asked Omegas why they were here. I told her that they were helping me to get ready for the party and Nora just stood there and stared at me like I have two heads or something."

"And?", Damon probed, equally curious and anxious.

"Nothing. I closed the door and she left."

She wanted to tell him that she was channeling the feeling of being his Luna, but she kept that to herself. Would a Luna close the door rudely without saying goodbye?

Damon relaxed. Did it really end like that? "You closed the door? Just like that?"

Talia smiled smugly. "In her face. Ivy told me that security will talk to Nora and investigate why she came here. They didn't stop her from coming this way because they assumed she wanted to visit Alpha Edward. But her coming here was not accidental, she was looking for you."

Damon was pleased that Talia dealt with Nora, and he regretted not seeing it in person. He would give anything to see his kitten showing her claws.

Can Damon connect this incident with Marcy and use it to ditch the stupid engagement which he had no plans to participate in? He really didn't want Marcy to come to the Dark Howlers pack. Actually, he would have completely forgotten about it if Alpha Edward didn't call two days ago.

However, for tonight, Damon wanted to focus on Talia because the guest list is full of people who won't shy from stirring trouble and he hoped that Talia will hold onto her cheeky confidence.

"You did good, kitten. No matter who comes to cause trouble, feel free to deal with them any way you see fit."

"I never did anything like that... closing the door on someone.", Talia said honestly while thinking about Nora's stupefied expression. "If not for your support, I would probably just lower my head and wait for her to leave."

"Don't give me credits for this, kitten. It was all you. I was not even in the room."

"But I knew you've got my back."

Damon loved that Talia said she was relying on him. This was another first.

"Keep that on your mind, kitten. This is not the Red Moon pack. You are here as an important guest, my woman. And I've got your back. Always."

Talia smiled foolishly. He said that she is important and his and that he will protect her. She liked that very much.

He already had her heart and with their every interaction, the moody Alpha was crumbling the mental protection she built over the years.

Damon pecked Talia's lips once, twice, and then he groaned while inching away.

"What?", Talia asked when she saw him frowning at her dress.

"I want to hold you but I'm afraid that I will mess up your hair or dress."

"I'm sure that a hug is fine.", Talia said in a small voice.

Damon chuckled. "I want to do more than just hugging."

His eyes lit up when he got an idea. "How about you remove the dress? It has a zipper on the back, right? Let me help you with that."

Damon nudged her shoulders lightly, indicating that she should turn, but Talia refused.

"We should go to the party. It's six o'clock.", Talia reminded him.

Damon made a face. "Just a little bit."

Talia couldn't believe how childish he was. "No. If I remove the dress, it will take a long time to be presentable because my hair and makeup will also be messed up." And she will definitely create creases on his finely pressed shirt.

Damon exhaled dejectedly. "Maybe coming to this party was not a good idea."

Talia giggled when she saw him pouting. She wished to take a photo as evidence that scary Alpha can pout. He was cute.

"How about this? We will go to the party and when we return, I will make it up to you."

Damon's lips stretched into a grin. "Really? Is that a promise?"

Talia had a feeling that he was thinking about something outrageous. But what can be more outrageous than him undressing and touching her down there? Even his head was between her legs and he licked her. At that thought, Talia blushed profusely.

Damon took a deep breath when the scent of Talia's arousal reached him. "I see we have a deal, kitten. I am eager to see how you will make it up to me."

Before Talia could respond, he pushed her to move toward the door.

"Let's make an appearance, kitten. The faster we go, the faster we will return, and then I don't need to worry about wrinkling your dress." Or tearing it into shreds.

Talia couldn't keep up with his quick mood change. "Eh?"

"You never said how long we need to stay at the party.", he reminded her with a wink. "Five minutes, no more than ten, and we will be back."

Talia shook her head helplessly. Her playful Alpha was here, and she didn't hate it. Not even a little bit.

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The party was held in the event hall which had three French doors that were fully open to provide access to the terrace and the garden where tables were arranged for the guests.

Luckily, it was late afternoon, and the sun was easing up, but the air still carried unpleasant dry heat.

To help guests cool off, among the tables in the garden, there were many barrels filled with icy water and various bottled beverages floating in it, available for anyone to help themselves.

Werewolves have increased metabolism which makes them warmer than humans, and they have no problems dealing with cold, but this scorching heat is a different thing. Many of the people present wanted to rip their fancy clothes off and take a dip in those barrels which were inviting with a promise of pleasant freshness, but this was an upscale event, so they held those urges back.

New Luna announcement was an important occasion, one of the largest a pack of werewolves could have, and the Lightclaw pack didn't skim on preparations or on the number of guests, even though everything was done in haste.

The moment Tony called home saying that he found his fated mate, his mother (aka Luna Alicia) summoned her helpers to come up with a timeline and assess how much time they need to prepare a party fit to welcome the new Luna.

If they delayed, it might appear they are not happy that Tony found his partner for life, the future Luna of the Lightclaw pack.

Luna Alicia was also mindful of the fact that Tony was dating Lisa and that over the years, Lisa's presence cast a shadow on the pack. That's why the party area was decorated elegantly with streamers, balloons, flowers, music, bountiful food and beverages, and there will be fireworks later in the evening.

Luna Alicia warned her son that he shouldn't be attached to one girl because he is the son of the Alpha. Sure, if they end up being mates, all will work out, but what if they are not mates?

Their arguments intensified once Tony confirmed that Lisa is not his mate. His mother warned him that things will turn sour, but Tony wouldn't listen.

Tony was saying how he and Lisa are getting along well and he had no need for seeing other girls, but Luna Alicia suspected that Tony didn't get a chance to see other girls because Lisa was sticking to him like a postage stamp.

After one heated fight, Tony succumbed to his mother's nagging and he agreed not to take Lisa to official functions outside of the Lightclaw pack. Unfortunately, that ended with Tony not attending those functions which backfired by affirming beliefs of many that Tony won't be a good Alpha. After all, a good Alpha would know that connections with other packs need to start forming early, yet Tony blew it.

And now that Tony found Kalina, Luna Alicia's fears came true. Most of the pack is reserved regarding Kalina because they thought that Lisa will be their Luna, and only a handful is open to accepting Kalina. Luna Alicia fears that some might dare to scheme against Kalina.

Acting against Alpha or Luna is a major crime, but Lisa had a tight circle of friends who might do something outrageous.

Unfortunately, Tony is too blinded by the newly found mate bond to realize the current situation in the pack, and Luna Alicia hopes that Kalina will have what it takes to win the pack over and overcome challenges as the future Luna.

Chapter 159 - Damon, Baby! [Bonus]

Was Luna Alicia worried about Lisa? Absolutely. After all, Lisa was part of their lives for years and Luna Alicia knows Lisa as a good girl.

Luna Alicia wanted to go and check on Lisa after the news broke that Tony found his fated mate, but Luna Alicia knew that her act of kindness might be interpreted as her support for Lisa (and against Kalina) as the next Luna, so she didn't go there.

As a Luna, Luna Alicia needs to consider the big picture before acting.

Luna Alicia's priorities are the Lightclaw pack and her family, and Lisa doesn't belong to any of those two groups.

This party has a goal to introduce Kalina to the Lightclaw pack and to high-ranking members of other packs, and also to show that Tony and Kalina have the support of Tony's parents to be the next Alpha and Luna of the Lightclaw pack.

Yes, Alpha Magnus is power-hungry and reluctant to let go of his position as an Alpha, but the reality is that no matter how much Alpha Magnus postpones it, he will need to step down eventually, and at that point, Tony will take over the pack.

Luna Alicia did everything she could to make this party grand with the hope this will be enough to start shifting the tide in Kalina's (and Tony's) favor and set them on a course to success.

Other than dealing with the party, Luna Alicia also spent quite an effort in convincing her husband (aka Alpha Magnus) to ask for a favor from Alpha Damon, to give some pointers to Tony. Everyone knows that Alpha Damon is an exceptional figure of the younger generation and if Alpha Damon agrees to mentor Tony, Tony's chance of becoming a good Alpha will increase exponentially.

Ah, no one knows all the things a mother will do from the shadows for her children.

Parenting is hard.

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Damon and Talia made their way through the hallway, and with every step, the noise from the party was increasing.

Damon felt Talia tensing next to him and he gave her waist a light squeeze.

"Relax, kitten.", Damon said. "No one can touch you with me around."

Talia glanced up at him and gave him a stiff smile.

Yes, his hold around her waist was solid and she believed that he can protect her from anyone who dares to approach her with malice, but what about her inner demons which were stirring?

Insecurities. Doubts. Feeling of inferiority. Inadequacy.

For two decades people around her either ignored her or looked down on her. How can she stand next to a magnificent man like Damon and feel worthy?

Talia released a shaky breath while telling herself that she can do this. She has to.

Damon did so much for her in the last two weeks and she won't disappoint him now.

Thanks to Damon, she looks like a million bucks, and she needs to act like it, even if it's just an act.

Damon and Talia stepped into the long hallway that connected the residential part of the packhouse with the rest of the building when...

"Damon, baby!", a shrill scream came from the side and both Damon and Talia froze.

Talia's eyes widened in horror. She was not done with her internal pep talk. And why did that voice sound familiar?

Damon turned to the side with a frown and observed the girl who was moving toward them with a big smile on her face.

Cassie.

Somehow, he forgot about her.

After slamming her against the wall and sending her home, Damon thought that he was done dealing with her.

Cassie was delighted to see Damon. She heard rumors about how Damon will come to this event with a date, but Cassie didn't believe a word of it, especially after confirming that Marcy's date is Nora.

How Cassie saw this, if Damon is not coming with the latest woman who claims to be his future Luna (aka Marcy), he won't come with anyone else.

On top of that, Cassie was keeping a close eye on Damon for years and she knew that he attends these events without a date.

Cassie's plan was simple.

She was standing there for some time, waiting to catch Damon at the right moment. She knew that Damon won't acknowledge her as his date, however... For Damon, she will make it appear as they met

accidentally, and the two of them will walk into the limelight of the party side-by-side. It might look innocent, but everyone will assume that she is Damon's mysterious date people are talking about.

With that, no one will doubt that she, Cassie, will be the next Luna of the Dark Howlers pack. Perfect!

While making her way toward our couple, Cassie ignored Damon's frown, but her smile faltered when she realized that there is someone on Damon's right side.

Damon's body obstructed Cassie's view, but there was definitely someone. Cassie craned her neck in an attempt to see who is it.

"How did you address me?", Damon's icy words full of hostility made Cassie stop in her tracks about three steps away from him. "It seems you are forgetting basics about hierarchy."

Cassie quickly lowered her head as a wave of dread washed over her. "I apologize, Alpha Damon."

"Where is your father?", Damon asked his next question and before Cassie could respond, Damon spoke to an Omega that was standing nearby. "Call Alpha Richard from the Steelbite pack to come here. Tell him that it's urgent. It's about his daughter."

Cassie looked after the Omega who scurried away with haste, and she couldn't believe this.

"Is there a need to call my father?"

Damon sneered. How can she feign ignorance? He labeled Cassie as hostile for the Dark Howlers pack. That means, an enemy. From where did she find the courage to approach him so casually? Is she tired of living?

"Did you forget how we parted ways, Cassie?"

Cassie gritted her teeth. How can she forget that Damon choked her and kicked her out? It was humiliating to be escorted by the warriors and that obnoxious Beta Maya, but Cassie was confident that was temporary.

Alphas are moody, and that was only Damon's outburst. It should be in the past. The two of them shared so many cozy moments over the years that one mishap is nothing.

Cassie was confident that if she reminds him of that, he will let her back in, but she didn't expect that there will be a girl by his side. A skinny one.

"Who is she?", Cassie blurted out.

Damon wanted to say how it's none of her business, but then he changed his mind. He glanced at Talia who had no intention of coming out of the hideout his body provided.

By now, Talia confirmed that the girl who was acting overly friendly with Damon was Cassie. The girl who accused her of stealing food while clinging onto Damon's hand... the girl who accused her of stealing the phone and slapping her... the girl who was getting frisky with Damon while Talia shrunk in her room alone, hungry, and aching. The more Talia thought about those moments, the more edges of her lips curled downward.

Damon looked at Talia's stubborn expression and he smiled helplessly. What was she thinking? Nothing good probably. How can she have any good thoughts when Cassie was in front of them?

Through the mate bond, Damon could feel Talia's emotions and he knew that if he doesn't do something, Cassie might do irreparable damage. But what can he do? Talia was still not ready to acknowledge her emotions openly and her thoughts were even more shielded. Other than her body... YES! Her body knows!

Damon held Talia's chin with his index finger and thumb and before she could react, his lips descended on hers and his arms enveloped her in the warmest hug ever that came with a burst of his intoxicating scent.

Damon's flavors seeped into Talia's system and her brain stuttered.

Why was he kissing her while Cassie was glaring daggers at her?

A second later, Cassie faded from Talia's mind due to Damon's toe-curling kiss full of longing which came with the most delicious flavor of the dark chocolate, and Talia gripped Damon's arms to steady herself because her legs were giving up on her.

"My dear...", Damon spoke into Talia's lips, his deep voice was full of unspoken emotions. "There is a woman who wants to know who you are. Do you want to introduce yourself or should we ignore her and move on?"

"What woman?", Talia asked breathily. She was lost in Damon's endlessly icy-blue eyes, forgetting about Cassie and the party and anything else.

Damon chuckled. "That's right. The only woman worth noticing is you."

Cassie's expression turned ugly. She was standing right there! Why were they treating her like air?

She was never humiliated like this!

But she couldn't voice her grievances. Not in front of Damon, but... who is that woman?

Talia's face was still obstructed by Damon, but Cassie knew everyone who was someone, and she was confident that Talia was not among those people.

Chapter 160 - SLAP! X2

"Well? Will you introduce your date to me? Or is she not worthy because tomorrow you will be with someone else?", Cassie asked Damon impatiently without removing her scrutinizing gaze from Talia, waiting for Damon to move so that she can see Talia's face clearly.

Damon's face darkened. He turned to Cassie to respond, and his mouth froze half-open because Talia spoke...

"Are you hoping that someone else will be you?"

Damon looked at Talia with renewed interest, unsure from where that confidence came. And this was beyond just confidence. Talia extruded an aura that urged him to worship her, similar to the one he felt at the human hospital when Talia faced Mr. Martinez, but this one was fiercer.

Damon was not sure if this sensation was due to the mate bond or something else. Can Cassie feel it? If Cassie felt anything, she was resisting it because she was glaring at Talia. But the beads of sweat on Cassie's forehead told him that there is something.

Talia had enough of Cassie and her attitude like she owned the place.

Every insult Cassie threw at her was replaying in Talia's mind and her cheek stung at the memory of Cassie's slap, fueling Talia's anger. At first, Talia thought that Cassie was bullying her because Talia was wearing shabby clothes and was alone, but now Talia was not alone, and her dress was fabulous, yet Cassie still treated her like trash.

This incident confirmed that Cassie looks down on everyone. Does she feel better by putting others down? How is that different from Anna and her gang of Omegas from the Red Moon pack?

Cassie is lucky to be a daughter of an Alpha, but that doesn't give her the right to bully others. Just like Marcy.

How can Talia allow Cassie to bully her? Talia is here with Damon, as his date, representing the Dark Howlers pack. If she lowers her head and allows Cassie to do what she pleases, that will be a stain on Damon and on the Dark Howlers pack. That's unacceptable.

Cassie eyed Talia from head to toe a few times and she could swear that Talia looked familiar, but Cassie couldn't put her finger on it.

"I'm not hoping that Damon will be with me. I know he will.", Cassie said confidently. "I've seen Damon with many women who don't tickle his imagination for more than one night, and then he comes back to me."

"He is ALPHA Damon to you...", Talia responded sternly and then her lips lifted into a mocking smile. "I am surprised to hear you boasting about being a fallback girl."

Cassie was stupefied. No one spoke to her like that before. Everyone in the Steelbite pack pampers her, her father included. She always had a celebrity treatment inside and outside of the Steelbite pack. What fallback girl? Damon coming to her more than once is an exception, that makes her special... why did this woman (aka Talia) make it sound like it's something shameful?

"What?"

Talia smiled condescendingly. "It seems you still don't get it. No wonder Damon was able to take advantage of you. But I must disappoint you Miss whoever-you-are because Damon is with me tonight. And I have no intention of letting go of him tomorrow either. So, you will need to find someone else's arm to latch onto, because Damon's arms are busy with me. Do you get it now or should I simplify it further for your pea-sized brain to understand?"

Cassie's biggest issue was the explosive temper that clouds her judgment and makes her forget all the warnings her father gave her. Now that Talia stood next to Damon (in Cassie's place, how Cassie saw it) and she insulted her, Cassie's anger was surging.

"Who do you think you are!?", Cassie screamed.

"I am someone who can come to this event as Damon's date. I am someone who can keep Damon by my side for more than one night.", Talia said firmly. She knew that her tone was egoistic, but she didn't lie.

Damon perked up at Talia's words. She was almost claiming him as hers openly. Almost.

Cassie sucked in a sharp breath. "You are the girl from the photo..." Her eyes darted from Damon to Talia. "You were with him at the Summer Solstice festival."

Talia really enjoyed putting Cassie in her place. "Yes. We were together at the festival and if you think that's the only place where Damon took me, think again."

Cassie's face fell when she remembered from where Talia was familiar. "You are the girl from the car... the one who went with Damon to the human town when I was..."

'SLAP!'

Cassie's eyes widened in shock when Talia slapped her.

Talia was equally shocked. This was her first time to hit a person! But Cassie was addressing Damon casually and Talia couldn't stand it.

Talia lifted her chin smugly. "It's ALPHA Damon. How dare you talk about Damon in such a friendly way?"

Cassie robotically reached for her cheek which didn't hurt much because Talia doesn't have the strength of a werewolf, but what received a devastating blow was Cassie's ego.

Talia's palm, on the other side, was throbbing painfully and Talia would shake her hand and cry if not for maintaining her high-and-mighty posture. Her hand was achy, but Talia felt the satisfaction of returning the slap that Cassie gave her in the packhouse of the Dark Howlers pack. It came late, but it still felt good.

Cassie's face turned ugly. "And what gives YOU the right to address him casually?"

"The right that you don't have, Missy..." Talia said smugly and hugged Damon's arm. "Do you get it now? You are nobody. A bad memory. Scram."

Cassie's fury swelled to the point of boiling and she lost it completely.

"You, wench!", Cassie screamed and moved toward Talia.

'SLAP!'

This slap came from Damon and it propelled Cassie backward until she fell on the butt unceremoniously.

There was no way that Damon would allow Cassie to hit Talia again. He still clearly remembers Cassie slapping Talia in the packhouse, and he regrets that he was not one second faster, to prevent it.

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"CASSIE!", Alpha Richard exclaimed while rushing toward them. He got into the hallway just in time to hear Cassie call Talia a wench and to see Damon slapping Cassie away (literally).

To make things worse, Alpha Richard didn't come alone. Several other people were right behind him, witnessing this, and making it an incident that can't be easily brushed off.

When Omega told him that Cassie and Damon are in the hallway and that his presence was requested, Alpha Richard asked people who were at his table to join him, with the hope that he can take advantage of the situation and the audience, but this was NOT what he had in mind.

Alpha Richard cursed internally while helping Cassie stand up. He told her to stay at home, but she insisted on coming because Cassie doesn't miss these events, and then Cassie said that she needs more time to get ready and he suspected that Cassie has a plan to get close to Damon, but he still thought she will be wise about it and not make a spectacle.

What did she do for Damon to hit her like that? Damn it!

Alpha Richard took a deep breath to compose himself. This is not a lost cause. His daughter got a beating and he can definitely turn this in his favor.

"Are you OK, pumpkin?", Alpha Richard asked sobbing Cassie whose cheek was swelling visibly. He turned to several Omegas who were observing the scene. "Ice! Bring an icepack!"

Damon put his arm around Talia and Talia glanced at Damon with eyes full of worry. Damon told her to not let anyone bully her, and she got carried away, but she didn't think that it will escalate so much. But Damon stood steady as a mountain and Talia leaned on him, basking in the comfort his presence provided.

"He hit me...", Cassie sobbed to her father. "Because of that woman... Damon hit me! And she hit me as well!" She was a pitiful image of a wrongly abused woman.

Too bad that no one other than her father dared to comfort her.

Omega with an icepack approached the group gingerly, and Damon called, "Come here."

Damon took the icepack and put it on Talia's palm, the one she used to slap Cassie.

"How does it feel?", Damon asked Talia in a low voice.

"It's fine. Thanks.", she responded in a whisper. Talia was touched by Damon's care and that he noticed her hand was achy. That icepack was soothing to her throbbing palm.

"Remind me to teach you evasive maneuvers you can use when someone wants to hit you in the face. I don't want you to end up like that." Damon's eyes darted toward Cassie. "As for this..." He looked at her palm with a frown. "Next time, use a fist."

Talia's smile widened. "Alright."

Alpha Richard's expression darkened at this public display of affection. That icepack was obviously for Cassie!

Alpha Richard waved toward lingering Omegas impatiently. "Get another one!"

Omega bowed and rushed to get an icepack, but she really wanted to stay and not miss a thing of what's coming.