

Alphas Bride 241

Chapter 241 - Plans For Guests (2)

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Damon thought how it would be good if Coach Keith was here.

That guy could feed James and George his funky protein shakes, put them to run on a treadmill, and make it look important.

Should he arrange for Keith to return early from the survival training? Actually, maybe he should call the whole soccer team and give them a mission to entertain Marcy. Yeah, that might work. Serving Marcy (and keeping an eye on her) can count as another type of mental training.

And if Keith or the soccer team players mess up their tasks, Damon will punish them.

Damon's eyes lit up.

He was getting closer to something that resembled a plan!

"Prepare rooms for people from the Red Moon pack on the first floor.", Damon decided quickly. If he denied them stay in the packhouse, it will arouse suspicion, but he wanted them as far as possible from Talia.

"I will do it.", Talia volunteered, making Damon, Caden, and Maya look at her with complex expressions.

"You don't need to do that, kitten.", Damon spoke first. "Maya will arrange their rooms, and after that, I will deal with them."

"No.", Talia refused. "How can I call myself your Luna if I avoid something as simple as arranging rooms for our guests? No matter how unpleasant it might be, we will deal with them together."

Damon's heart skipped a beat. Can she be more adorable? "Alright. Together."

Maya and Caden exhaled in relief when they realized that Talia and Damon were really together in this. Part of them feared that things went South between their Alpha and the future Luna and that in the fit of his rage Damon decided to replace Talia with Marcy.

It wouldn't be the first time for Damon to do something unreasonable when he was angry but it usually involved fighting and breaking bones.

Talia being part of all that meant there was a plan, and they definitely needed a plan because Marcy was coming and if they don't handle this delicately, they might end up with a war on their hands!

"Alright.", Caden said. "What's the plan? What do we do with Marcy?"

"I have no idea.", Damon deadpanned and both Maya and Caden stared at him with their mouths open.

"Come again?", Caden asked in disbelief. Surely, his ears malfunctioned.

Seeing Damon's helpless expression, Maya frowned. "Why is Marcy coming ahead of schedule if you don't have a plan?"

"Because I asked for it."

Maya and Caden snapped at the same time and stared at Talia, both wondering if they heard her right. Why would Talia want Marcy to come? Wasn't Marcy the one who bullied Talia in the Red Moon pack?

Well, it was not really Talia who asked for Marcy's presence, but Talia couldn't tell them that it was her wolf, so she decided to own it.

"Damon wants to announce me as his Luna, and I want him to clean his mess before that.", Talia said. "If we make it public that I'm Damon's mate, Marcy and her supporters will see me as an impostor. They won't care about the story of how the Moon Goddess knows best. If they cared about those things, they wouldn't try to push Marcy into Damon's hands."

Maya and Caden nodded in agreement. Talia was right. Those people were driven by greed and if Talia steps into the limelight when Marcy is this close to her goal, everyone will target Talia.

And it's not only Marcy, there are many other women who wish to be Damon's Luna.

People with common enemies will form alliances, and with Talia stepping out as Damon's Luna, she will be labeled as public enemy number one.

Even members of the Dark Howlers pack might resent Talia because they will think she is the cause they are not forming an alliance through marriage with the Red Moon pack which would give them absolute dominance on the continent.

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Maya decided to share her thoughts.

"I think that Talia should establish her footing and gather supporters before our society explodes with news that the position of the Luna of the Dark Howlers pack is taken. With Mindy and Kalina in Talia's tight circle, we are on the right path.", Maya said while pointing at the WW Magazine on her desk, the one that was featuring Kalina's party where she was announced as the future Luna of the Lightclaw pack.

Maya thought for a moment before adding, "We should introduce Talia to some prominent figures in our pack. Maybe we can organize a gathering in the next few days and invite Elders. When they see how Talia is accepted among high-ranking members of other packs, they won't have a choice other than to support Talia."

"That sounds great, but we need a plan on how to handle Marcy.", Caden chimed in and turned to Damon. "We shouldn't offend her, but the more this drags, the more she will be misled that she has a chance. You need a clear cut, and you need to do it quickly."

Damon agreed with Caden, but... "I am not concerned about dealing with Marcy. The real problem is her father."

"Well, then you should break up your engagement with Alpha Edward.", Maya said sarcastically, and she bit her lower lip when she realized that she said that aloud. What's wrong with her?

Damon was not in the mood to bicker with Maya. In a way, she was right.

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As much as Damon wanted to come up with some solution, he knew that one can't be forced. "Alright. We are all on the same page regarding this, and they won't be here before tomorrow evening which gives us a full day to think of something. What's the status on other guests?"

Caden glanced at his notes on the computer before responding, "Group from the Midnight Guardians pack will arrive in time for breakfast tomorrow morning. The group from the Lightclaw pack is running late, but they should be here before midnight. Alpha Maddox and Mindy are on their way, and we expect they will join us for dinner. After dinner, we can all go to the Shifters nightclub and leave a few Omegas behind to welcome Tony and his party and help them settle. If they are in the mood for a club after their trip, they can join us at Shifters."

Damon thought that was a good idea, but instead of responding, he looked at Talia. "What do you say, kitten? Do you want to go to a nightclub with me?"

Talia's mind flashed with images of her previous visit to the Shifters nightclub. It was an eventful evening with Zina, Dawn, Pierce, and Liam. Coach Keith was also there, and she met his sister, Katya. However, what stood out the most was the scene of Damon standing at the entrance and observing the crowd like he owns the place, and then he walked into his VIP booth, and he looked cool out there.

And he just asked her to join him.

"I would love to.", Talia responded with a smile that lit up Damon's world.

Will she get to stand at the entrance by his side this time? Definitely.

Will they dance? Probably.

She really wanted to dance with Damon again.

Just thinking about dancing with Damon at Kalina's party awakened butterflies in Talia's stomach and after that, they went to their room and got entangled with each other for the first time. The first time of many.

Damon made her undress him as punishment and he pulled her into the tub with him... fireworks... and then they moved to the bed.

Talia pressed her legs together. This was not a good time to get aroused!

Suddenly, Talia became super-aware of how under that skirt she was panty-less.

The way Damon gripped her waist told her that he could smell her arousal.

"You heard your Luna. We will be going to Shifters tonight.", Damon said without removing his gaze from Talia and he stood up with her in his arms, like it's a totally normal thing.

Talia hid her face in the crook of his neck.

"Let us know when Max and Mindy arrive.", Damon said while walking out in big strides, and Talia peered over his shoulder just in time to see Maya and Caden looking at them with knowing smiles on their faces.

Ah! They definitely knew that Talia and Damon were going to their room to do the naughty.

How embarrassing!

Chapter 242 - Desire To Submit [Bonus]

Mindy and Alpha Maddox were in a car that was approaching the packhouse.

"I have no idea why you tagged along.", Mindy said while scrutinizing Maddox.

"Who would drive?"

"I can drive just fine", Mindy snapped at her brother. "You are up to something, and I want to know what. The fact that you are colluding with Axel is only making it more suspicious."

Maddox shrugged like he has no idea what Mindy was talking about. "Aren't I allowed to socialize? Or is having fun reserved only for females?"

Mindy rolled her eyes. Maddox's idea of socializing is to band with a group of guys and drink and after that he bands with a bunch of females in order to pick one (or more) who will accompany him. Considering that Axel is like a monk who is abstaining from females and alcohol, Axel is definitely NOT buddy-material for Maddox.

"Fine. Don't tell me. But don't mess around with Talia anymore. She is a good girl, and Alpha Damon likes her."

"When did I mess with Talia?", Maddox asked innocently and then burst into chuckles. "Besides, I know that Damon is set on her." That's what makes her so interesting. "With so many she-wolves in this pack, why would I pick a bone with Damon?"

"As long as you know.", Mindy said and turned to look at the back seat that held a bunch of neatly packed boxes. "I hope Talia will like the presents I got for her. Last time I came empty-handed so I'm making it up..."

Maddox didn't care about presents and pleasantries. He was set on figuring out what's with Damon and Talia. All signals were pointing that Damon and Talia are mates, but why was Damon not announcing it?

As an Alpha, Maddox is handling serious matters that will impact thousands of people in his pack, and some carefree mischief was refreshing.

Maddox felt the excitement of a child who was about to open a mystery box, but he knew that if he acts rashly, he will face Damon's wrath. That's where Axel comes in.

Ever since the party at the Lightclaw pack where he recorded Damon and Talia dancing, Maddox fed Axel carefully selected information, just enough to stir up the future Alpha and make him an accomplice.

The two of them will collaborate and figure out the secret Damon is keeping, and if Damon gets upset, Axel will be there to ease up the situation. Or at least to bear a part of Damon's fury.

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In the packhouse...

Damon and Talia were in their room, getting ready to face the world by putting clothes on and making themselves appear decent.

Talia was pleased with her short-sleeved, peach-colored summer dress that reached her knee level. With her hair lifted into a ponytail, Talia was presentable and not over the top, and her best feature was the happiness that reflected in her eyes.

Talia had only one concern. "What will we do if Lisa causes trouble?"

Both Talia and Damon knew that if Lisa was fine, the mother-daughter duo wouldn't move out of the packhouse.

As the first-time hostess, Talia wanted Kalina to relax and have a good time, and how can Kalina relax if she needs to watch her back because Lisa might be lurking?

Talia remembered how tense she was with Cassie around, and at that time, she didn't even think about being with Damon!

"Try not to worry about Lisa.", Damon said. "We have security strengthened around the packhouse, and several Omegas are staying on the first floor. Lisa won't be able to sneak in without being noticed. Other

than that, I told Tony that Lisa is in the pack, so he will be vigilant, and when you girls go out without us, Maya will keep watch. At most, Lisa will cause a scene, but I hope she is smarter than..."

Damon's words stopped as his eyes lost focus for a moment, and he said, "They are almost here."

Talia nodded in understanding and with that, Talia and Damon were on their way to greet Mindy and Alpha Maddox. Their first two guests.

"Is this OK?", Talia asked while straightening non-existing creases on her dress.

"Perfect.", Damon responded with a smile. She looked good in anything. Actually, she looked the best naked, but they were outside of their bedroom, so he couldn't complain. He will undress her, later.

"How about me?", he returned the question.

Talia looked at Damon who wore a simple black shirt and jeans, but even with that, he was the most handsome man on the planet.

"Very handsome.", Talia said honestly, and Damon hummed in approval.

He loved when she looked at him like that, like he is the only man in the world, the only man in Talia's world. Just how it should be.

"Can you walk?", Damon asked Talia when they reached the stairs.

Talia looked at Damon and his sly smile told her that he was referring to her condition after the intense lovemaking they did.

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Since they finished their brief talk with Caden and Maya, Damon didn't let Talia get out of bed.

Talia enjoyed it very much. Damon's every touch came with addictive sparks, and even without those, Damon definitely knew how and where to touch a woman but talking about it was embarrassing.

"I am fine.", Talia responded stiffly, but the blush that crept on her cheeks was a giveaway of her discomfort.

Damon chuckled. "No need to hold it in, kitten. I will carry you gladly. That should save your energy for more useful things." Damon winked and gave her a grin.

'SMACK!'

In her embarrassment, Talia slapped Damon's buttocks, and even though the hit didn't carry any force, it made much more noise than intended.

Damon was shocked for a moment and then a devious smile appeared on his face. "It seems you are still energetic. How about we go back and...?"

Before he could finish, Talia swiftly moved down the stairs.

"Oy! I was talking here! How dare you disregard your Alpha!", Damon exclaimed after Talia, and she could hear that he was smiling.

What Talia didn't hear was that Damon caught up with her before she reached the end of the first flight of stairs.

"AHHH!", Talia screamed when she lost her footing.

Her body rotated at an unusual angle, and it took her a moment to realize that Damon scooped her in his arms.

"What are you doing?", Talia asked with panic in her voice.

They were having guests, so naturally, the packhouse had a number of Omegas busying themselves around there... somewhere... probably watching them.

"I am carrying my woman.", Damon said matter-of-factly. "Don't you know that the best way to stir your man is to give him a good chase? But I don't want you to tire yourself out because those pretty legs of yours will do only two things tonight."

He made a dramatic pause, obviously giving her time to ask for clarification of his ambiguous statement.

Talia had a feeling that it's nothing good, but she still asked, "What two things?"

"Dancing and..." He moved closer and spoke softly, only for Talia to hear, "Wrapping around my waist."

Talia knew that the playful Damon was holding her, and she didn't dislike it, but this was outside of their privacy, and people could see and hear them, and he was scandalous.

"You are holding me, so I can't smack you.", Talia grumbled. "I feel like biting you."

Damon's eyes flashed in delight. "Bite away, kitten. I am all yours to bite." He tilted his head, exposing his neck. "You can start from here."

With the tip of her index finger, Talia touched the base of Damon's neck on his left, and his steps halted as sparks shot through his body. That was the marking spot, and he was surprised how sensitive it was.

Normally, the dominant one in the relationship would put his mark on the one who is submitting because in the world of werewolves there are no such things as equals and sharing, and Damon had no idea what to make out of this.

Yes, he wanted to give the world to Talia and to take care of her until he spoils her rotten, but that would be on his terms and out of his own will because he is the dominant between the two of them. Right?
RIGHT!?

Damon looked at Talia who was fixated on the spot she touched, and he saw her little tongue darting out to moisten her lips.

"Do you want to bite me there?", Damon asked, and Talia snapped to look at him.

"I don't know.", she responded honestly. She wanted to lick and bite him everywhere, but at that moment, that particular spot seemed like it was calling for her.

Damon could feel Talia's desire and he swallowed hard when he realized that he wouldn't mind if she bites him.

No. No! This is NOT happening. He is THE Alpha for crying out loud and he won't submit to anyone, not even if that other person is the most beautiful and addictive and adorably cute she-wolf who can pull on his heartstrings without trying. Talia's mark on his neck will probably be just as cute as she is...

'BEEP! BEEP!'

A loud car horn from outside announced the arrival of guests, pulling both Damon and Talia out of their thoughts.

Damon shook his head. What was he thinking? It's crazy.

He resumed his steps down the staircase. They need to greet the newcomers.

Chapter 243 - Talia's Friend (1) [Bonus]

After dinner, per Mindy's request, Mindy and Talia went to Mindy's room.

Since Mindy said that guys were not welcome, Damon and Maddox headed to the entertainment room to catch up over drinks while two girls were doing whatever Mindy had on her mind.

Caden and Maya went into their room.

They all agreed to meet up later so that they can go to Shifters nightclub together.

Talia was happy to leave the dining room because Dawn and Zina were serving food and both Omegas were unable to conceal their inquisitive gazes at the sight of Talia and Damon sitting next to each other and holding hands.

Dawn and Zina knew that there is something between their Alpha and Talia. After all, the duo was acting suspiciously, and they also appeared in the WW Magazine for everyone to see. However, the fact that Talia and Alpha were so intimate with each other even now, meant that they are an item. Officially. That was a big deal because Alpha Damon was not official with any other woman before.

Dawn and Zina couldn't wait to get more information from the source itself (aka Talia).

Talia was painfully aware that Dawn and Zina were hoping to catch her for interrogation the moment Damon is not in sight, but she wanted to avoid that as long as possible. Maybe until forever.

When Talia and Mindy got inside Mindy's room, Mindy was pleased to see that Omegas kept her suitcase in the closet, and they arranged boxes with presents for Talia on the coffee table to form a pyramid, just how Mindy instructed them.

"These are for you.", Mindy announced proudly.

Talia's eyes moved over a small mountain of boxes. She never saw so many presents in one place.
"Which one is mine?"

Mindy giggled. "All of them, silly." She approached the table and took one square-shaped box that was larger than her palm. "OK. This one is for Alpha Damon, but the rest is for you."

"You really..." Talia had no idea how to respond other than, "I can't accept this."

Mindy rolled her eyes. "Please. This is not the first time for me to come here, and last time I didn't bring you anything so I'm making up for it. Don't think I will come as Santa Claus every time. Don't hurt my feelings by rejecting the presents I painstakingly picked."

Mindy didn't painstakingly pick anything. She just swept through several brand-name stores and got their latest products.

Seeing that Mindy was eagerly waiting for Talia to start checking out the presents, Talia took the box from Mindy's hand and after removing the wrapper, she could read "Rolex" which was written in golden letters on a dark green box.

Inside was a Rolex oyster perpetual cosmograph Daytona 18k yellow gold men's wristwatch that was impressive with golden and deep green colors, and it sparkled in a way that told Talia it's expensive beyond belief.

"What do you think? Will Damon like it?", Mindy asked.

"The watch is beautiful. I'm sure he will like it.", Talia said honestly.

"Great!", Mindy exclaimed with glee. "I'm glad you think it's beautiful because you have a matching one."

Talia helplessly accepted the next box that Mindy picked from the pile. It was a square-shaped box, larger than Mindy's palm, and Talia guessed that inside was a matching Rolex watch. And she was not wrong.

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About a dozen present openings later...

Talia was sitting on the sofa, absolutely flustered. Other than two Rolex watches, there was jewelry, a purse which probably cost more than all the jewelry combined, a silky bathrobe with matching fluffy slippers, a set of luxurious toiletries, and a variety of imported snacks that came with professionally paired wine.

Among all those things, Talia was flabbergasted by a women's self-care kit that included bathing salt, a playlist of slow songs for relaxing, a sponge, scented candles, a bottle of wine, facemasks, lotions, a lubricant, and a dildo.

Talia paid special attention to the bottle of wine. It had a yellow label with many details that resembled a vineyard and it said 'Far Niente Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon'.

With this one, Talia counted that Mindy gave her a total of seven bottles of wine, and Talia deducted that wine is a must-have for females. Should she try drinking it?

"The sales associate told me this is popular.", Mindy explained when she saw that Talia was carefully examining the contents of the box. Mindy was pleased because every item was from a high-end brand.

"What is this?", Talia asked when her attention was drawn to the purple dildo.

She took it in both hands and saw that silicone was somewhat bendable.

Mindy giggled. "With Alpha Damon giving you company, I assume you won't need that."

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Talia's confused expression told Mindy that Talia didn't understand.

Mindy eyed Talia suspiciously. "You are kidding, right? Tell me you are kidding. You really don't know what that is?"

Talia blinked. She really didn't know.

"It's to help yourself when there is no man to satisfy your needs. Or you can use it in addition to your man. I mean, we have two holes down there.", Mindy said, and her eyes darted toward Talia's crotch area.

One second passed in silence... two... three... and then Talia's eyes widened in realization, and she swiftly kept the purple thing back in the box, like she burned herself.

What did she just hold? And she even bent it a little!

Mindy burst into a fit of giggles that produced small snorty sounds. Talia's expression was comical.

Talia's embarrassment turned into dejection. "Did you buy this to make fun of me?"

"No, no...", Mindy said while catching her breath.

Other than the saleswoman's pitch how that was the most popular self-care kit for women, Mindy didn't check the details. But Mindy didn't want to admit that to Talia because she previously said how she 'painstakingly' picked presents.

"Sorry.", Mindy said when she calmed down. "I had no intention to make fun of you. To be honest, considering your relationship with Alpha Damon, I would assume that you are more... experienced."

Talia pressed her lips into a line. Yes, she entangled her body with Alpha Damon's many times, but her lack of experience was showing. Actually, every time Alpha Damon would be on top or would hold her upright, and he was the one doing things while Talia would be on the receiving end.

Now that Talia thought about it, there was no variety, but even if she wanted to try out something different, she didn't know what that 'different' might be.

Mindy was an obvious person who could provide Talia with information related to those topics, but Talia was too shy to ask, so she closed the box and kept it on the table, together with many others.

"Thank you, for all this. I am overwhelmed. I don't know if I will ever be able to repay..."

"No!", Mindy cut her off sharply. "I didn't give you any of this because I am expecting something in return. I admit, maybe I got carried away while shopping, but I never did anything halfheartedly and I have no regrets."

Mindy scooted closer to Talia on the sofa and took her hand between hers.

"I'm glad you like the presents.", Mindy said and patted Talia's hand before getting to the point, "How are you doing?"

Talia's eyes moved to the presents. "Did you buy me those so that I loosen up and talk?"

Mindy cocked an eyebrow at Talia. "I got you those because I can afford them, because I wanted to come with presents, and because we are friends. Are we friends?"

Talia didn't need to think much about the answer to this one.

They met only recently, but Mindy and Talia shared fun moments at the Summer Solstice festival, they had a few heartfelt chats, Mindy had Talia's back when Marcy and Nora approached her, and they spoke on the phone and kept in touch... Isn't that what friends are?

"We are.", Talia said, and Mindy's face broke into a genuine smile that warmed Talia's heart.

Talia knew that Mindy noticed the intimacy between her and Damon, and Talia guessed that Mindy's 'how are you doing' is mostly related to Damon.

Talia told herself that people will find out one way or another, and she wanted her few friends to find out first.

"Can you keep a secret?", Talia asked, and Mindy's eyes widened. A secret!

"You can tell me anything, dear.", Mindy said enthusiastically. "My lips are sealed."

Talia inhaled forcibly before spilling the beans.

"Damon and I are mates."

Mindy froze for a moment and then responded a bit stiffly, "Congratulations, dear."

"You don't seem surprised.", Talia voiced her thoughts.

Mindy gave Talia a smug smirk. "A guy like Alpha Damon stopped chasing skirts and gave his exclusive attention to you. I suspected it at the Summer Solstice festival, and at Lina's party it became more obvious, but I still needed confirmation."

"And you don't seem delighted with the news either.", Talia said the second half of her observation.

Mindy didn't deny it. "Don't get me wrong. Finding a mate is once in a lifetime and you should accept it with your arms open wide and enjoy every minute of it even if you know it will last forever. However, being Alpha's mate means you will become his Luna. Your choices are to accept the role or for him to abandon his pack, and the mate bond won't allow you to harm him, so you will sacrifice your dreams in order to stay by his side."

Chapter 244 - Talia's Friend (2)

Talia remembered Mindy's words from the Summer Solstice festival, and how she disliked the idea of being mated to an Alpha.

Mindy didn't want to fit into a mold that someone else created for her, even if that someone else is her mate. After all, Mindy is a confident she-wolf with many accomplishments behind her and many dreams ahead.

For Mindy, being a Luna would be like cutting off her wings and forcing her to stay in one place.

Sure, Mindy might be able to do other things also, but considering how busy Lunas are with managing the pack and hosting (and attending) parties and other functions, there wouldn't be much time left for anything else. After all, being a Luna is a full-time job, and a mate bond will make Mindy wish to submit to her mate and she might neglect willingly the things she currently holds dear.

However, Talia was different. Until a few weeks ago, she didn't have any dreams, and the ones she created so far were definitely achievable, assuming that Damon won't obstruct her, and so far, he was supportive.

How Talia saw this, any aspirations she develops in the future, will include Damon. He is already an indispensable part of her life.

Will their situation change in the future for the worse? Maybe. But Talia didn't want to think about it because no one knows what lies ahead and she already jeopardized her relationship with Damon by giving importance to things that were irrelevant or unlikely to happen.

"I am not thinking that far ahead.", Talia said. "Damon and I agreed to take this one step at a time. I'm still getting used to the reality that we are mates, and the idea of being a Luna and how that will work out is vague. I know that Damon won't force me into anything. He wants me to complete my education and he is not stopping me from trying new things, like working in the kitchen, or studying medicine."

Mindy thought how that was novel. It all sounded great except for... "Why didn't you announce your relationship?" It is common knowledge that when an Alpha finds his mate, he can't wait to announce it. It's a big reason for celebration because Alpha found his mate, and the pack got their Luna, and there is a belief that when the pair are fated mates, the Moon Goddess will bless them and the pack.

"I asked Damon to take this slow, and he agreed. Only a few people know we are mates, so I hope you can keep it a secret. It's for my safety also."

"If people knew you are their future Luna, the whole pack would protect you.", Mindy voiced her thoughts.

"That would be the case if my background is impressive, if I am powerful, or if I have some achievements. However, I am nobody. I'm confident that even though we are mates, there will be people who won't approve of me as their Luna. I don't think that anyone will openly rebel because they respect Damon, but if we recklessly announce my new status, some powerful people who are against Damon will fan the flames within the pack, and that can quickly get out of control."

Mindy understood the reasoning, but she didn't approve. "So, how long will you maintain this status and allow others to see you as Damon's plaything?"

Talia didn't like Mindy's choice of words, but she appreciated Mindy speaking her mind. Isn't that what friends do?

It was the truth that unless people know Talia is Damon's mate, they will see her as his plaything.

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"I want to keep the type of our relationship a secret at least until he deals with Marcy from the Red Moon pack.", Talia explained.

"If Alpha Damon tells Alpha Edward that he found his mate, Alpha Edward will take care of his daughter."

Talia shook her head, indicating how that won't work. "Alpha Edward is the one pushing Marcy in Damon's bed with the goal of two large packs forming an alliance through marriage. Do you think he will care about Damon finding his mate? If he finds out, he will probably target me first. With me out of the way, Damon will be mateless again."

Mindy pressed her lips into a line. Talia had a point.

"So, what will you do?", Mindy asked.

"I might need your help with something."

"To deal with Marcy?", Mindy guessed and when Talia nodded in confirmation, Mindy's imagination exploded. "Are we going to sneak into the Red Moon pack, drug her, shave her head, take embarrassing photos of her and some guys groping her, and post those photos online with all faces blurred out except Marcy's?"

Talia was flabbergasted. That was oddly specific. "Where did that come from?"

Mindy shrugged. "You are behind Cassie losing her hair, and I added the rest."

Talia facepalmed. She forgot about Cassie.

Talia thought how only Damon forgets about females that are not important, but it seems it's contagious!

"No. We won't shave Marcy's head and take embarrassing photos while she is drugged with some guys." At least I hope not. "But she will be here, and I will need your and Lina's help. Nothing excessive. Mostly to keep an eye on her."

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Mindy thought that her ears malfunctioned. "SHE will be here? Are we still talking about Marcy? And where is that HERE you are talking about?"

Talia realized that it sounds bad, but it was the truth. "Marcy is coming here. To this packhouse. She will arrive with her party tomorrow evening probably, no later than the next morning."

Mindy needed a moment to process this information. "Why the hell is she coming here?"

"I asked for it."

"Why the hell are you welcoming into your house the woman who is coveting your mate? You know that Marcy will throw herself at Damon. What will happen if she jumps on him, and he fails to avoid her?"

Talia didn't want to imagine that visual.

The truth was that Talia was not confident about this, not even a little bit. But her wolf demanded this ridiculous thing and Talia knew that her wolf was not willing to compromise.

Sure, Talia could explain to her wolf the situation, but Talia felt the disgust of her wolf at the thought that Damon was intimate with some other woman. Assuming that Talia could come up with an explanation that would work, it would have the desired effect of pacifying her wolf only if her wolf is willing to listen and not make a mistake that can't be fixed before Talia can convince her otherwise.

Talia was terrified of facing Marcy, her bully. But she hoped that with Mindy, Kalina, and Damon by her side, she can overcome her fears and face Marcy without falling apart.

"That's why I need your help.", Talia said. "Damon will deal with her. I want him to do it without disclosing that I am his mate because if he does that, Marcy will use me as an excuse for why her engagement failed."

Before Mindy could come up with more reasons why Marcy shouldn't come to the Dark Howlers pack, Talia spoke again.

"Marcy is not the only one. I can't keep an eye on Damon all the time, and that's why I'm expecting that he will deal not just with Marcy but with every woman who comes at him. If he fails to do so... it's better if he fails now than a few years down the road."

Mindy released a long breath before pulling Talia into a hug and patting her back.

"I guess since you will be the Luna of the largest pack in North America, it's useless to ask you to be my assistant.", Mindy said while trying to lighten up the mood.

Talia smiled. "Look at it from the bright side. It will be easier for you to get donations from Damon."

Mindy hummed in agreement. "You made a good point. Having as a friend a Luna with deep pockets will be beneficial for my business."

Talia and Mindy laughed at this.

"Thank you, Mindy."

"Remember this and repay me when you get a chance.", Mindy said with a wink. "Alright! Let's get ready for the nightclub! I've got everything we need here. Just get your dress..." Mindy's voice trailed when she saw that Talia's expression was not good. "What's wrong?"

"I'm not sure what to wear."

Mindy didn't think that's a problem. "How about we ravage your closet first? I'm sure we will find something. I would give you something mine, but you are a few sizes smaller." Mindy gestured at her chest area and Talia made a face but the truth was that Mindy was much more curvaceous compared to Talia.

"I will be happy if you help me pick something. How about you get your things, and we get ready in my room? I will call Maya to see if she wants to join also."

Mindy refused. "I'm assuming that you are sharing a room with Alpha Damon. I am not going to spend here more time than necessary. In this room, we won't be disturbed, and you are welcome to invite Maya to join us."

"There are plenty of other rooms that are unused."

Mindy paused. "Is any of them set up to be used as a dressing room?"

"Well, no."

"Then we will use mine." Mindy didn't leave Talia time to respond as she was stuffing boxes in Talia's hands. "Let's take these since it's on the way..."

Talia helplessly watched as Mindy piled up boxes for Talia to carry, and she smiled. She was happy.

Chapter 245 - Damon's Friend (1)

The entertainment room is a big space that is about one half filled with couches and sofa chairs that are arranged to form three sitting areas. There is also a pool table, dartboard, and a massive flatscreen TV on the wall above the wet bar.

Damon took from behind the bar a bottle of imported scotch and paused.

This room was used often while Damon's parents were alive, but since Damon became the Alpha, the most frequent visitors are Omegas who are ensuring dust doesn't pile up.

However, now that he found his Luna, Damon was confident things are changing, and they will create friendships that will include unofficial visits and put this room to good use.

Maddox sitting behind the bar was a small glimpse of shifts that were almost tangible. Damon is not a lonely Alpha anymore. He has his Luna and her presence will attract friends and they will expand their family. It was surreal just to think about it.

Damon opened the bottle of imported scotch, and he and Alpha Maddox chatted while enjoying the way smokey flavors of amber liquid danced over their tongues with hints of coffee, licorice, and vanilla.

The two Alphas discussed current issues in their packs, and their ongoing and upcoming collaborations as well as the always-current topic of rogues and their activities.

However, they already communicated about this over email and video calls, so nothing was new, and they skimmed over everything rather quickly.

"It seems you have something on your mind.", Damon finally got to the point.

"I thought I was sneaky about it."

Seeing Damon's cocky smirk, Maddox shook his head and admitted, "I wanted for you to have a few more drinks so that your tongue loosens up."

Damon stifled a laugh. "Come on. Whatever you ask, I will answer honestly unless it's related to the security of my pack."

Maddox perked up. "You will answer honestly?"

Damon shrugged while wondering what Maddox was up to. "Sure."

"Promise?"

"What are we, in elementary school? Do you want me to give you a pinky promise?"

Maddox made a face. "Fine. Here it goes. What's up with you and Talia?"

"Why are you concerned with Talia?", Damon responded with a question. He had a feeling that Maddox will be nosy. It's not the first time for Maddox to show interest in Talia and Damon didn't miss that Maddox was observing them during dinner.

Maddox frowned. "You said you will answer honestly!"

"But I didn't promise.", Damon responded cheekily.

Maddox was speechless. After a few seconds of silent staring contest, Maddox angrily grabbed his glass and downed it.

"Talia is my fated mate."

'COUGH! COUGH!'

Maddox coughed violently and his face turned completely red like he was drowning in half a glass of amber liquid which went down the wrong pipe due to the revelation that caught him off guard. He struggled to inhale.

Damon swiftly moved behind Maddox and gave him a few good smacks in the back, using much more force than necessary.

"You don't need to hit me that hard!", Maddox shouted when he caught his breath.

"I was concerned for your life.", Damon responded with a straight face. "You shouldn't drink so quickly if you can't handle it. Take small sips. Or should I give you a straw?"

Maddox ignored Damon's provocation. "I was surprised. For a moment, I thought you said that Talia is your mate."

"I did."

Maddox looked at Damon in disbelief. It's not that he didn't believe they are mates, because Maddox already suspected it, but he couldn't believe that Damon admitted it right away.

With this, all Maddox's plans about messing with Damon became invalid. He would be a complete asshole if he tried to do something fishy with Damon or with Talia after he got confirmation that the couple is mated.

Ah! And Axel is on his way also! Should he just tell that guy to go back home?

Damon was happy to reveal that Talia is his mate. After all, the condition Talia's wolf set was only that he can't announce it publicly but sharing among friends was acceptable.

"Congratulations on finding your Luna.", Maddox said after some time. "Why are you not announcing it?"

"Security reasons. Also, Talia wants us to take it slow. It's not a secret we are mates, but I will appreciate it if you keep this information to yourself. For now."

All Maddox's fighting spirit deflated.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"You didn't ask.", Damon deadpanned.

Maddox was speechless.

"So, tonight I'm chasing women on my own?"

Damon frowned and glanced at the door. He feared that Talia might overhear Maddox and Damon might be in a pickle again.

"Since when were we chasing women together?", Damon asked in a hushed voice.

"Not together, but at the same time.", Maddox responded. True, they would find women separately, but there was a sense of companionship because both of them were Alphas enjoying their youth and...
"Forget it. Let's toast for your Luna."

Damon swiftly grabbed the bottle and filled both of their glasses.

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...

Three glasses later...

"Maddox...", Damon called in an official tone. "I might need your help."

Maddox perked up. It sounded important. "With?"

Damon told Maddox about his current predicament that included Marcy from the Red Moon pack, and how she was about to arrive, and he needs to deal with Marcy without disclosing that Talia is his mate.

Maddox burst into hearty laughter.

Damon's expression darkened as he waited for Maddox to get it out of his system.

"What's funny?"

"Oh, man...", Maddox said while wiping tears from the corners of his eyes. "You are whipped."

"You will be the same when you find your mate.", Damon sulked. He didn't like that Maddox teased him about being whipped, but he couldn't deny it either. Just thinking about Talia made his heart flutter and his crotch tighten.

"I know that Lunas have spunk, but yours is special.", Maddox said mysteriously.

Damon was alerted. "What do you know?"

"By insisting that you handle Marcy with such tricky conditions, she is testing you. It takes a special kind of woman to invite a bedclimber into her house only so that she can assess your sincerity.", Maddox explained. When he saw that Damon was visibly relieved, Maddox guessed that Damon suspected something else. "Was I off the mark?"

"No, no.", Damon was quick to deny it.

There was no way Damon will admit how he feared that Maddox knows about Talia's talking wolf or her unusual powers.

It's not that Damon didn't trust Maddox, but the more people know about a secret, the higher are chances it will reach ears that shouldn't know about it. After all, there are methods to make people talk, no matter how much they are resisting.

"Talia is awesome.", Damon said with a silly grin on his face.

Maddox couldn't bear to see Damon with invisible pink hearts floating above his head. "You look horrible."

Damon chuckled and shook his head. "Trust me, if you told me a month ago that I will be uninterested in any woman other than Talia, I would punch you. But here I am, on the verge of ditching you and this bottle of fine liquor so that I can go upstairs and cuddle."

Damon rubbed his face to snap out of his lovey-dovey daze. Talia is with Mindy, having girl-time (whatever that is) and if he goes to demand cuddles, he will interrupt them and Talia might scold him.

"Will you help me in dealing with Marcy?"

Maddox cocked an eyebrow. "What's the plan? Do you want me to seduce her?" Marcy is a fine-looking she-wolf, and Maddox would make that sacrifice gladly. "You can barge in and catch us in the act and then kick her out. If you throw a punch at me, it will be more convincing. Just don't hit the face."

"I wish it's that simple.", Damon said. "When I visited, Marcy showed a lot of restraint, and we didn't go beyond a blowjob. In my house, she will be even more cautious. Besides, I think she still has her v-card."

Maddox grimaced. "Bitches with v-card intact are the worst."

Damon nodded in agreement. "If you go after her, she might accuse you of molesting her and turn that to her advantage. If you have any other ideas, I'm all ears."

Maddox rubbed his chin while thinking. "Whatever happens to her, it should be outside your territory. Since they are coming this soon, we can't do anything properly on short notice, but we could stage an ambush on their way back and..." Maddox ran his thumb over his neck. "We can make it look like it was rogues."

Damon made a thoughtful expression. He was considering it.

Unfortunately, if they go that route, Damon will need to pretend that everything is fine while Marcy is visiting so that she doesn't suspect something is fishy. If by some miracle Damon managed to execute the suicidal scenario of him being lovey-dovey with Marcy in front of Talia, he would still face another problem.

"If Marcy is on her own, that would be an option, but she is coming with future Alpha James. If something happens to that kid, Alpha Edward will turn heaven and earth to find the culprit and execute him personally. And also, commander George will be with them, and he is not easy to deal with."

Chapter 246 - Damon's Friend (2) [Bonus]

Damon knew that his situation was specific, and he hoped that Maddox will come up with something he can work with. He looked at Maddox expectantly. "Any ideas?"

"Only one."

Damon perked up. "Which one?"

"We need women.", Maddox said matter-of-factly.

Damon's expression darkened. What the hell was wrong with Maddox? "Do you have short-term memory loss? I told you only a few minutes ago that Talia is my mate. How can you suggest women? Are you getting a kick from adding trouble to my misery?"

Maddox waved his hand, indicating to Damon to calm down. "Not the type of women to sleep with. The ones with brains. I am good at breaking bones and making others submit, but when there is a need for subtlety, I consult my sister."

Damon paused and he had to agree with this. Whenever he needed a plan, Maya would handle brainstorming, and he and Caden would execute on it.

"Do you think Mindy will help?", Damon asked.

Maddox smirked. "You know what Mindy likes. Give her a fat check or endorse one of her projects and she will help out."

Damon thought how that might work. With Marcy arriving no earlier than tomorrow evening, Damon will have plenty of time to catch Mindy and talk about this.

Damon raised his glass toward Maddox. "I'm glad you are my friend, Max. Thank you for helping me out."

Maddox clinked his glass with Damon's. "That's what friends are for."

They downed their glasses and Maddox smacked his lips in approval. "This is good stuff. Let's have a few more rounds while girls are getting ready..."

"I hope you didn't plan to finish the bottle without me.", Caden said from the door while approaching the duo.

"Is Maya with girls?", Damon guessed while retrieving a glass for Caden. Why else would Caden be on his own?

"Yeah. They are getting ready in Mindy's room."

Since Caden was there, Damon thought of asking, "Do you think that Maya will help me figure out how to deal with Marcy? If Maya and Mindy put their heads together, I'm sure they can come up with something good."

"Didn't Talia ask you to deal with Marcy yourself?", Caden reminded Damon.

"That doesn't mean I can't seek advice."

"You can seek, but don't get your hopes up.", Caden said. "They have some sistership going on, and Maya is eager to see how you will wiggle out of this one. She wanted to bet if you will mess up as soon as Marcy arrives, or if you will last a day."

Damon frowned. He knew that Maya was rebellious but mocking his predicament was too much. It seems that Maya forgot how Caden was away because of her attempt to set up Talia with random guys. Maybe he should send Maya to survival training. But then Caden will be miserable and probably go after Maya. Looking at Caden, he didn't seem to be worried about Damon either.

Don't they realize how important this is? If he fails, they will lose their Luna!

Damon got an idea. He will go on a vacation with Talia, and Caden and Maya will need to deal with whatever is here. Yeah. That sounded like the best punishment.

But Marcy was set to come in twenty-four hours, and Damon was running out of time!

Damon wished for a pill or a spell that will put him to sleep for a week so that when he wakes up all the guests (Marcy included) are gone, and he can go back to being lovey-dovey with Talia. Just the two of them.

"Don't act like it's the end of the world.", Caden said to Damon.

Damon made a face. "Easy for you to say. Your mate didn't give you a task that might break you apart if you fail."

"Why are you so dramatic?", Caden asked Damon. "Talia gave you a task, but I'm sure she won't let you walk over that bridge on your own. Don't forget that the mate bond works two ways. You need her, but she needs you as well. As long as she sees you are trying, Talia will be happy with the outcome."

Damon responded with a stiff smile. Yes, that might be valid if Talia doesn't have in her mind a grumpy talking wolf who dislikes him to the core.

Damon didn't doubt that Talia will help him. However, if he fails to handle Marcy as expected, Talia will need to fight against her wolf again, and Damon didn't want to put that burden on Talia.

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He was the one sleeping around and even though he didn't sleep with Marcy, he is the one who made that video so... he should fix it. Somehow.

"Finding a mate should be a happy event, but it seems it turned you into a wus.", Maddox said to Damon.

Damon was not in the mood to argue. He had a problem called Marcy on his hands, and it's not like Maddox will understand. Damon knew this very well, because only a few weeks ago he was like Maddox, and worse. Damon was looking down on the mate bond and mocking guys who were into their mates, and now he was completely entranced with the presence of Talia. It seems that the Moon Goddess has a sick sense of humor because she was making guys eat their words.

"Remember what you said and repeat them to yourself once you find your mate.", Damon said. "Then you will realize what an arse you were."

Maddox snorted. "Mate should make you stronger, and not act like a sissy. Look at yourself."

Damon smirked. "I can't wait for you to find your mate."

"My mate will be obedient and not make me jump through rings of fire in order to get what's already mine.", Maddox said confidently.

"The Moon Goddess is giving us what we need, and you need a bitter pill that will cut your ego in half.", Damon said seriously.

Maddox chuckled. "Maybe my mate will support me, so my ego doubles."

Maddox enjoyed bickering with Damon. Only a few people would dare to talk back to Maddox, and talking with Damon was refreshing, even when they talked smack and end in a fistfight. Their friendship is like that. Raw and rowdy and honest. How it should be.

Damon narrowed his eyes at Maddox. "You know what? I bet that your mate will be a sixteen years-old she-wolf."

Maddox grimaced. "I'm not a pedophile."

"I know.", Damon said smugly. "The point is that you will be so smitten with your mate that every other woman will disgust you, yet you won't be able to touch the target of your affection until she comes of age. Two years of celibacy will teach you how important mate is."

Maddox couldn't believe this. Damon was beyond evil. "Are you cursing me?"

"You are cursing yourself by acting like there is no tomorrow.", Damon said and let out a long exhale. "If I didn't jump on a woman every time I got aroused, I wouldn't be in this predicament."

Maddox couldn't believe how sappy Damon got.

Maddox looked at Caden for support, only to find the latter completely focused on the amber liquor in his glass like it's the most interesting thing he had ever seen.

Of course, Caden was listening, but he had no intention of getting into a spat that involves two Alphas.

Besides, Caden agreed with Damon.

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...

The guys got ready in less than fifteen minutes and waited for the girls in the hallway.

"Why are they taking so long?", Maddox grumbled.

He wanted to go to the Shifters and start his hunt. All that talk about mates made him horny.

Another reason for urgency was that Tony and Kalina were set to arrive soon and if the newcomers get there before Maddox and the gang leave the packhouse, they are bound to be delayed by welcoming them.

"You know that other than taking forever, the girls are also chatting to the point of turning it into a social event.", Caden said to Maddox.

Damon didn't comment. He was eager to reunite with Talia, but he was also happy that she was having fun with Mindy and Maya. Damon could feel Talia's joy washing over him and he knew the longing that sneaked in there was for him, and his heart was in place.

Chapter 247 - Ready For The Night Out

In Mindy's room...

Mindy, Maya, and Talia were doing finishing touches on their hair and makeup and the mood was good.

Once Maya realized that Mindy also knows how Damon and Talia are mates, Maya and Mindy had a blast coming up with various ideas about Talia's Luna ceremony.

The duo talked excitedly about the color scheme, decorations, and types of appetizers, and Talia said that they could be great party planners.

"You will need two party planners because your Luna ceremony will be massive.", Mindy said.

Talia's heart shook. Listening to Mindy and Maya chattering was one thing, but what was that about a massive party? "Do we need a ceremony?"

"Absolutely!", Maya exclaimed. "The largest pack in North America is getting their Luna. There is no way we will go small about this. Everyone who is someone will be invited."

Talia exhaled helplessly while calming down with the thought that the ceremony is something in the future. Far-far-far away future. Until then, she might find a way to avoid it.

Talia's heart warmed at the sight of her Maya and Mindy who got along well. Talia envied their outgoing personalities, and she was confident that Kalina will fit in perfectly.

Mindy did Talia's makeup. It was nothing over the top. A bit of cherry-colored lip gloss, mascara, and just a touch of dark-golden eyeshadow for a smokey-eyed effect.

Maya styled Talia's hair in a French braid that was draped over Talia's left shoulder.

"Keep the braid here so that others don't get a clear view of your neck.", Maya said mysteriously.

Mindy approved. "Let people wonder if you are marked or not. If they see a mark, they will start sucking up to you, and if they confirm that your neck is clean, they will look down on you. Like this, people will leave you alone."

Talia was grateful for all the care Mindy and Maya showed.

"Will you girls be available for some girl-fun before you huddle with your mates?", Mindy asked Talia and Maya. She wanted to know in advance so that she can make plans.

"Caden is fine without me, as long as I am in his visual range. His greatest fear is that all guys will swarm around me, and I won't be able to repel them." Maya smiled dreamily. "I love how protective Caden is, but sometimes he forgets I can take care of myself."

Talia blinked when she saw that both Mindy and Maya were looking at her. She was still not used to talking openly about Damon as her mate.

"It will be fine.", Talia responded. She enjoyed her time with Damon, but she loved the novelty of having girlfriends also.

Maya cocked an eyebrow. "Are you sure about it?"

"To be honest, I'm not sure what to expect. This will be my first time to go to a club with Damon."

"Technically, it's second.", Maya said and when she saw Talia's questioning gaze, Maya explained, "The first time you arrived separately, but Alpha Damon blew a fuse when he saw some guy sticking to you and he carried you out of the club after starting the biggest fight in the history of Shifters."

Mindy looked at Maya incredulously. "Wait a minute. The fight in the Shifters on the night of Summer Solstice, that was Alpha Damon's doing?"

"You should see him standing there like a big bad wolf and 'she is mine' attitude.", Maya said while standing straight with her arms akimbo and a grimace that was supposed to imitate Damon's expression.

"I don't remember.", Talia said awkwardly. She really didn't.

Maya burst into giggles. "You were wasted."

Mindy felt sorry for Talia who was visibly uncomfortable. "Don't tease her. It happens to everyone." She turned to Talia. "You were lucky that Damon was there to take care of you when you were vulnerable. Most of the guys are selfish pricks, and they either won't care about you, or will try to take advantage of the situation. However, a mate will put your needs first."

Talia noticed a trace of sadness in Mindy's words. So far, Talia was confident that Mindy is a strong and independent she-wolf, but it seems that she was longing for her other half also.

"Don't worry, Mindy. I'm confident that your mate is out there, and you will meet him soon.", Talia comforted Mindy.

Suddenly, Maya felt like a bad guy, so she retracted her teasing enthusiasm.

"Do you have a dream guy?", Maya asked Mindy. "What's your perfect mate?"

Mindy shrugged. "I don't know. A young one will be energetic and last longer, and an older one will be wise and experienced. My only hope is that he is not an Alpha."

Maya blinked. "Why? You have Alpha blood running through your veins."

"Mindy loves to travel and do her thing, and she fears that Alpha will tie her to his pack.", Talia responded instead of Mindy.

Maya didn't ask more questions. Everyone has preferences. But she had to say, "When you meet your mate, it won't matter if he is Omega or an Alpha. For you, he will be perfect."

"I look forward to that.", Mindy responded. She couldn't imagine the feeling of loving a person unconditionally, and she yearned for someone who could make her experience it.

"We should get going.", Maya reminded them. "Caden mind-linked me three times already..."

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Talia bolted to her feet and balled her hands into fists. She was nervous. What if Damon doesn't approve of her appearance?

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Damon's eyes snapped to the top of the staircase as soon as one fine sparkling high-heeled shoe appeared. And then there was a calf, second shoe... knees, and just as the thighs got to the good part, black fabric obstructed the view and Damon held his breath as Talia came into the view fully.

Her short-sleeved deep blue dress had a bodice that fit her snugly and it flared from her exquisite waist lower until it reached half of her thighs. Talia's dress, hair, and makeup were spot on, accentuating her beautiful features without revealing too much, but the most dazzling about the girl coming toward Damon was her smile directed at him that had the power to light up his world.

Behind Talia were Mindy and Maya, but Damon didn't notice them.

Maddox glanced at Damon and Caden, and he snorted when he confirmed that both were equally smitten by the sight of their mates.

Maddox rolled his eyes dramatically. He definitely felt like an odd one.

Maddox never had any strong thoughts in favor or against mates, but this time he hated it because he felt left behind by his best buddy (aka Damon).

Should he find a girl and try dating her for real? Nah, that's not Maddox's style and he didn't want to form attachments that were doomed for failure.

To make up for this sense of alienation, Maddox decided to pick up two feisty she-wolves in the club. That should keep him busy for the night, and he will remember why it's good to be single.

Talia stood in front of Damon and the two of them stared at each other with matching silly grins on their faces.

"Did you wait long?", Talia asked.

"Not at all. I just got here.", Damon responded.

Maddox rolled his eyes. They are waiting forever!

Damon took Talia's hand into his and kissed the back of her palm. "You are stunning." Damon's lips caressed Talia's skin as he spoke, and her cheeks got a rosy tint before she breathed out a thank you.

"Can we go now?", Maddox asked impatiently. Any more of that lovey-dovey mush and he will throw up.

And he was not irritated only by Damon and Talia.

Caden and Maya were exchanging kisses and compliments about how amazing the other one looked, without caring they were not alone.

"Max, can you at least pretend you are glad to see me?", Mindy asked Maddox while gesturing toward two loving couples. "See how they are acting? Say something nice about my dress."

Maddox was not in a mood to indulge Mindy. "Sorry, Min. I don't get a hard-on when I see you."

Mindy slapped his shoulder. "Can't you be polite? I am your sister. Save that behavior for the girls who are fawning over you. And I told you not to call me that."

Mindy never liked that nickname which Maddox used when he wanted to tease her. Why does he get to be Max (aka maximum) while she is Min (aka minimum)?

Mindy had an everlasting grudge against their parents for giving them names that can be reduced to Max and Min with her ending as the smaller one.

Maddox chuckled and hooked his muscular arm around Mindy's delicate neck. "Let's go, Min. Looking at those four reminded me that I'm single and I need to find a company for tonight."

"Aren't we sharing a ride?", Mindy asked.

"No. We will meet at the parking lot of Shifters. Sharing a ride means we need to return together, and I will be a free agent tonight."

Mindy knew that means Maddox was planning to pick up a woman. Well, there was nothing new about it.

Wait! How will she return to the packhouse? Her best bet was to hitch a ride with Maya and Caden (because Damon and Talia were too intense), or she could pick up a guy.

"Max", Mindy called. "What if I find my mate tonight?"

Maddox paused his steps and looked at Mindy in disapproval. "Not you too."

Mindy didn't get it. "What?"

If she finds her mate, he will be the only single person. But he didn't want to say that aloud because it will sound like he is carping. "Nothing. Let's go."

Chapter 248 - Back In The Shifters Nightclub (1) [Bonus]

Damon and Talia arrived at the parking lot of the Shifters nightclub and saw that Caden, Maya, Alpha Maddox, and Mindy were waiting for them.

Damon exited the black, armored Lexus SUV first while Talia sat obediently in her front passenger's seat.

Talia smiled at Damon's sleek butt-slide over the hood of the car as he made his way to her side of the car to open the door for her.

Damon offered her his hand, palm up with a big smile on his face that made her heart flutter while saying, "I am excited about this date, kitten."

A date? Talia's cheeks warmed as the delicious sparks of their bond danced over her skin wherever they touched. "Me too." She really was excited, and nervous also because this was the first time for them to be together in public, officially, on the territory of the Dark Howlers pack. It was a big deal.

"Totally whipped...", Maddox said under his breath while glaring at Damon who possessively held Talia around her waist the moment her feet touched the ground.

Mindy elbowed Maddox in the ribs. "Keep snarky comments to yourself."

"What's your problem?", Maddox grumbled.

"Maybe Alpha Damon is used to your harshness, but Talia is a nice girl. Don't make it awkward for her. You know that she can hear you, right?", Mindy said and looked at the duo who was now approaching them. "Besides, they look good together and you sound like a sour single guy."

Maddox rolled his eyes dramatically, but he didn't comment further. Was he a sour single? Well, not for long! He was determined to find himself company for the night and that will make him non-single. At least until morning.

Maya gave Mindy a thumbs up. She would scold Maddox also if she was not scared of him.

Talking back to Damon came on rare occasions because she knew him well, but Alpha Maddox was super-scary and Maya didn't dare to try her luck by saying something that might sound like disrespect.

Talia thought that the last time she came to the Shifters nightclub they had special treatment because Maya got them into the club without waiting in line, but now that she came with Damon, she realized what a special-special treatment was.

Everyone moved to make way for them, and most of the people bowed a little like they greeted royalty, and Talia knew those were werewolves. The few who were observing curiously were humans and even though they were clueless about Damon's identity, they could feel the solemn mood.

Even without using his Alpha aura, Damon demanded attention and submission and Talia's heart swelled at the thought of how that's her mate.

She couldn't stop staring at his handsome face that was stern and domineering, and Damon noticed.

He halted his steps and looked at her with mischief twirling in his eyes.

"If you keep on looking at me like that, I will eat you up right here.", Damon said in a low voice, only for Talia to hear, but it was inevitable that Maya, Caden, Maddox, and Mindy heard it also. They were right there, next to them!

Talia's face exploded in blush and Damon regretted teasing her because Talia was extremely cute when flustered. Instead of going into the nightclub, Damon had an urge to take her back home so that no one can see that adorable face.

Damon wanted to kiss her thoroughly, but he was painfully aware of all the audience, and he knew that Talia wouldn't approve. His hold on her tightened. "Let's go inside." His booth is dark, and he can kiss her there.

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Talia held her breath when they stepped into the Shifters nightclub and within a split second, all eyes were on them.

Talia remembered the scene of Damon coming to the Shifters nightclub during the Summer Solstice festival. She was sitting at the bar, and she observed Damon who stood on the elevated platform with Caden, Maddox, Mindy, and Axel. At that time, Damon looked cool with a dangerous biker vibe, and she soaked in his presence hungrily even though she believed there was something going on between Damon and Mindy.

Talia realized that this was different. Instead of being one of many in the crowd, she was the one and only by Damon's side.

She swallowed a mouthful of air.

With so many eyes on her, Talia felt an urge to flee. She was not used to the attention, and she could hear whispers related to her identity that were like undercurrents stirring under the loud music blaring from the speakers.

[Who is that woman?]

[Alpha never brought a woman to the club.]

[Wait! Isn't that our team spirit?]

[Doesn't she look like the one who was with Alpha in the magazine?]

[Is it possible that's the same person?]

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[I think I saw her in the packhouse.]

[Did our Alpha finally acknowledge a woman?]

Talia was aware of Damon's colorful past that was filled with numerous women. However, no matter how many females passed through his hands, Damon never displayed affection to any woman in public, and he would never show up with one by his side or allow her to associate herself with him, and this... was different.

Damon and Talia were standing on the platform, for everyone to see, with his arm around her waist. On their right were Damon's Betas, Maya and Caden, and on the other side were two prominent figures, Alpha Maddox and Mindy. The fact that Talia was in their company was another proof that she was not a random female, but that Damon valued her, and that further stirred the crowd to speculate about her background.

Talia felt the urge to run away. Can she run away?

She agreed to come here with Damon. Actually, she was looking forward to it.

What were her options?

With every passing moment, anxiety swelled within Talia, and she took a shaky breath while trying to compose herself. How can Damon be so calm when everyone was watching?

Right! Damon! He was the key to solving her predicament!

Talia was a nervous wreck, but Damon wasn't and if she could tap into his feelings, maybe she will find a way to survive this ordeal.

Well, there was no harm trying and she was out of ideas.

Talia focused on the invisible bond she shared with the exquisite male specimen by her side, and she felt... pride.

Talia looked at Damon as if she was trying to ascertain if she got it right.

Was he really proud of her?

Damon glanced at Talia and when their eyes met, Talia forgot how to breathe.

His endlessly icy-blue eyes smiled at her, and she knew it was true. He was proud to have her by his side.

An inexplicable emotion bloomed inside Talia's chest and her smile reflected the joy as her soul hummed in pleasure.

Her mate was proud of her.

Damon didn't see her as a nobody he found in the attic. He didn't see her as a weak she-wolf without her wolf. He never did. For him, she was Talia, his mate, his everything, and at that point, it was all it mattered.

Tears swelled in Talia's eyes as the emotions crashed on her with unexpected force. She dreamed about having a mate, a man who will accept her unconditionally and proudly show her around as his. And here was Damon, fulfilling her dream, the one she thought will never come true because she never saw herself as worthy. Isn't he amazing?

"Are you alright?", Damon's deep voice sounded close to Talia's ear. He didn't know her thoughts, but he definitely felt her fluctuating emotions and he wondered if coming here like this was too soon.

"Never better.", Talia responded and wrapped her arms around his neck.

Damon's eyebrows shoot up when he realized that Talia's lips shyly brushed against his, and he had no intention of leaving it at that.

Gasps and murmurs shook the nightclub over the loud music as the crowd in the Shifters observed the scene of their Alpha being kissed while standing on the entry platform, that was something like a stage, for everyone to see. And it's not that he didn't push the bold female away, but he actually embraced her and kissed her back.

Alpha Damon kissing a woman in public! That was unheard of!

Yes, they saw the kissing picture in the WW Magazine, but seeing a picture and witnessing it live were two different things.

It was monumental, like seeing a unicorn or some other animal everyone believed was extinct, and many phones were directed at the couple that was embracing each other to record the sight that will definitely change the world.

Katya was behind the bar as the owner of Shifters nightclub and as part of the crowd who observed the scene of Damon and Talia kissing.

She had no doubts about Talia's identity. How can she not recognize the only woman her brother showed interest in? And she also knew that because Damon appeared with Talia in public, Damon acknowledged Talia as a woman who is important. Definitely a girlfriend, and maybe even more.

Katya was aware that her brother is capable, but there was nothing he could do when the other guy is an Alpha.

Katya was not looking forward to the day when Keith will return from the training in the mountains because she knew that her baby brother will be heartbroken.

Chapter 249 - Back In The Shifters Nightclub (2)

Talia and Damon were ignorant about the stir of the world around them. They inched away from each other, a second before their kisses turned too steamy.

"Let me show you our booth, kitten", Damon murmured, and Talia's smile reached her eyes.

He said OUR booth.

Talia had to admit Damon made her feel welcome and accepted. He truly was her home, and she couldn't be happier.

Talia leaned on Damon who led the way and Talia was confident that she was walking on clouds, happy that Damon held her tightly because she might float away.

Alpha Maddox and Mindy were behind the celebrity couple (aka Damon and Talia), and Maya and Caden followed the four while observing the crowd and listening to people's chatter through the mind-link.

Irritated by the sparks of gossip that were turning into a fire, Maya spoke to pack members through the mind-link, 'For the ones who don't know, her name is Talia. Talia was the MVP of the tournament at the Summer Solstice festival, and she is Lia who accompanied our Alpha to the recent Luna announcement ceremony at the Lightclaw pack. When Alpha is ready, he will provide additional information about Talia's identity and her role in the pack. Until then, I hope you can refrain from creating baseless rumors because last people who pried into Alpha's private matters ended up in the dungeon.'

Caden added, 'Your devices will be checked for recordings and photos of Alpha Damon and Talia. If you delete them now, you will reduce the time needed to leave the Shifters nightclub and we hope you will be sensible enough not to share them on social media.'

Next, Caden called for patrols to watch exits of the Shifters nightclub in addition to the staff that was already stationed there while Maya instructed for the Wi-Fi to be turned off and any wireless communications to be jammed.

With that, the Beta duo handled any unwanted information leak.

That didn't mean people won't talk about what they saw. After all, the scene of their Alpha being with a woman openly meant that he gave her a status that no other woman had before. It was a big deal.

However, Maya's and Caden's words were a warning that people shouldn't act recklessly or they might provoke their Alpha.

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In the VVIP booth...

Damon and Talia sat in the middle of the curved sofa where at least ten people can sit without touching each other.

Damon pulled Talia so close to him that she nearly sat in his lap. Talia didn't mind as she basked in his proximity.

Maya and Caden also snuggled closely, while Mindy and Maddox sat at a distance so that there was space for another person to sit on each of their sides.

Talia glanced at the crowd beyond the metallic rail, and she was glad that no one was staring their way.

She forgot that the VVIP booth is the only place in the nightclub where colorful lights don't hit, so they had privacy in the darkness while being able to clearly see the rest of the nightclub.

"What will you drink, kitten?", Damon's voice sounded close to her ear, creating goosebumps over her skin.

Talia turned her head toward Damon, and they were so close that their noses nearly touched. She suppressed her urge to kiss him.

"I don't know. Last time I had some tasty cocktails Keith made, but I am eager to try something new. If you can recommend something, I will take it." Actually, Talia didn't know the names of the cocktails Keith prepared for her so even if she wanted the same ones, she wouldn't know how to order them.

Damon was clueless about what females like to drink. It should be those fruity drinks that come with tiny umbrellas and twisty straws. Maybe.

Wait! Did she say, Keith? Damon gritted his teeth at the mentioning of the wretched coach. He made cocktails for Talia? Damn him!

Damon took a mental note to learn about mixology. He will make drinks for Talia, and not allow some measly coach to steal his thunder!

Talia is Damon's mate, and he will be the one creating beverages for her!

"How about one drink with the guys, and then we go to the bar?", Mindy suggested.

Before Talia could think how to respond, Maya spoke, "Sounds like a great idea. The three of us will have some girl time, and guys can chat here. They can pick us up when it's couples' time."

Damon frowned. "What?" He was ready for couples' time right now!

"I promised Mindy and Maya to spend some time with them.", Talia said timidly while hoping that Damon won't make a scene. She didn't want to bicker with him in front of others. "Give us half an hour. You can watch us from here. OK?"

Seeing Talia's expectant expression, Damon exhaled in defeat. "Half an hour."

"At least.", Mindy chimed in. "Like that, Max will also get a chance to have a few drinks with you before he goes to mingle."

Damon wanted to say that they had plenty of drinks while waiting for the girls to get ready, but Talia's excitement made him hold that comment for himself.

He didn't want to spoil the fun for Talia, but this was their date and she already had girls' time while getting ready. Why was she leaving him on his own again? What kind of a date this is if they will spend time separately?

A scarcely dressed waitress sashayed into the VVIP booth with a menu in her hand, and she asked, "What can I bring you to drink?"

"The usual.", Damon said, and he knew that his 'usual' is a whole bottle of liquor that will cover not only his order but Caden and Maddox also.

Mindy took the menu from the waitress and when Damon saw that she was looking at the page with cocktails, he got an idea.

"Can you order something for Talia?", Damon asked, hoping that Mindy will solve his what-will-Talia-drink dilemma.

Maya moved to sit next to Mindy with, "Let's pick the same cocktails for all three of us", and the duo started discussing which cocktails to order first. Maya is a regular in Shifters, so she helped Mindy narrow down choices.

Talia looked at the waitress who stood there and she observed the waitress' big smile and even bigger cleavage. Were those for Damon?

As much as Talia tried suppressing negativity, images of Ashley and Heather flashed in Talia's mind and her eyes moved over the crowd.

How many women from there would ogle at Damon like that?

How many of those women got to experience Damon's intimate embrace?

She heard stories of how Damon would come to the Shifters nightclub alone, with Caden, or with some high-ranking guests, and no matter who his company was at the entrance, Damon would leave with the woman he picked up for the night.

Talia's insides churned at the thought that Damon was coming to this nightclub to pick up women.

Why the hell did she come here?

Talia felt the urge to leave. Or even better, burn this place to the ground.

"Kitten?"

Damon's voice pulled Talia out of her destructive thoughts.

"What's going on?", he asked.

Damon could feel her rage swelling exponentially by the second.

Talia took a few deep breaths while calming down her raging emotions. She had no idea from where those violent thoughts came. Was it from her wolf?

"I want her to leave.", Talia said, and Damon understood that she was talking about the waitress.

"Leave.", Damon said sternly, and the waitress stared at him for a second without moving a muscle.

Did she do something?

"If you are here three seconds from now, you will lose your job and probably a piece of skin also.", Damon growled. "We will order our drinks through the mind-link. I don't want to see you here again."

The waitress swiftly scrambled out of the VVIP booth, still unsure what she did to upset the Alpha.

Damon pulled Talia to lean on him and kissed her forehead. "Better?"

Talia didn't know how to respond to that.

The best thing would be if every woman Damon touched would leave this nightclub, or even better, leave the planet, but Talia feared that the female population would dwindle to dangerously low levels, so she didn't ask for such a thing.

A marvelously vicious idea popped into Talia's mind: she should cripple women who are coveting Damon as a warning for any future bed climbers.

"Is your wolf stirring?", Damon asked.

"What makes you think so?"

"Because I can feel hostility."

"It's not toward you." Or maybe it was. It would be more efficient if she cripples Damon instead of hundreds of women.

Talia shook those thoughts away. Harming Damon or women who are coveting him was not an option.

Talia realized that these foreign emotions were not hers.

Jealousy. Impatience. Rage.

Talia feared how the awakening of her wolf will impact her personality and her relationship with Damon.

Her wolf was still sleeping, but Talia could feel the changes and she didn't like them. She was never a violent person, and her wolf shouldn't force her to do things she wouldn't normally do.

"I will talk to her when she awakens.", Talia said.

"We will do it together.", Damon assured her. "Until then, pay attention to your state and learn to distinguish your emotions from external ones. Now you can feel your wolf's emotions and mine. It's easy to spot what's not yours when it's different from what you should be feeling, but if it matches, it will amplify your emotions and might cause an unexpected outburst."

Talia snuggled into Damon's embrace and listened to what he was saying. It calmed her down to know that what she was going through was normal, and she was not crazy.

Chapter 250 - Back In The Shifters Nightclub (3)

Damon was leaning backward on the sofa with both of his arms spread over the backrest and his eyes were trained at the bar where Talia, Maya, and Mindy were. Of course, his attention was on Talia.

Three young women were sipping cocktails and chatting enthusiastically, occasionally bursting into laughter and Damon wondered what they were talking about because he could feel Talia's happiness mixed with excitement.

Damon wanted to go there and join Talia, but he suppressed that urge because he knew that she was having a good time with her girlfriends. He will get her later, and he comforted himself with the fact that Talia was in his visual range.

A new sense of fulfillment filled his chest. Talia was enjoying thanks to him.

Damon's heart ached at the thought of how Talia had a rough time before they met. The truth was that he had no idea what she went through, but he knew that she was a gentle soul who craved company, yet she was hiding in the attic out of fear that she will be bullied.

Talia was smart and kind and wonderful in every way possible, but others suppressed her light and treated her like trash. They harmed her body, her mind, and even her wolf.

Well, not anymore.

Damon was determined to give Talia everything she missed so far; from simple things like food and a comfy bed, to luxuries like designer clothes and jewelry.

Will his support alone be enough for Talia to gain the confidence that should have been hers from the beginning? Damon was not sure, but he hoped that with the help of friends like Mindy, Maya, and Kalina, Talia might get there. Someday.

Damon's mission in life became to pamper Talia and spoil her rotten, and he had no doubts how that's the right thing to do because she deserves it.

"Is it OK for Talia to drink that much?"

Caden's voice got Damon's attention, but he didn't understand what Caden was getting at.

"Hm?"

Caden hesitated before explaining. "Based on what happened during Summer Solstice, it doesn't seem that Talia handles alcohol well. The girls had cocktails here, and this is their third round at the bar."

Damon needed a minute to realize what Caden was talking about. The last time Talia was here, she drank too much, and Damon started a massive fight when some sleazeball approached her.

"If things get out of hand, I will take care of it.", Damon responded. Talia was having fun and he had no intention of telling her to stop.

Caden's eyebrow twitched. That's what he was worried about. When Damon takes care of things, usually someone gets hurt badly.

"It seems you are making up for all those years of not caring for a girl.", Maddox said with a chuckle.

"It's not like that.", Damon responded.

"And how is it?"

Damon shrugged. He was not sure how to respond to that question other than with, "When she is happy, I am happy." Damon saw Maddox rolling his eyes dramatically and Damon gestured toward Caden. "Ask him if you don't believe me."

Caden shook his head, indicating that he doesn't want to talk about it. "There is no point explaining this because Max won't get it. Only when you find your mate, you will discover a new array of emotions, and at that point, you will realize that before finding your mate you were just horny."

Maddox frowned. "And mate will make me less horny?"

Caden chuckled. "It's the opposite. Mate will make you hornier, but that will be an itch that only a mate can scratch."

Maddox's frown deepened. He was horny most of the time, and Caden said it will be worse and that only one woman can satisfy him? "Are you trying to convince me that finding a mate is a good thing or not?"

"It's the best thing ever!", Damon exclaimed. "But Caden is right. Explaining now is just wasting words because you won't get it." Damon turned to talk to Caden. "Let's not throw pearls in front of a swine."

Maddox's expression darkened. "Did you just call me a pig?"

"I don't know. Do you feel I was talking about you?", Damon teased.

And another banter between guys began.

Luckily, the VVIP booth was veiled in darkness, and the loud music covered up voices from reaching the crowd because if others saw how childish Damon and Maddox were, they might stop thinking about them as two intimidating and dignified Alphas who are leaders of the younger generation.

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At the bar...

Talia was having fun with Maya and Mindy, and the trio enjoyed the special service Katya provided by serving them the best cocktails the Shifters nightclub can provide.

The ladies were discussing drinks, clothes, guys, and plans for the next few days.

Mindy approved of the morning in the spa that was a female-only event scheduled at the time when guys will be training. And there was also an afternoon at the beach that included everyone.

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Maya was explaining how the beach is on the lake, about half an hour drive from the packhouse, and it has a good stretch of sand so they can play beach volleyball, relax in the sun, and swim. That event will end in the evening with beer and roasting marshmallows over a campfire.

Talia listened to this attentively because she never went there. The outing on the beach was totally Maya's idea and it sounded fantastic.

Talia was imagining her and Damon on the beach, and she was not sure how that will work. Will they be able to keep their hands off each other considering that they will be scarcely dressed, without privacy? And it's a public beach, mid-July, so there is a strong possibility that many people will go there to cool off on the hot summer afternoon, and not only their group.

Damon is cheeky, and he will definitely try something funny... assuming that he allows her to wear a bikini.

Wait! Does that mean Damon will wear only swim trunks? This didn't sit well with Talia.

She could imagine Damon coming out of the water, with drops glistening on his perfect body, and he will be exposed, on full display, for everyone to see! Not acceptable!

Suddenly, the idea of going to the beach with everyone didn't sound so good.

Unaware of Talia's emotional turmoil, Maya finished her beach-talk with, "There are several stores nearby so we can get food and drinks without dragging it with us from the packhouse. We have spare swimwear, but there is also time tomorrow for shopping. Boutiques in Darkbourne will have something for everyone."

Mindy bobbed her head in approval. She liked that Maya thought of everything.

At some point, Maya assessed the state of her bladder.

"I am going to the ladies' room. Anyone wants to join?", Maya asked.

Mindy stood up from the barstool, silently accepting the invitation, and Talia waved at them. "I will watch your seats." She didn't feel like going.

When Mindy and Maya were out of the visual range, Katya approached Talia to collect empty glasses.

"Do you want another drink?"

"Yes, please. Can you give me one more like this one?", Talia gestured to the tall empty glass in front of her. "It's tasty, and I love that it comes with fruit."

Katya smiled. She liked that Talia praised drinks she made personally. "Thank you."

Talia observed as Katya expertly poured various liquids into the shaker and she remembered her previous visit to this nightclub and how Keith was making drinks for her.

"How is Keith doing?", Talia asked.

Katya's movements paused. "I'm sure he is fine."

"You don't know?"

"During survival training, they are not allowed contact with the external world."

Talia didn't know that. "I see."

"Don't worry about Keith. He is strong and has a good head on his shoulders."

Talia agreed with that one. Keith left the impression of a smart person.

"He will be happy you asked about him.", Katya said.

"Of course. He is my coach.", Talia responded without missing a beat. "I am training diligently and I look forward to showing him my progress when he returns. I'm confident he will be pleasantly surprised." And he might praise her also.

Talia and Keith had only a few training sessions, but Keith always had plenty of words to encourage her to keep going. She missed that.

It's not that Damon didn't encourage her, but their sessions usually ended with making out, and then in the shower... Talia blushed while thinking about it. Naughty thoughts.

Katya wanted to ask Talia how she ended up with the Alpha, but she kept those questions to herself. It was not appropriate, and everyone heard Maya's and Caden's warnings.

"Here you go.", Katya said while giving Talia a tall glass with the cocktail that had a pinkish hue and was decorated with a wedge of an orange.

Talia took a few big gulps, finishing half of the glass in one go.

"It's very tasty." Talia smacked her lips.

"I'm not familiar with your tolerance to alcohol, but I need to warn you. These are sweet, and you don't feel them sneaking on you. Be careful when you stand up."

Talia was touched by Katya's concern. "I will keep that in mind."

Talia had no plans to get up from that barstool until Damon comes to fetch her, and after that, he will be holding her, so she didn't need to worry. Besides, she was feeling fine. Happy, but fine. Was Katya exaggerating about the effect of those drinks? Or maybe with her wolf awakening, Talia became immune to alcohol? Anything was possible.