

## Mated To The Beastly Alpha

Chapter 71

### Chapter 71

Nicole chuckled, appreciating Asha's lightheartedness. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves, Asha. We still have a lot to handle before anything like that can happen. It may not even happen."

Maya interjected, "But, Nicole, what if it does happen? Are you ready for that kind of responsibility?"

Nicole's smile faltered slightly, her gaze shifting between Maya and Rose. It seemed like a harmless question, but she knew better. "Honestly, Maya, I don't know. It's something I'm still trying to figure out. Right now, my focus is on the pack's well-being and defeating the witches."

Rose, unable to hold back her bitterness any longer, sneered, "A slave becoming a Luna? That's quite a leap, isn't it? You're just an Omega, Nicole. Don't let your fantasies get the best of you."

Asha's eyes widened in disbelief, her voice filled with indignation. "Rose, that's uncalled for!

Show some respect!"

Rose shrugged dismissively, a mocking smirk dancing across her lips. "Respect? For someone like her? I don't think so."

Nicole felt a surge of anger rise within her, but she tried to remain calm. "Rose, there's no need for this. Let's just part ways amicably."

But Rose wasn't ready to let it go. Her jealousy and bitterness had consumed her, driving her to provoke Nicole further. "Amicably? How about we settle this with a duel? Let's see if you're really fit to be a Luna."

Nicole's eyes widened in surprise, taken aback by the sudden challenge. She wasn't one to seek conflict, especially within the pack, but Rose's taunting pushed her to her limit. She could feel her wolf growling within her, the power of her Luna and Witch bane abilities surging through her veins.

"A duel?" Nicole repeated, her voice laced with a newfound edge. "Rose, this is unnecessary. I don't want to fight you."

Rose laughed mockingly, her eyes glinting with malice. "Scared, are we? Afraid that an Omega like me will defeat you?"

Nicole's jaw tightened, her hands curling into fists. She couldn't let Rose's insults go unanswered. Her wolf was already going crazy within her. With a deep breath, she made a decision. "Fine, if it's a fight you want, then it's a fight you'll get."

Asha stepped forward, her tone firm. "Nicole, don't do this. She's not worth it."

But Nicole's resolve had solidified. She couldn't back down now, not when her strength and power had grown in the face of adversity. She was tired of being babied; being seen as weak. They didn't know that she had always been a Luna wolf, even when it had been fake. With a determined gaze, she faced Rose, ready to prove herself.

The tension in the air was palpable as Nicole and Rose faced off, their eyes locked in a battle of wills. Without a word, Rose lunged forward, aiming a fierce punch toward Nicole's face. But Nicole swiftly sidestepped, her reflexes honed from years of survival.

As Rose's fist whizzed past her, Nicole countered with a powerful kick to Rose's midsection, causing her to stumble backwards. Determined not to let up, Rose recovered quickly, launching a flurry of punches and kicks in rapid succession. Nicole deftly blocked and dodged each strike, her body moving with grace and precision. With a swift spin, she delivered a sweeping kick, knocking Rose off balance. Seizing the opportunity, Nicole followed up with a lightning-fast combination of strikes, targeting Rose's vulnerable areas. The impact of Nicole's blows reverberated through the air as they landed with precision. A resounding crack echoed as Nicole's fist connected with Rose's jaw, causing her head to snap to

the side.

Rose retaliated with a wild swing, but Nicole effortlessly ducked under the attack and countered with a forceful uppercut, sending Rose staggering backwards.

Blood trickled from a cut on Rose's cheek, evidence of the intensity of their confrontation. But she refused to yield, her eyes burning with defiance.

With a feral growl, she launched herself at Nicole, grappling with her in a desperate attempt to gain the upper hand.

Their bodies twisted and turned, locked in a fierce struggle. The ground beneath them trembled as they fought, their movements fueled by a potent mix of anger and determination. Nicole's wolf surged within her, lending her additional strength and endurance.

Rose, fueled by her jealousy and anger, regained her balance and launched herself at Nicole once again. She swung a series of punches, each aimed at breaking through Nicole's defenses. Nicole deftly blocked and parried the attacks, her agility, and reflexes serving her well.

Sensing an opening, Nicole seized the opportunity to counter. With lightning speed, she delivered a swift uppercut, catching Rose off guard and sending her sprawling to the ground. But Rose

quickly recovered, her determination evident as she pushed herself back up, a fierce glint in her eyes.

As Rose attempted to overpower Nicole, she underestimated the depth of Nicole's power. Nicole blocked Rose's punches with expert precision, countering with devastating strikes that left Rose staggering.

Rose, fueled by desperation and wounded pride, launched a final desperate attack. But Nicole, her senses heightened by her Luna and Witch bane abilities, anticipated the move. With a swift sidestep, she evaded Rose's strike and swiftly delivered a devastating roundhouse kick to her opponent's head.

The impact sent Rose crashing to the ground, defeated, and unable to continue. The fight had taken its toll on both women, their bodies bruised and battered from the fierce exchange. Nicole stood over Rose, her chest heaving, a mix of exhaustion and a sense of triumph coursing through her veins.

Breathing heavily, Nicole extended a hand to Rose, offering her support. "Enough, Rose. It doesn't have to be this way. We are all members of this pack, and we need to work together."

Asha rushed to Nicole's side, concern etched across her face. "Nicole, are you okay? You didn't

have to do this."

Nicole, catching her breath, nodded. "I know, Asha. But sometimes, you have to stand up for yourself. I won't let anyone undermine me or the potential I hold."

Rose chuckled wryly and spat out blood as she wheezed. Maya rushed to her side, looking guilty. She refused to meet Nicole's eyes.

Rose, who was still angry, refused Maya's help. She pushed herself up and approached Nicole with a sneer on her face. "So, you think you're better than us now, huh? Just because you might be Luna. You think you're special, huh?"

Nicole tried to defuse the situation, taking a step back. "Rose, I never said that. This isn't about being better than anyone. We're a pack, and we should support each other."

But Rose wasn't interested in peace. Her jealousy had consumed her, fueling her aggression. She lashed out, pushing Nicole forcefully to the ground. "We'll see how powerful you really are, Luna, when you find out the truth. Asha, here has not been completely honest with you. Stop pretending, Asha. We know your heart is broken."

Asha looked away, guilt shining in her eyes. "I must go now," she said, giving Nicole one last glance before rushing out.

Nicole couldn't understand what was happening. Rose snickered, then staggered away. Only Maya remained.

"There's still a lot you don't know about Dark Moon or Alpha Liam," Maya said, her voice cold.

"You should never have admitted that you might leave, especially if you're truly his mate. It can be used against you. It would be used against you. I hold nothing against you, Luna, but you should be wiser."

"Maya! Are you coming?" Rose screamed.

Maya hesitated and hurried away, leaving Nicole standing wide-eyed and heartbroken. She couldn't help but feel a mix of emotions. She had proven her strength, but at what cost? The lingering tension and bitterness within the pack weighed heavily on her mind. What was going on with Asha and the other ladies?

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## **Chapter 72**

Nicole spent the whole evening and night pondering the latest events with Asha, Rose, and Maya.

She was confused and wanted to understand what Maya meant. Since Liam was very busy

planning for the full moon run that was to take place soon, she didn't get a chance to discuss it with Liam.

He knew that something was bothering her, but each time they tried to broach the subject, something distracting came along.

And Nicole herself wasn't willing to talk about it because she wasn't sure of the right question to ask. Maya's words created a thousand scenarios in her head that, in turn, created even more questions.

The first thing the next morning, she went in search of Asha, and unsurprisingly, Asha was nowhere to be found. She went cutting around the park, asking around for her, but no one had seen her, and most people thought she followed Liam's troops into the forest.

Another thing Nicole noted was the not-so-subtle hostile looks that were being thrown at her, especially by the female folk. Nicole's heart sank as she observed the change in dynamics within the pack.

The once-familiar faces now seemed distant and guarded. The whispers and glances directed her way made it clear that something was amiss...

Determined to confront Maya and uncover the truth, Nicole seeks her out in the pack's gathering

area. Maya's body stiffened as Nicole approached, a guarded expression on her face. Nicole's voice quivered with a mix of hurt and confusion as she spoke.

"Maya, what's going on? Why are you avoiding me? I thought we were friends," Nicole pleaded, her eyes searching Maya's for answers.

Maya sighed, her gaze shifting uneasily. "Nicole, it's not that simple. There are things happening, things you don't understand."

Nicole's frustration grew, her voice tinged with urgency. "Then help me understand, Maya. Tell me what's going on. Why are they all turning against me? What lies have they been fed?"

Maya hesitated, her eyes filled with conflict. "I can't... I can't say anything. It's not safe."

Nicole's heart sank further, the weight of isolation crushing her spirit. "Maya, I need your support. I thought we were allies. Don't abandon me now."

Maya scoffed and then folded her arms. "I'm sorry, Nicole. I can't be involved. It's not just about us anymore. There are forces at play, and you're caught in the middle."

Nicole's frustration turned to desperation, her voice trembling with emotion. "Tell me, Maya. Tell me what you know. I can handle it. I can't fight these battles blindfolded."

Maya rolled her eyes, "I'm only going to tell you that the females in Dark Moon are very angry at you. And it has to do with the malicious rumors that Rose is spreading plus other contributing factors."

Nicole sighed. She still couldn't grasp what Maya was saying.

"I wish I could be open with you, Nicole. But it'll only make you seek me out, and I don't want that. For now, you need to stay away from me. It's for your good as well as mine."

Confusion and anger welled up within Nicole, her hands trembling at her sides. "Safety? From what? Are you saying I'm not safe in my own pack?" Maya snickered, "Your own pack? I believe that was a silly slip. I pray you're not delusional to think that you've become welcome here. Oh, you're loved, respected, and even feared by the general folk, but you're not welcomed by a particular sect.

That secret is something you'll have to find out by yourself. Nicole, you don't understand. It's not just about them. It's about something much bigger, something that threatens all of us."

"You're speaking in parables, Maya!" Nicole screamed.

Maya shrugged, " Look within, Nicole. Start with yourself, then scrutinize your rumored mate.

What do you really know about Alpha Liam? What picture did stories of him paint in your head before you met him? What were those stories? If you're smart, you'll figure it out."

Nicole rubbed her throbbing head. Nothing was making sense. She couldn't understand what Maya was talking about.

"Where's Asha?" She asked, hoping to find answers about why her closest friend disappeared.

Maya chuckled, "She's wherever you are not, Nicole. The truth burdens her so much, and it's so much that she can not stand you and your cluelessness. I don't blame her. It must be so hard for her."

Nicole groaned. Fear began creeping in. "Help me understand, Maya."

Maya shook her head, her voice tinged with sorrow.

"I can not help you. No one can, Nicole.

There are things you're not ready to face. When the time is right, you'll know everything. Until then, stay safe and be cautious."

With that, she began walking away. Nicole swallowed as she watched her go.

Suddenly, Maya stopped and turned to her. "For what it is worth, I believe in you, Nicole. You're a better option than all the others combined."

With those words, Maya turned away, leaving Nicole standing there, her heart heavy with the weight of uncertainty. As she watched Maya disappear into the crowd.

Nicole's mind was filled with even more questions than before. What did Maya mean by looking within? What was she hiding, what was within her, and who was Alpha Liam before they met?

Nicole didn't believe that there was any change in Liam from when they met and now. She only understood that as she got to know him better with time, she felt like she could understand him.

Maybe she needed to ask questions, but who was she supposed to ask? Rose? Rose wanted to beat her up. Maya? Maya was being cryptic, and Asha was nowhere to be found.

Nicole entered her old room, feeling a mix of exhaustion and confusion. She was startled when she found Asha sitting on the edge of her bed, her gaze fixed on the floor. The atmosphere was heavy with tension, and Nicole could sense the walls that had risen between them.

Asha looked up, her eyes cold and dull. "We need to talk," she said softly,

A shiver swept down Nicole's spine. "What's going on? Why have you been acting so...? Maya has been saying things."

Asha sighed, her eyes meeting Nicole's briefly before looking away again, "Nicole, it's complicated. There are so many rumors circulating about you and Alpha Liam, and I don't know what to believe anymore."

Nicole's brows furrowed as she sat beside Asha. "What rumors? And why are they affecting our friendship? Shouldn't you know better?"

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## **Chapter 73**

Asha stared into the distance, "You need to understand the history of Alpha Liam's relationships, Nicole. He's been involved with many women in the past, but he never acknowledged any of them. The Alpha you met is very different from the one we all met.

Yes, he's ruthless and even more powerful, but he has developed another quality that is unbelievable; he's now loyal and even steadfast. At first, we didn't realize that there was a relationship between you two. Everyone thought you were one of the harmless strays he normally picks up.

Despite his demeanor, Alpha Liam has always been kind-hearted. So we pegged you as an unfortunate stray. But then we noticed the chemistry and sexual tension between you guys, and we guessed that you had fallen into his trap; you had become another fling, whom he would soon get rid of.

But it's been months since you came here, and his attraction to you has refused to fade. With other females, he loses interest in a matter of weeks or days. In fact, you're not his type. He prefers women with conviction, not softies like you. And then, when you disappeared and returned, we thought it was over because you didn't give him time or attention, yet he continued following you. And now it seems you are his mate."

"I haven't said anything about being his mate," Nicole responded.

Asha chuckled, "Do you need to? I'm curious, how did you meet? I realize that the story of you meeting him is also well shrouded, like the truth about your relationship with him. It should explain a lot of things. I've never really asked why he brought you suddenly. There are rumors about you, Nicole. So how did you meet?"

Nicole scrunched her nose. The Asha talking to her was very different from the Asha she

remembered and loved. And she didn't think it wise to reveal anything to her, not until she was certain of where her loyalties lay. "At a bar," she muttered, remembering the moment perfectly. It was a clear picture that had been ingrained in her memory forever.

"But why does it matter? What's important is..." She started saying, but Asha interjected her.

"What was the connection like?" Asha asked, leaning forward, completely intrigued.

"I was drunk, I don't remember." Nicole lied, waving her hand dismissively.

"You asked how it matters, right? Oh, it does. Because everyone who has known Alpha Liam forever knows that the last thing he can ever have is a mate. His wolf is a beast. Werewolves are brutal, and males are rough, but Alpha Liam is another thing altogether.

It has so much power that no female can stand it for too long. He said it himself. He can never have a mate, and he has lived that way. That's why your connection to him is suspicious."

Nicole's blood turned cold. Suddenly, Maya's words began to make sense.

"So Nicole, you see why Rose is mad. I wouldn't blame her. Or any female. They were all gunning to be Luna. Rose, in particular, thought she was his favorite, and she believed she would

become Luna. And now rumor has it that you're his mate?"

Nicole's lips pressed together. Her wolf was angry at the way Asha addressed her. Its newfound dominance, which it drew from Liam, made it want to challenge Asha into submission, but Nicole knew the importance of looking weak.

Something about Asha was unsettling. There was so much bitterness in her voice as she spoke.

"You know what I think? I think Alpha Liam is using you. And that's smart. He knows he can never have a mate, and he's collaborating with you as the witch bane. It's a good move."

Nicole swallowed.

"And he's acting so well, too. Do you know?"

Pretending to be head over heels. He has an amazing

mind, Alpha Liam. You know how I know that all this is a sham, Nicole?"

Nicole shook her head.

"Because if he was really your mate, he would have marked you on your first night together. It would have shown immediately. A dominant beast like Alpha Liam would not be able to stop himself from completing the bond.

He would have made it known the instant you met.

How is it that you have met for months, but it

was only after you became a witch bane and went through trauma that he became your mate? It's not possible."

Nicole's wolf raged within. But she had long mastered the art of looking helpless, weak, and even shocked. She didn't know why it took so long for her and Liam to realize that they were mates.

But she was certain that it had something to do with her subdued nature, her traumatic experience, and the fact that he didn't believe that it was possible. Both of them had been fighting their attraction to each other from the beginning. She wanted to argue, she ached to put Asha in her place but she didn't.

"So, you're saying that Rose is spreading these rumors to undermine me?"

Asha smirked, her eyes lighting up. "It seems that way. She's threatened by you by the possibility that you might be Alpha Liam's mate. She wants to take away everything she thinks is rightfully hers."

Nicole's mind raced, trying to process the information. It didn't sit well with her. Something was missing, something Asha wasn't telling her. What did all this have to do with Asha? She seemed angry at something. It was like she had completely excluded herself from the equation.

"Anyways, another way to reveal the truth is to wait for the full moon. Our human nature may lie, but our wolves can never lie."

Nicole felt a lump in her stomach.

"What does this have to do with our friendship, Asha? Why are you angry?"

Asha laughed, "Angry? No, I'm cautious. The Dark Moon would be torn apart if you ended up as mates. Liam has broken so many hearts. He has even destroyed so many mate bonds and ruined the chances of many females finding their mates that if he had a true mate, chaos would reign, and trust me, neither he nor his mate would survive it."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you think the witch sprung out from nowhere? There are curses, and a particular one is for Alpha Liam and his mate. Anyways, I know you're here until we defeat the witch, and then you can go away."

Nicole was out of words.

Asha's voice was much kinder and quieter when she spoke up again. "I hope you know what you're doing, Nicole. Just... be careful. Liam uses and discards. You may think his feelings for you run deep, but it's a sham. I've seen him do it to a lot of women."

Nicole nodded and fell to the bed. She found it difficult to breathe. As they sat in silence, the

weight of the unspoken words hung heavily in the air. Nicole couldn't help but wonder what secrets Asha was hiding and how they would impact her journey to uncover the truth.

But for now, she knew she had to stay vigilant and navigate the web of rumors and deceit with caution, all in the hopes of finding her place in a pack that seemed more divided than ever before.

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## **Chapter 74**

Liam couldn't shake off the nagging feeling that something was amiss with Nicole. Her withdrawal, her distant demeanor—it weighed heavily on his heart.

He knew they needed time alone to communicate and sort things out, but his responsibilities as Alpha kept pulling him in different directions.

As the pack gathered for their daily training, Liam made a quick decision. He needed an excuse to create a window of opportunity to talk to Nicole without raising any suspicions. Turning to James, he whispered in his ear, and their plan quickly formulated.

"James, I need you to lead the pack in their training today," Liam said, projecting his voice for all to hear. "I have to check on the troops and make sure everything is in order. I trust you to handle things here."

James nodded, understanding the unspoken message. "Don't worry, Alpha. I'll take care of it. You go do what you need to do."

With a nod of gratitude, Liam made his way toward Nicole, his eyes searching for her amidst the gathered pack members.

Finally spotting her, he approached her. His wolf yearned to hold her, to pull her soft body into his arms, but he remembered the mate rumors and held himself back.

"Nicole," Liam called out softly, his voice laced with concern. "Can we talk? Alone?"

Nicole glanced up, surprise flickering in her eyes, but she nodded and followed him as he led her away from the training area. They found a secluded spot beneath the shade of a large tree, where they could have some semblance of privacy.

Liam took a deep breath. "Nicole, what's wrong? I've noticed that something's been bothering you. You've been withdrawing, and I can't bear to see you like this. Please, talk to me. Let me help."

Nicole sighed, her gaze fixed on the ground, and swallowed. She knew from the very beginning that there was no way she could easily hide the events of the past few days from Liam, especially when they were now connected.

Yet it wasn't time to tell him because it would definitely land Asha and all the other ladies in trouble. Of what use would it be if she hadn't figured out the complete truth?

She wondered if she should ask Liam about his past, about the curse, and if it had something to do with the current attacks on the Dark Moon.

It was at times like this that she missed Garrett the most. He would have been the best person to talk to about Asha's claims, but something kept nagging at her and telling her that Asha didn't paint a clear picture.

It was like she told Nicole bits and pieces of what happened while completely excluding herself from the picture.

Nicole was heartbroken. She had believed that Asha was a true friend of hers. Something told her that she was also lying, and the funniest part was that she couldn't figure out what was true or what was a lie.

It was all twisted, and she had no one to confide in apart from Liam, who stared at her with his blue eyes.

"We need to talk," she said, "but the time is not right."

Liam reached out, gently placing his hand on hers, offering her support, "Whatever this is, Nicole. You don't have to face it alone. We're in this together. Whatever it is, we'll find a way to overcome it."

Nicole looked up, "The Full Moon run," she said easily, using it to mask her emotions. "The pack is buzzing about it."

Liam gave her a wry smile. "Oh, that? It's no big deal. We will run together through and into the deepest parts of the forest. Throughout that night, we will all live as wolves, and you will be by my side."

Nicole's heart skipped a beat. If Asha's claims were true, the last thing she needed to do was be part of that run. She couldn't risk putting Liam in jeopardy.

"I'm afraid. And it's okay that I am. Things like that make me uncomfortable. I've always been a lone wolf, remember?"

Liam's grip tightened slightly. He wanted to say, 'Not anymore,' but he didn't know if she had understood that she was going to become a full-pack member; his Luna and he didn't want to spook her, especially if she still thought that she was leaving.

As if she could read his mind, Nicole said,  
"Remember our deal?"

Liam froze. He didn't want to remember that deal. He wanted it to be expunged. She was his mate. How was he supposed to let her leave? Was it his Karma?

"Don't leave me," he muttered so softly. He didn't think he could bear the heartbreak. "We still have time to figure this out together, Nicole. We will. So please be patient. Let's figure it out. We're a team, and we'll face any challenge together."

Nicole's eyes softened, and her mind was in pieces. How was she supposed to stay when his life could be in danger because of her? And how could she leave when he had begged her to stay? What was the truth? What was real?

"Okay." She whispered, "Okay. But this is too much for me. I just need some time to process everything. I hope you can understand."

She hated it. Nicole hated that she was always asking for time. Every time. She hated that she always needed to process. But she didn't know what to say or do.

Liam nodded, "I understand."

They sat in silence for a moment, the weight of unspoken emotions lingering in the air. Liam

wished he could unravel the mystery that troubled Nicole. Something was disturbing her.

"I'll do my best to protect you, Nicole," Liam finally said, his voice filled with resolve. "Whatever you're going through, I won't let anything or anyone harm you. You're important to me."

Nicole's eyes met his, a flicker of appreciation and vulnerability shining through. "Thank you, Liam. Your words mean a lot to me. Just... give me some time. I'll find my way back, I promise."

Liam gave her a reassuring smile, his voice filled with tenderness. "Take all the time you need. I'll be here, waiting, ready to support you whenever you're ready."

They sat together beneath the shade of the tree, finding solace in each other's presence.

James came by and cleared his throat, and Liam, immediately understanding what he meant, got to his feet.

Alpha? Has she told you? There have been rumors flying about her, and all the animosity seems to be directed at her. James said into Liam's head. Liam stood wide-eyed, looking directly into James's eyes.

What do you mean?

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James glanced briefly at Nicole, who was staring curiously at both of them, then back at Liam.

The females you've been entangled with Alpha. They heard the rumors that she's your mate and they aren't happy.

Liam felt his body turn cold. He looked at Nicole, who wasn't privy to the information James had just passed, and he was angry.

Liam made it clear from the very beginning that he had nothing from the females he had been with, nothing more than pleasure and protection. That was why, when picking anyone, he would make sure to only approach those who understood the rules of the game.

He stayed away from soft-hearted females whose houses you could easily break and only went to the females who understood.

Although even with everything, he made sure they parted amicably. So why is this happening now? And even if he deserved it, why weren't they attacking him? Why were they going after his mate?

"You've got to go, right?" Nicole said meekly, her voice tugging Liam's heartstrings.

He nodded, "It's an emergency. I have to go."

It sounded like a lie, but it wasn't. He needed to be in the forest making the final positions for his backup plan and, at the same time, deal quickly with the rumors flying about her.

The last thing he needed was anything to make Nicole feel uncomfortable and want to leave him. Nicole nodded, then got to her feet and hugged him. He inhaled her scent, wishing he could stay with her, but he remembered what was at stake, and he let her go immediately.

Nicole watched Liam walk away. His departure was sudden and filled with an air of urgency. And she hoped that all was well with all she was doing. Liam's eyes glinted golden as he mind linked the pack while striding away with James by his side. He sent a simple message, carrying a warning that sent shivers down the spines of those who dared to spread rumors and undermine Nicole's position.

James stopped abruptly and gave him a look. I think it's best I stay with her. You should go ahead. Liam nodded and continued while James turned back. He approached Nicole and suggested that they go on a walk.

Nicole was tentative about James's presence. Out of everyone in the pack, she feared him the most. They walked together, finding comfort in the quietness of the surrounding woods.

"Nicole," James began, his voice firm yet gentle. "I haven't spoken to you about this before because I thought it was a passing fling. But now, things have changed.

The rumors, the tension—they're affecting the pack. And more importantly, they're affecting our loyalty to the Dark Moon."

Nicole looked at him, her expression laced with curiosity and concern. "What are you trying to say, James?"

James sighed, choosing his words carefully. "I need to know where your loyalty lies. The pack; the Dark Moon or Liam. Are you fully committed to us, or do you have other plans?"

Nicole's gaze hardened, and her heart skipped several beats. She swallowed, trying to find the right words. Was she committed? She didn't know. After all this time, she hadn't been able to process the events in her life fully.

Before now, the plan had been to defeat the witch and leave, but now Liam was her mate. And even if she wanted to stay, there was a possibility that her staying behind could wreck everything.

"Have you heard the rumors about me?" She said instead,

James gave her a look, "Yes," he responded in a clipped tone. "You are yet to answer my question."

"I heard about you while passing by yesterday. Like Lilian, they're starting to believe that I practice witchcraft and that I'm using some sort of power on Liam," she said, laughing dryly.

"We both know that's not true, Nicole. It still doesn't answer my question."

"Have you ever tried to be in my shoes or look at things from my perspective?" She questioned.

James opened his mouth to counter her, but she interjected, "Why should you? You're too busy being a warrior. But then if you did. If you're like me, would you be fully committed to a pack that wrongfully snatched you out of your old pack, even though they were saving you? And while you were still trying to figure out your new reality, you discovered something new about yourself, and at the same time, you were attacked.

Then again, you're suddenly supposed to be an important member of the new pack while trying to gain acceptance from people who don't want you. Still, being connected to the Alpha himself and knowing that your actions may hurt him?"

James furrowed his brows.

Nicole paused and looked at him. "Confusing, right? Well, that's me in a nutshell. Whatever you feel from hearing this, that is how I feel, and this should answer your question about commitment."

Surprise washed on James's features, his gaze shifting before meeting hers again. "I've been observing and listening, Nicole. I know there's more to your story than what we know.

I know you're hiding a lot of things from what you experienced at Crimson. What you experienced in your induced sleep and whatever it is with you and Garrett. I'm watching you."

Nicole's eyes widened, a mixture of surprise and apprehension. "How... how did you find out?"

James gave her a knowing look. "I have my ways, Nicole. As the chief warrior, it's my duty to protect its members. Including you.

And as such, I can not perform properly if I don't have all the information. Dark Moon doesn't hate you. We are very accepting people. It's just a bunch of entitled females that are jealous. Keep that in mind."

Nicole scoffed, "Just a bunch of entitled females? Heartbroken is the right word. Why is it that no one is thinking that the witch might stem from one of Liam's heartbroken women?"

James's eyes widened for a split second, "That's a very interesting take. However, you've got to make your decision fast. I've never seen Liam this way before, and I assure you, I'll do everything to protect the Dark Moon.

I've learned over the years that the best way to protect a pack is by protecting its Alpha, and to protect an Alpha, you have to protect what he cherishes the most.

So, you see Nicole, the time has come when you'll stop thinking about yourself, discard that lone wolf mentality, and think as a pack."

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