

Chapter 27: Invitations and Realizations

Where the hell did that come from? Amaya thought to herself, shocked at the letter. She opened and closed her mouth a few times to speak, but she didn't know what to say. So instead, she looked like a fish out of water trying to breathe.

"I told you," Jonathan said smugly. "It's a personal invitation from Mandrake."

Amaya looked to Amelia. "Doesn't mean anything," she shrugged, forcing nonchalance. "Just because you have a meeting, doesn't mean you'll seal the deal."

"We'll see," Amelia said in a challenging tone. Amaya decided not to say anything further. Amelia still had to prove her worth at the company; she still had to prove that she could make the company better. If she couldn't, the board of directors would surely initiate a vote to get her out of there. It was just a meeting. So what? Amaya excused herself and strut out of the office

Amelia turned to Jonathan then. Truth be told, she was just as shocked as Amaya. And a little suspicious. He just told me about his friend at Mandrake yesterday. And then today a personalized invitation

just shows up? Amelia thought to herself. Jonathan is efficient, sure – but this seems a little TOO efficient.

“May I see the invitation,” Amelia asked. Maybe it was fake? Forged? Addressed to someone else? But when Jonathan removed the invitation, sure enough it was addressed to Amelia. But the ink on the invite looked oddly fresh.

Jonathan saw Amelia eyeing the invite with suspicion. “Okay, so it didn’t come in that envelope,” Jonathan confessed. “My friend from school, the one I was telling you about? She invited me to a lavish party at Mandrake Enterprises. That invitation came in this envelope,” he explained, holding the envelope and her invite in either hand. “I just put the invitation in this fancy envelope for shock affect.”

Well it worked, Amelia thought, cuz I was certainly shocked. She looked at the invite again.

“My friend does want to meet with you. But in a casual setting. You can pick the place and time,” Jonathan continued. “My friend just isn’t available for the next few days.”

Amelia still had her suspicions, but she shrugged.

Gabriel returned to his pack, only to find his mother

and Sophia in the middle of a massive argument. He sighed audibly. This was the last thing he needed and was just about to break up the fight, when he overheard some of the things they were saying.

They were both yelling, eyes glaring, as they spewed out vicious words to one another.

“How could you come back here? You are the stupidest girl I know!” Vivenne said.

“What was I supposed to do? Run away and hide?” Sophia asked, crossing her arms.

“Yes! The King wants you! You can’t be here. You’re putting our entire pack in jeopardy with your foolishness!” Vivenne yelled at Sophia.

“Foolishness? We BOTH wanted me to be Luna, you stupid bitch! You BOTH came up with the plan to frame Amelia for the ruby,” Sophia seethed at Vivenne. Vivenne growled, throwing her arms up.

“You brought shame onto our pack! Your behavior at the banquet was deplorable. You hid the ruby stone! And then you dropped it you dumb fool! That’s not on me. That’s on you. And now our pack is a laughing stock, thanks to you!”

“Don’t you dare plead innocence here, you old bitch! You knew damned well I had that ruby.”

Vivienne is just about to respond when she sees Gabriel out of the corner of her eye. Sophia can't see him from where she's standing. Vivienne takes a step backwards and gasps. She feigns shock. "I DID NOT! I trusted you! But you've brought me nothing but disappointment. You screwed everything up!"

"What are you talking about, you crazy woman? It was OUR plan." Sophia looked confused.

"Hardly!" Vivienne says, acting offended.

"And what do you mean, screwed everything up? If it wasn't for me, you'd be cursed. I convinced YOU not to use deadly poison instead of wolfsbane."

"Not true! You little liar! I told YOU we can't use poison. We'd be cursed by the Moon Goddess if we killed the Luna of our own pack. Amelia was our Luna."

"I KNOW she was our Luna. Don't remind me. If anyone screwed anything up, it was you. He was your son! You were supposed to convince him to ditch that lowly rogue. You're useless. You couldn't even get rid of your own son's Luna. So weak."

"WEAK? Amelia had a damaged wolf! Damaged! And she STILL beat you. You're the one who's useless! Useless and stupid."

Gabriel had had enough! He couldn't believe the venom spewing out of these women's mouths. Clearly his mother was a mean, vicious person. It was obvious she'd tried to harm Amelia and that she lied to him. And Sophia? What happened to the tender, innocent girl he thought she was. The woman standing here was violent. Manipulative. Cruel.

"I'm ashamed of you both," he said, stepping towards the woman. "How could you be so malicious?"

They both stopped yelling, shocked to see Gabriel. Shit, how much did he hear? Sophia's thoughts raced. But the look of disappointment on his face clearly said – he'd heard it all. In a heartbeat, Sophia changed from angry, yelling she wolf to doting, vulnerable girl. She batted her eyelashes at Gabriel and ran her finger up and down his arm.

"It was your mother's doing," she said. "She forced me. You know I would NEVER do anything to shame you or this pack. You know how much I love you."

But Gabriel was done with her lies and deceit. He saw right through her ruse. He shrugged her off. She continued. "And I know you love me. I mean, you made Amelia leave because you love me, right? So I could be the new Luna?"

Gabriel took a deep breath. He lifted his chin and said to her, in a very serious tone:

“No. I don’t love you. I never have.” Sophia’s eyes widened in shock.

“But I – but we...”

“Listen,” Gabriel cut her off. “You were like a sister to me. A younger sister. We grew up together. And when your brother sacrificed his life for our pack, I wanted to protect you. But I never loved you, not like that. And I have no intention of naming you Luna.”

Tears welled up in Sophia’s eyes, but Gabriel was oblivious. His thoughts were focused on Amelia.

Dear, sweet Amelia.

She was so kind. So good. And I ignored her. I never listened to her feelings. Not once. I let everyone bully her. I treated her so bad.

Gabriel sighed then, deeply and ran his fingers through his hair.

“Amelia was a good Luna. A very good Luna. A much better Luna than you could ever be.”