Chapter 37

Nicole slowly opened her eyes, her head pounding with a dull ache. She was lying in a white hospital bed, surrounded by unfamiliar walls. Panic set in as she tried to sit up, but a sharp pain in her abdomen made her wince and fall back onto the bed. She took deep breaths and tried to calm down, taking in her surroundings.

The room was quiet. The only sound was the one coming from the beeping machines, monitoring her heartbeat and breathing. Suddenly, the door burst open.

Asha rushed into the infirmary and screamed out in joy at seeing Nicole awake. "Oh my god! Nicole, you're finally awake!" she exclaimed, tears streaming down her face. The doctors rushed in and began checking Nicole's vitals, making sure she was okay.

Nicole looked around, disoriented and confused. "What happened?" she asked, her brows etched up in surprise.

Asha took deep breaths and started to explain. "You were attacked, and you disappeared. We thought you were kidnapped by the witch. But Alpha Liam found you in an abandoned building

and brought you back here. You didn't leave this place at all."

Nicole suddenly remembered the conversations she had heard before she passed out. It was still confusing. How was she hearing conversations when she was awake in Crimson?

"Wait. What do you mean by I didn't leave? I was back in my old pack. I was captured and tortured." She croaked.

"It was all just a nightmare," Asha said reassuringly, holding her hand and squeezing it. Flinching, Nicole moved away; the touch scared her.

She didn't want to talk or touch or be touched. Even Asha's presence made her uncomfortable. Her wolf was also silent. She felt vulnerable, like Alpha Shane would burst into the room and take her back.

Maya, the nurse, came in with a warm smile, and her anxiety increased.

"It was a nightmare? Are you sure?" Nicole asked, feeling numb. Nicole furrowed her brow, trying to remember what had happened. Her mind was foggy, and it took her a few moments to recall the events that led to her unconsciousness. She remembered Crimson, the torture, the assault, but now, she was safe in the Dark Moon.

Asha nodded, "Yes, Nicole, it was just a nightmare. You've been unconscious for two weeks. You

were injected with wolfsbane and wolf lichen. Whatever you saw wasn't real. You're safe now." She explained,

Nicole closed her eyes and took a deep breath, trying to process everything. "But it felt so real," she whispered.

"What did you see?" Maya asked,

"I know, I know," Asha said, placing a comforting hand on Nicole's shoulder. "But it wasn't real. You're back with us now, and we're all here for you."

Nicole let out a scream at the contact and then began panting.

"Oh god! I'm sorry." Asha cried.

Maya looked at her sceptically and took down notes.

Nicole nodded, still feeling overwhelmed. She found it hard to believe that what she experienced was a nightmare. She unconsciously looked at her body to inspect for healing cuts.

She looked at Maya and shook her head. She couldn't bring herself to speak about what she went through, "I was back in my old pack. Where's Garrett?" She asked.

It was very surprising that he wasn't there yet. Maya quickly excused herself.

Asha's expression turned grave. "It's bad, Nicole. The pack was attacked after you disappeared. It was horrible. We were caught unawares. Beta Garrett was badly injured, and he lost his mate. It's

been a rough couple of weeks for everyone."
Nicole's heart ached at the news, but she couldn't show care. Her face was expressionless.
"Alpha Liam, had it worse." Asha continued.
Nicole's heart skipped a beat.
"He's not doing so great, Nicole. He almost lost his mind when you disappeared. He searched for you nonstop. His wolf has been on the edge. You've spent one week here and he's still very scared because he's worried that you might not wake up. We've never seen him like this before."
"I'm sorry, Asha. I didn't mean to cause all this trouble. I never wanted any of this to happen." Nicole croaked.
Asha shook her head. "It's not your fault, Nicole. None of these is. You're a victim here, and we're all here to support you."
Nicole didn't feel that way. She was becoming overwhelmed and wanted to be left alone.
Alpha Liam entered the room, a look of relief on his face. As soon as he walked into the infirmary room, Nicole felt her body tense. She knew that she should be grateful to him for rescuing her, but the memories of her nightmare were still too fresh in her mind.
"Nicole," Liam said softly, his voice filled with relief. "I'm so glad you're awake. How are you feeling?"

Nicole looked away from him, not wanting to meet his gaze. "I'm fine," she said curtly.

Liam's face fell at her cold response. Nicole tried to sit up again, wincing as the pain in her abdomen flared up once more.

Liam nodded, sitting down on a chair beside her bed. "I'm glad you're okay. We were all worried about you," he said, his gaze full of sincerity.

Nicole felt a warm sensation in her chest, grateful for the support, but it was odd. She didn't understand it, and neither did she understand what was going on with her either.

She couldn't bring herself to respond. She didn't want to. She wanted to be alone.

Liam looked down, his expression filled with guilt. "I know. I know we messed up. And I'll do anything to make it right, Nicole. Anything."

Nicole closed her eyes in disbelief. Did he think he was going to fix anything? Did he think a few apologies and promises were going to wipe out her memories? She was damaged. The room felt crowded. She wanted them to leave.

Liam looked contrite. The past few days had affected him badly. "Nicole, give me a chance to make it up to you. I'm sorry for what you went through. I failed you. Let me prove to you that I care about you, that I'll do anything to protect you."

Nicole looked at him for a long moment, considering his words. She could see the sincerity in his eyes, the pain he was feeling at the thought of losing her. But she couldn't forget the fear and pain she had experienced from him. Memories of Crimson melded with his taunting and made her want to cry.

"I need to be alone," she finally spoke, her voice trembling. "Please go away, let me be."

Liam nodded. This was the saddest and most disoriented she had ever seen him.

"I understand," he said, reaching out to touch her, but she flinched and trembled.

Liam froze, he looked shocked. "Take all the time you need. But just know that I'm here for you whenever you're ready," he said softly.

Nicole didn't reply, instead turning her gaze away from him again. She couldn't deny the fact that a part of her still cared for Liam, but the wounds she had were too deep to be easily forgotten.

She had yet to come to terms with what she had experienced, especially with what Shane did to her. She could still feel his hands on her. Whenever she closed her eyes, she was transported back to that dungeon, that cell where he desecrated her.
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Nicole had never felt so alone and vulnerable. She felt broken and damaged beyond repair. The

once lively, confident, and adventurous young woman was now reduced to a shadow of herself. She had become quiet and reserved, keeping to herself and avoiding any interactions with others. Every night, she relived the traumatic experience, and the memories replayed themselves in her mind like a broken record.

Her wolf had gone dormant, and she felt like a part of her was missing. She was terrified of Liam, the one person who had risked everything to save her. His mere presence was a constant reminder of the trauma she had been through.

Nicole tried to make an effort to interact with others, but she found herself withdrawing at every turn. She could not bring herself to trust anyone, not even Asha, her best friend.

Liam tried to approach her, to be there for her, but she recoiled at his touch, and her fear of him only grew stronger. She didn't want to be near him, and the physical distance between them widened each day.

Liam couldn't take it anymore. He came to visit her, but she tried to push him away, telling him to leave her alone.

"Please, Nicole, talk to me. Let me help you," he pleaded.

"How can you help me, Liam?" Nicole asked, her voice laced with pain and bitterness. "You

weren't there. You were also mean to me. What can you do to help me?"

Liam's heart broke at her words. "Maybe I can not help you, but speaking to the doctors and therapist can. You've been inside for days. Just let us know what happened. That will help you."

"Nothing happened. You said it was a nightmare, and I was overdosed on wolfsbane and Wolf Lichen, right? I dreamt it wasn't serious."

Liam rubbed his face, "Okay, anything you say. Please just…"

Nicole shook her head, tears streaming down her face. "I can't, Liam. I can not do anything you're asking. Stop asking. I'm too scared. I'm scared of everything and everyone. I can't trust anyone anymore."

Liam reached out to touch her, and she flinched away. He pulled back his hand, feeling like a failure. "I understand, Nicole. Take all the time you need. But know that I'll always be here for you, no matter what."

Nicole watched as he left the room, her heart heavy with guilt and fear. She didn't like what she was doing, nor was she enjoying treating him like that, but it was too much for her.

The doctor had explained that nothing she experienced was real. Everything was from the deepest

parts of her mind. He told her that it was probably her worst fears playing out in her head. She had even gone with Asha to the place where she was rescued from and had inspected the room.

Like they said, she had been injected with so much wolfsbane and Wolf lichen, but she couldn't reconcile the fact that it was all a dream. What she experienced was too much to be a dream.

Her wolf, who had been a source of Succour, was gone. The doctor said it was dormant because of poisoning. But she didn't believe it was that. She thought it was the horror she experienced.

Asha sat down beside Nicole, holding her hand gently. "Nicole, you don't have to do this alone. We are here for you," she said softly. "You don't have to keep reliving this trauma every night. We want to help you."

Nicole looked away, tears brimming in her eyes. "I can't," she whispered. "It's too much. I can't even talk about it."

Talking about it meant that she was accepting that it happened. She has never spoken about the trauma she received under Shane before. It wasn't just about the induced nightmare. It was about everything she had been through.

She felt like speaking about it, and she didn't want to at the same time. She knew that if she talked

about her trauma, she would gain more attention than she needed, and everyone wouldn't look at her the same way.

Maya, the nurse, came in and sat down on the other side of the bed. "Nicole, we understand that it's hard. But talking about it can help you heal. It can help you come to terms with what happened."

"I just can't," Nicole repeated.

Asha leaned closer to Nicole, and Nicole shied away from her touch. "We'll help you get her back. We'll help you heal. But you have to talk to us. You have to let us in."

Nicole shook her head, the tears now falling down her cheeks. "I'm scared," she admitted.

Maya reached out but thought better of it and returned her hand. "We won't let anything happen to you," she said firmly. "You're safe here."

Nicole looked at them. Maybe, just maybe, she could start to heal. "Okay," she said softly. "I'll try." Even though she knew she was lying.