

## **Alpha's Redemption: My Luna Has A Son by Jessica Hall**

### **Chapter Forty-One**

Everly

Two Days Later

Something is going on with Macey and Kalen; they've been joined at each other's hip for the last two days. And it's always the same excuse, too—they're dealing with the hotel renovations. Yet as Kalen left this morning, I couldn't help but wonder because of the way Macey hung up abruptly on whomever she was talking to when I came out to make something to eat.

"Where are the kids?" I ask her as she starts putting her belongings into her bag. And why is she so dressed up? She's even wearing makeup.

"Kalen and John dropped them off at school," she answers with a shrug, trying to push me back toward the room.

"Go lay down, you're on bed rest. I'll bring your breakfast in."

"And Valen?" I ask her. I didn't hear him get up this morning; usually he wakes me.

"Uh, something about meeting the council elders with Marcus before they pick up Zoe," Macey answers as she shuffles me down the hall to my room. Their constant fussing is driving me insane.

"Zoe is coming home?" I ask, feeling relieved. She could have come home yesterday, but they kept her an extra night so she could meet with a counselor this morning.

"Yep, and I think everyone is moving to the main packhouse today. Valen said something about organizing it," Macey says as I climb back into bed. I stare at her as I pull my blankets back up,, still wondering why she's all dressed up. It's odd.

"Where are you going? To see Tatum?" I ask her. She chews her lip.

"Um, yeah, I was going to try to patch things up with him. Hopefully he's in a better mood today," she says, yet her jitteriness makes me nervous.

I can't explain why I feel that way, but she seems off; she has for the last two days. With everything going on, it's understandable, but for her to suddenly hang around Kalen and my father has me rattled—two men, who for years she despised and are now acting like they're all best buddies.

She walks off, returning with a tray of tea and toast. "Sorry. Valen," she sighs.

It's fine, I'll wait for her to leave and hunt for my own coffee so she doesn't get in trouble. She leans down and gives me a kiss on the cheek as I pluck a piece of toast off the tray.

"You know I love you, right? You and Zoe," Macey says with a shake of her head. "I would do anything for you, without question or fear of consequence. You girls are my family—always have been, always will be. Taylor and I wouldn't be where we are if it wasn't for you both."

I smile sadly, feeling the same way about her. Yet, my brows furrow in confusion. It strikes me as odd; Macey isn't one to declare her love or show her emotions. She gives me a quick kiss before stopping by the door.

"I love you," she says.

"I love you too. Are you sure everything is okay?" I ask her around my mouthful of jelly toast.

"Yes, I'm fine. I'll see you later," she says, then walks off. Taking another bite of my toast, I shake my head at her strange behavior. I'll be sitting her down when she gets home to find out what is going on with her. Maybe I'll call Tatum later and tell him to pull his head out of his ass, or get Valen to do it.

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For the most part, my day is as boring as every other day I've spent in this place. By lunchtime I'm starving again and decide after dragging myself out of the shower that I'll make something to eat. I'm craving cucumbers and peanut butter. My mouth waters.

I slip my robe on, deciding against clothes, knowing I'll just be uncomfortable and itchy. Besides, no one's home yet, though that has me confused. Kalen or Dad are

usually back by now. Valen would be fuming if he knew I was home by myself, but I'm not going to call him and snitch on them; I'm enjoying the peace and quiet.

I don't feel like being stared at or criticized for my weird food cravings, and that means I can sneak more coffee. Just as I wander out to the living room, however, the devil himself calls, his ringtone blaring loudly from the bedroom. I waddle my fat ass back to the room, puffing and panting, and barely make it to my phone before it rings out. Snatching it off the dresser, I put it to my ear.

"Hello?" I gasp out.

"Hey, just checking in," Valen says while I sit on the edge of the bed and try to catch my breath. My lower back is killing me from the fast pace I made back to the room and my hips throb.

"Everly?" Valen asks.

"Yeah, I'm fine, just had a shower and had to race to the phone," I tell him while tugging off the towel that's wrapped around my hair. I toss it at the basket by the door but miss and internally groan, knowing I'm not going to be able to pick the damn thing up easily.

"I may be a little while longer. I'm just visiting Tatum."

"Good, maybe you can find out what's going on with Macey. She was odd this morning. Did she say anything to Tatum?"

I hear Valen ask Tatum about Macey before answering.

"He said he hasn't seen her since their argument."

My brows furrow.

"Why?" Valen asks.

"No, reason. I thought she was visiting him today, is all. How was the council meeting?"

"Dunno, they cancelled last minute, and—"

I pull the phone away from my ear, hearing someone knocking on the door.

"Hang on a second, someone's knocking on the door," I tell Valen.

“Let Dad get it. Also, I need to speak to him, so can you put him on?”

“He isn’t here, he left this morning, hasn’t been back,” I tell him, wandering down the hall.

“But I spoke to him this morning after the school drive. He said he was on his way back to you?”

“He must have got distracted,” I tell him as the knocking gets louder and I drag myself back down the damn hallway.

“Hold on, I’m coming!” I yell to whoever it is. Suddenly, I feel my feet get wet as I step into the entrance hallway. I stop, wondering if I imagined it. The knocking gets worse and I hear yelling from the other side of the door, ordering me to open it. Valen is yelling in my ear, asking what’s wrong. I don’t hear any of it. My eyes are on the huge puddle of water at my feet.

“Everly, who is it?” Valen asks as I stare, stunned.

My mouth opens and closes and I try to answer Valen when I hear the door burst open and smash into the wall. The sound makes me jump and more liquid gushes out of me, covering my feet and the floor—my legs are soaked. I look up to see armed men race down the hall with their guns drawn, straight toward me.

“Valen, get home,” I tell him when a man stops in front of me. He holds out a piece of paper, thrusting it toward me before looking down at the puddle I’m standing in and glancing at the men behind him.

“Who are you and what are you doing in my house?” I demand, growling at the man. I can hear Valen yelling through the phone.

“We’re looking for Alpha John—we have a warrant for his arrest,” the man explains.

“A warrant?” I ask, snatching the paper from his hand a moment before pain ripples through my abdomen. I clutch the hall stand, the paper crumpling in my fist as I hold my stomach with my other hand.

“A warrant for what? And who are you?” I growl through gritted teeth. I look up to see the men in uniforms looking at me warily.

“My name is Deacon. I’m a member of the werewolf council, and your father is under arrest for his experimentation on the rogues and creating the forsaken.”

I tried to pay attention to what he’s saying, yet pain like a sharp knife tears through my stomach. I groan and grit my teeth, trying to breathe through the contraction.

“Ma’am, are you alright?” the man asks, a little startled. He reaches toward me and I snarl at him, slapping his hand away.

“Of course I’m not alright! My damn water just broke, and you just broke into my damn house!” I snap at him, already feeling Valen getting closer.

“We have a warrant, ma’am,” he states.

“FUCK YOUR WARRANT!” I scream at him as another contraction makes my stomach tighten, and more liquid spills onto the floor at my feet. The man jumps back and they all glance at each other as if they’ve never seen a woman in labor before.

“Ma’am?” the council elder asks. I glare at him.

“Call a fucking ambulance, you idiot!” I snap at him, not in the mood for whatever it is they’re doing here or their oblivious faces as they gape at me. Chapter Forty-Two

Macey

I pull into the underground parking lot and pull into the space next to Kalen and John before hopping out of the car. Kalen also gets out, and we quickly go over the plans again while John fiddles with my phone and pairs it to his and Kalen's so they can track me.

“We’ll be right behind you. John will grab Ava from the meeting spot, and I’ll follow. Derrick and Dion are waiting for the call. Once we have your location, we ambush him,” Kalen tells me and I nod. My heart is thumping rapidly as nerves kick in; I’m stressing over leaving with Carter, even if only temporarily.

“Here, but just in case this disconnects, take this,” John says, handing me something that looks suspiciously like a suppository. He's pulling my leg, right? I hold it up, looking at it.

“And what am I supposed to do with this?” I ask. They both mumble and look away from me. “Oh, hell no! You shaft it!” No way is that going up my butt.

“It's just a precaution,” John mutters.

“I don't see you shoving anything up your ass! Do I look like a drug mule?” I snap.

“There's always the other—” Kalen starts to say, but I hold up a hand to stop him before he can tell me his suggestion.

“Nope! Definitely not,” I growl, annoyed at how easily they're discussing my nether bits.

“Geez, woman, just swallow the damn thing!” John says. I growl but swallow the rubbery device.

“You better hope that comes out. And easily. I am not going to the damn hospital and explaining this shit!” I tell him and John sighs.

“Hey, you wouldn't let us get anyone involved but Derrick and Dion, so we need backup plans. That is the backup plan,” Kalen tells me.

I roll my eyes before snatching the water from him and downing some. The damn thing feels like it's lodged in my throat.

Pulling my phone from my pocket, I glance at it, knowing it's getting close to the time. We quickly go over the plans once more. Carter said Ava would be dropped off at the old mine tunnels where he dropped Micah. Once I'm out of the city with him, that's where John will head first.

Kalen will follow behind me to the borders in one of the delivery trucks that came in this morning. Goddess knows how much he had to pay the driver to hand the truck over and wait around, but a random car would look suspicious.

“Okay, where are you meeting Carter again?” John asks.

“The train bridge. Then, once we've left the city limits, he said he'll make a call to whoever has Ava.”

I wait for the message to come in. It's the only thing going that we can't plan for because we don't know when he'll call.

Once the message comes in, I drive to the station and we all split up. Kalen goes to pick up the truck; John, to get Ava. As I drive toward the train station, I pass Dion and Derrick. However, when I get there, my phone rings again, but I see no sign of Carter.

"Where are you?" I ask him.

"Get on the train that's waiting," he says, and I look at the train.

"No. We had a deal."

"And the deal stands. If you think I am stupid, Macey, and that I wouldn't know you have a plan, then you are mistaken. Get on the train and catch it to the first stop out of the city," he says, hanging up, and I curse.

Shaking my head, I race to catch the train before it leaves. I have to jump the turnstiles, and I slip through the narrow door gap just in time. Once inside, I start to text Kalen when I notice a teenage girl sitting on one of the seats. She has her earbuds in and I quickly tap her shoulder. She looks up at me, startled. I can tell she's a rogue, and after a sniff of the air, she seems to realize I am, too, and pulls her headphones from her ears.

"Can I borrow your phone to send a message?" I ask her. She looks at my phone in my hand.

"Out of credit," I tell her before she says anything. She hands her phone over, and I quickly message Kalen from it, not trusting my own phone. After handing it back to her with a 'thank you', I wait by the doors as the train passes over the city, watching the buildings slip by.

The train passes Dion and Derrick, parked on the overpass.

I glance down, seeing police cars and black SUVs racing toward the borders before I recognize John's car screeching to a stop as his vehicle is encircled. I try to see what's going on, pressing my face to the glass as I curse, but the train is going too quickly, and I suck in a shaky breath.

The train keeps going.

The girl whose phone I borrowed waves me over. "I, um, think this is for you," she says, showing me the phone screen. Kalen has replied.

‘Borders blocked, hang tight. Something is going on’

That’s all it says.

“Fuck!” I hiss under my breath. I swallow and quickly thank her. There’s no doubt this is Carter's doing.

My phone rings, and I whip it from my pocket.

“I noticed Taylor isn't with you. And you have no suitcase,” Carter purrs, and I grit my teeth. He laughs. “Little mate, you won't get one past me, so I don't know why you tried. Never mind, it's alright. I will forgive your dishonesty. Make sure to get off at the next stop. I will be waiting,” he says before hanging up.

Even with looking at the train map on the wall, I have no idea what train I’m on, but we passed two stations without stopping. I sit down until I feel the train begin to slow

Finally getting off the train, I move to the parking lot and spot a black Mercedes waiting. Carter stands leaning against the hood. He looks impeccable in his suit and the bond burns to touch him, but I stamp the urge down.

“What, no hug?” Carter purrs, stalking toward me. I try to sidestep him but am swept up in his arms before being pinned against the car.

“Where is Ava?” I growl.

“And where is your phone, love? Hand it over,” he growls, feeling my pockets. He finds my phone before dropping it and stomping on it.

“Ava?” I demand. Nothing is going to plan. I’m barely holding myself together.

“In the trunk. Now, I am done playing your little game of cat and mouse, so I will release her the moment I have marked that pretty little neck,” he says, pressing closer, and I turn my face to the trunk. I can hear the faint banging and groaning coming from it.

“No. Release her, then we can leave. Let her out, Carter,” I tell him.

“I want assurance first. No one will risk your life, so you want her, you will let me mark you,” he says, trailing his nose across my neck. I swallow, trying to stamp down the urges of the bond to give in to him.



The crackles of electricity are relentless the longer he touches me, making a moan escape me. Carter chuckles, though I'm seething on the inside that he has this effect. But if it works in distracting him, I'll use it to my advantage.

"Now there is the reaction I have been looking for," Carter murmurs, nipping at my neck, and my breath comes in uneven breaths at the sparks as the bond reacts to my mate. Glancing around, I see the girl from the train waiting at the bus stop. If I can just get Carter to release Ava, I know the girl would help her.

"Not here. We have too many observers," I tell him, and he glances around before reaching for the door handle and opening it. I glance at it as he steps away from me and nods to get in.

"You want her back, then get in. Once I have marked you, I will let her go and not a moment before," he says. I bite my lip and reluctantly get in.

"You'll let her out?" I ask worriedly. What if all of this is some ploy? Carter leans in, clipping in my seat belt. When he pulls back, he smirks.

"Of course," he purrs, pressing his lips to mine.

Instead of fighting the bond, I allow it, answering his kiss and internally cringing the entire time. Yet, this insane man seems to think the feeling is reciprocated and cups the back of my neck, deepening it. His lips trail down my neck hungrily, and I offer it to him. Tears burn my eyes at what I'm about to allow him to do. I just hope I'm strong enough to fight the bond afterward.

"Do it," I whisper, and he pulls away to look at me.

"Ava can catch the train home from here. Do it, so you know I'm yours," I tell him.

He observes my face for a few seconds before glancing around the parking lot, and I notice it beginning to empty. The girl is gone—she was by the bus stop, but now I can't see her.

"Carter?" I ask, turning my attention back to him.

"And you'll mark me?" he asks, pecking my lips.

"You'll let her out?" I ask, and he nods.

"Then yes, but—"

"I will let her out," he repeats.

I suck in a breath and quickly nod. Carter kisses me and I kiss him back, playing along until he pulls me to the side edge of the seat so my feet are hanging out the door; the seat belt feels as if it will strangle me. He crouches in front of me, his hands trailing up my thighs when he turns his head, offering me his neck.

"You want me to go first?" I ask.

"Well, unless you can fight an Alpha mark, Love, you first. Because you won't be awake long once I mark you," he says, and my heart beats like a drum in my chest as panic kicks in.

Carter grips my face in his hands. "I promised, didn't I?" he says. He offers me his neck, and I hesitate before leaning closer. I feel my canines tear from my gums as his scent overwhelms me, the bond flaring to life, and I sink my teeth into his neck.

The bond surges as my chest tightens and my heart swells, letting his soul intertwine with mine. Carter grunts, tugging me against him, holding me closer until the bond forges. When my canines retract, I run my tongue over his mark, sealing it. My body feels traitorous, and I try to remind myself I still have control.

"Good girl," Carter purrs, pecking my lips before he yanks my head to the side and sinks his teeth in my neck. I clench my eyes shut as pain rips through my shoulder before pleasure makes my entire body tingle; I submit to the bond and let it forge. Yet as the bond forms and blossoms, I feel my body become increasingly heavy, and I sag back against the seat.

Carter turns me after sealing his mark, pushing me back in my seat and untangling the belt that's caught around my torso.

"Ava," I murmur, fighting the overwhelming exhaustion.

"I will release her. Sleep," he says, kissing my head and shutting the door. As my head hits the glass and I slump to the side, I watch in the side mirror as Carter pops the trunk. He rummages around, then I see Ava stagger forward before falling on the ground as her legs give out from under her. Moments later, Carter climbs in the driver's door while Ava undoes the gag from her mouth and tries to get up.

In a fight I'm never going to win, my eyes flutter as I try to force them to stay open. I manage long enough to see the girl rush from the bus station toward Ava while Carter speaks soft words to me and starts the car. As he pulls onto the highway, relief floods me when I see she's alright.

I smile sleepily.

She's safe.

Me, not so much.

"You won't regret this, Macey; I will take good care of you," I hear Carter's voice.

No, but you will regret ever meeting me, I think before the oblivion of the mate bond sweeps me under.

ChapterForty-Three  
Valen

The phone temporarily cuts out as it goes through my Bluetooth, and I can hear Everly giving the council a mouthful.

"Valen!" she groans through gritted teeth. Pain courses through the bond as I race to get to her.

"Nearly there. Hold on," I tell her, tearing through the streets. This explains the council canceling at the last minute, but why is another question? Yet right now, I have a one-track mind: get to my mate.

"Touch me again, and I will gut you!" I hear Everly growl at someone. "Grab my bag! Over there, you idiot! Now move! Unless you want to deliver my babies, get out of my way," she snarls, groaning as another contraction hits her.

I press my foot harder on the accelerator when I hear her panting as she breathes through another. Marcus white-knuckles his seat as we skid around another corner, the car sliding out and narrowly missing some parked cars before I pull it back.

"It's too early! It's too early, Valen!" I hear Everly cry out. It's early, yes, but we had hoped she would make it to this point—sure, we would have preferred her to go full term, but Doc expected this, and Marcus assures me the hospital is getting prepared and an ambulance is on its way to her.

Now, I just need to get there.

Both the tires and Marcus scream around the next corner when we find a roadblock. Cops are everywhere up the main street, blocking both sides of the road, and I see my father get pulled from a truck while John has his hands in the air.

Both of them are surrounded by the council and half the police force. The car screeches to a stop and Marcus is thrown forward in his seat as we come to an abrupt stop. Then suddenly, all guns are turned and pointed at us.

“FUCK!” I curse as the car becomes surrounded. I growl.

“Valen? Valen, the ambulance is here. Where are you?” Everly cries as pain ripples through the bond, along with her panic. She’s scared—scared she’ll have to do this on her own, scared for our babies, and overall, just scared for herself.

“Just a detour, love. I’ll meet you at the hospital,” I tell her, watching as the car becomes surrounded.

“You’re coming, though? I can’t do this again, Valen!” Everly cries.

“I promise I will be there. Just go with the ambulance,” I tell her before tossing my door open.

“Hands where we can see the Alpha,” comes a voice, and I turn my head to see John’s Beta smiling and walking toward me. John is pinned to the ground, being handcuffed. My father still stands with his hands in the air, and I wonder what’s going on a second before I feel Everly’s panic through the bond.

‘Breathe, love! I’m coming. I’ll be there soon. Just gotta take care of something first,’ I mind-link her. We’ve been avoiding the mind link for weeks, worried about the strain it puts on Everly, but seeing as it’s baby time, I don’t think she could become more stressed than she already is.

“Well, this is a fun turn of events now, isn’t it, Alpha?” Beta Clarke says when I see his brother Deacon pull up and get out of his car. I knew he was with Everly, so if he’s here, the ambulance has already gotten Everly.

“Valen, my daughter? Clarke said she’s in labor,” John says, and I nod to him as he struggles on the ground.

“Trying to get to her, John. Give me a moment,” I call back to him. A scuffle breaks out and my father shifts abruptly, taking off for the borders. I have no idea where he’s going, but the moment he started fighting, so did John before everyone rushes to contain him. My father's huge, black wolf takes out two of the men and effectively escapes. However, Marcus and I are surrounded.

“Well, gentleman, you either shoot or drop your weapons. Because I made a promise, and I don't intend to break it,” I tell Deacon as I start undoing my cufflinks.

“You are under suspicion for your involvement in the forsaken and rogue murders,” Deacon tells me, and my brows raise. No doubt Carter and Nixon are up to something.

“Is that so?” I ask him while removing my blazer. I toss it on the hood of my car before I start unbuttoning my shirt, and they start backing up.

“Y-yes... Alpha Valen, we have—” Deacon stutters, but I ignore him. Of all days they could have picked to piss me off, today wasn't one of them.

“Now, I have a mate who, as you know, Deacon, is in labor,” I tell him, tugging my tie off. I toss it on the hood with my blazer, mindful of everyone watching me as I size them up and count how many surround us.

“We can't let you go, Alpha Valen. Not until—” Deacon begins to say when I cut him off.

“The hard way it is, then,” I finish for him as I remove my shirt, dropping it to the side with my other things. I hear Marcus growl behind me, but I pay no attention to him. I know he has my back.

Stepping forward, I smile when they back up. They know the grave danger they are in if they try to stop me from getting to my mate.

What I never would have expected, however, is for Alpha Nixon's wife to step out of the black SUV behind them. My eyes zero in on her. Of course, Nixon had something to do with this, and looking at Beta Clarke, we now know who the other informant is.

"We have all the evidence we need to prove this was Alpha John's and your doing, Alpha Valen. It would be best if you came with us," Deacon says, while Nixon's Luna saunters over with a smug smile on her wrinkling, made-up face.

"And what evidence is that?" I ask, curious about what I will have to prove myself innocent of.

"For one, the facility being in yours and John's name," Deacon answers.

"What facility?"

"The one hidden in the mining mountains. We have all the evidence needed to prove our case. Both your signature and John's are on it. Also, the amount of incriminating evidence of patient zero, of course—the patient used to create the poison and the vaccine; to use his own wife for his sick misdoings is purely vile. And you helped them all to drive my husband from the city. I won't let my husband take the fall for this," she growls.

"And where did this supposed evidence come from? You? Nixon himself?" I ask her, knowing it did. The other council members look around at each other, while Deacon looks between the elders and me. "Now, I am going to give you one last chance, Deacon, to correct this mistake. If not, you will find out why they call me the Blood Alpha," I tell him.

If they want a fight, they will get one, because no one is stopping me from getting to my mate.

"So, I suggest you choose wisely, because your shitty wolfsbane bullets won't stop me. And if I have to run through all of you to get to my mate, so be it," I tell them, feeling the ripple of the shift as it hovers under the surface, ready to take over.  
ChapterForty-Four

Valen

Deacon shuffles uncomfortably on the spot, looking at Clarke while the other council members glance at Deacon, making me wonder if Deacon is only doing this as a favor to his brother, whom we are now aware is a traitor.

"We found evidence at John's packhouse," Deacon declares and I laugh because it even sounds ridiculous.

“Before or after the forsaken attack? Or during?” I ask Deacon, but he says nothing. I see Clarke step forward and John growls and snarls from where he’s pinned when we hear the sound of screeching tires across the intersection and a car comes to an abrupt halt. Glancing over, I see Slasher pack's Alpha climb out of the car.

Alpha Daxon and I are on good terms, however, he doesn't have the best relationship with my father, seeing as, reportedly, my father killed his son Preston. Preston himself hadn't had a stellar relationship with his own father, who had threatened to remove his title for misdoings and the negative attention he constantly got from the media. Alpha Daxon is a good Alpha, a little old school like my father, but good. It makes me wonder why he’s come here. Is he helping Nixon too?

“Fucking bastard, you found nothing! Your men turned the place upside down, and nothing. I know this is for Amber, Clarke, you prick!” John growls.

Clarke nods to the main officer pinning him before one of the other officers smashes his baton across the back of John’s head. I press my lips in a line, and one of the older council members glares at Clarke, who gave the order.

Turning my attention back to Deacon, I fight back a growl. “I don't remember you fighting on the front lines, Deacon. So, while patient 'zero', or Luna Claire, was dying protecting the city, were you planting evidence? Or was it your brother?” I ask him, wondering what Daxon is doing here, as I feel his aura getting closer.

“And where was Nixon?” I ask his Luna, turning my attention to her.

“Fleeing—that is where the scum was. Does it upset you that he left you behind with his psychotic son?” Alpha Daxon says, coming up behind me.

“Dax,” I acknowledge as he comes to stand by me.

“I lost over a hundred of my men in that forsaken attack, and not once did I see one of Nixon's men step out to protect our city. In fact, half of them were fucking forsaken, so how can you believe this bullshit? Now let John up,” Alpha Daxon growls.

“We have evidence that this was all thought out and Nixon was framed,” one of the older council members says, stepping forward with documents, and Alpha Daxon growls again.

“Go. I will handle this,” Alpha Daxon nods to me. “Give Everly my best,” he adds, making me wonder if that’s why he’s here. Because of her?

Yet when I start to move toward my car, a gun is lifted at me. I growl furiously, only to feel Deacon's daring hand grip my shoulder. My reaction is instantaneous as I reach back, gripping his shoulder and letting my claws hook into the thick band of muscle along his shoulder and neck before flipping him over my shoulder and onto the hood of my car

The bang of his body as the air expels from his lungs on impact is audible as I remove my claws and grip his forearm, giving it a quick twist and popping his shoulder out. That’s when I feel the first dart hit between my shoulder blades. Reaching back, I yank it out—the toxin burns, but it will take a lot more than one to drop me.

Big mistake.

Daxon howls with laughter. “Oh, you foolish pup,” he chuckles at the young officer. I spin so quickly that the officer only has time to gasp—he had come up behind me. Instantly gripping the barrel of his dart gun, I slam it into his face and disarm him. He clutches his face and bleeding nose and I turn the gun on him, letting off three shots in his chest. He staggers back, and the rest of the officers lift their weapons, pointing them at us.

“Uh uh, I would advise you, doing that isn't a wise decision,” Alpha Daxon states. The shift pushes harder to take over while Alpha Daxon just leans casually against the hood of my car with his arms folded. Deacon groans behind me and scrambles off my hood, only for Alpha Daxon to shove him away.

“Unless you want to take on an entire city, I suggest you step down and let this man get to his mate,” Alpha Daxon says.

Somewhat confused, I look at him. He nods over his shoulder, and I see hundreds of people stepping out from between the buildings and cutting across the roads.



"It appears your council holds no power here; not against my people," I tell the council members when I see Everly's rogues coming to our aid along with Slasher pack. The council looks around nervously at all the enraged faces coming toward them.

"Seems you've found yourself in a predicament. I suggest you leave my city. They will fight for my Luna," I tell the council, knowing full well they are here for her.

"And Alpha," Alpha Daxon says behind me before baring his neck to me. I press my lips together and give him a nod, glad for once that our city will stand and fight together as one, all because of the woman who would fight for them.

"You earned that position when you stood beside me to fight for my people, our people, and my pack will stand with you now," Alpha Daxon says. I smirk, turning back to the council, who glance around nervously when they find themselves completely surrounded.

"Let him go," Deacon gasps, clutching his arm.

"What are you doing? We—" Clarke goes to say, but one growl from his brother shuts him up and Deacon nods to Alpha Daxon, just as John is let up. I wave for him to come to me, but he shakes his head.

"I have somewhere else I'm needed. Take care of my daughter until I return," he says, confusing me, but I shake my head. I don't have time to ask what's going on. I need to get to my mate, whose panic is bleeding into me through the bond. However, the roads are blocked with cars, which is taking time, so I shift. I trust Alpha Daxon will handle things. My bones realign and snap, then I'm off in the direction of the hospital. People scatter, getting out of my way.

'Marcus?' I mind-link.

'Yep, I got the school pickup. Get to your mate,' he says, and I cut the link, my paws scraping concrete as I cut up alleyways and tear through my territory. The sight of the huge hospital building coming into sight makes me run harder, knowing she's just there.

'Where are you?' I ask her, feeling her worry.

‘They rushed me in for a c-section. Where are you, Valen? You aren't here,’ she cries through the mind-link as I smash through the front doors. The people in the foyer shriek and scramble away, and one of my nurses points down the corridor.

“Second floor, Alpha,” she says, and I tear off for the stairs. Buzzers go off in the distance and I find the doors opening by security while people flurry everywhere as I get to the floor.

My heart pounds in my chest as I shift back, racing down the hall to find the surgical ward, following the directions of my pack as they point out which way to go. Just as I come to a set of double doors, a nurse grips my arm and tugs me to a small room beside them before I can shove through to find Everly. It’s a washroom. I wash my hands and arms while the nurse thrusts a hair net down over my head before handing me a mask.

There isn't much more than that I can do before she shoves a gown at me. I quickly yank it on and rush to the room next door to find Everly lying on a table while nurses pull up a tent-looking thing, preventing us from seeing as they cut into her. I scoot around behind them to my terrified mate with her eyes closed, muttering to herself.

An anesthesiologist stands by her head to monitor her, and they step aside for me while a nurse sets a chair by her head for me. I nod to the nurse and they move off somewhere as I sit down. Focusing on Everly, I place my hands on the side of her face and lean down, pulling my mask from my face briefly to kiss her forehead.

“I don't break my promises,” I whisper to her as her eyes fly open and her lips quiver.

“You made it,” she breathes while staring up at me.

“Yes, I made it. Always for you,” I tell her. Doc and the nurses hurry around while also explaining what they’re doing, yet all my attention is on Everly, trusting they know what they’re doing. She is my focus.

“Valarian?” Everly asks.

“Marcus will get him for us,” I assure her.

“And my father?”

“Will be here when he can,” I tell her while brushing my thumbs down the sides of her face.

“Everly, you may feel some pressure, but you shouldn't feel any pain,” Doc tells her, and I suck in a breath. Doc explains that the steroids Everly was put on should have helped the baby's lungs develop, and she's past thirty-three weeks, so the fact she carried them this long is good.

We all hold our breath when he declares the first baby is out and briefly holds her above the curtain so quickly I miss it. Everly stares wide-eyed in panic when they rush off with the baby.

“Why wasn't our first one crying?” Everly worries when Doc declares baby two is out and she instantly starts screaming. Moments later, the first one gives a screech and I let out a breath, all panic leaving along with the breath I hadn't realized I was holding.

“Baby just needed some suctioning to clear the airways,” a nurse tells us.

Doc talks through what he's doing as he searches for baby number three, and before we know it, she's out, too. At the same time, the nurse comes to place babies one and two in my arms. A moment later, we hear baby three's mighty scream as it fills the room.

I am amazed and awestruck at the two little bundles in my arms, unable to tear my gaze from the little creatures we created. The nurse brings baby three over, bundled up in a hospital blanket and Everly coos as she tries to see. I lean down so she can see better and the nurse places baby three on her chest for a few moments.

All Everly's panic slips away the moment she does, and the bond blooms with love and tenderness. Never in my life have I ever felt so complete. After the nurse checks Everly and they're stitching her up, the nurse awkwardly places baby three in my arms, and I stare down at our three perfect little girls. I can't wait for Valarian to meet his little sisters.

ChapterForty-Five

Macey

I awake to fingertips brushing up and down my arm. The chill in the air makes me inhale deeply as tingles spread up my skin where his fingertips caress. I pretend to remain asleep when the vibration of a phone ringing beside my head buzzes and vibrates against the wooden table it's sitting on.

My mate growls, and where I'm lying dips, so I know I'm on a bed—the jostling movement as he climbs off reinforces that. Eyes fluttering open, I squint, remembering to remain calm and keep my heart rate down as I try to take in my surroundings.

Brown wall paneling covers the walls and is the first thing I notice in the dimly lit room. The old-fashioned lamp with a floral shade makes very little light in the room, and the smell of burning wood reaches my nose—it smells somewhat damp, making the scent a little too strong, reminding me of pine needles. The crackling sound reaches my ears at the same time his voice does.

“What is it, Father?” Carter asks. At least I know who he's on the phone with.

“Not my problem. I did my part. I am done now. Find your own way into the city to enact your revenge. I want no part of it anymore,” he growls into the phone.

“I have better things to entertain myself with, but I left half the money in the mining tunnels for you. It should tide you over for a while.”

Momentary silence has me lifting my head, which is a mistake on my behalf.

In my drowsy state, he sounded further away. Turns out, he's only a couple of feet away, and as I turn, I catch his eye. Carter smirks at me, turning away, and I glance around to find I'm in some small cabin.

“Contact Clarke; he may help you,” Carter tells his father before I hear yelling through the handset. My eyes flick to Carter to see him pull the phone from his ear and glare at it before he lets out a growl.

“Well, I told you he was a moron. If he has gotten himself locked up, what do you expect me to do about it? Figure it out. This is no longer my problem,” he snaps back before hanging up.

I swallow when I watch him set his phone down and I quickly wiggle up on the bed, only to find I have nothing on but my bra and panties. I tug the itchy, brown

blanket higher, and Carter purrs before stepping closer and crawling onto the bed.

I watch him. He's a predator, and I refuse to be his prey. Bond or not, he's not my Alpha, and I will never be his Luna.

"Did you rest well, Love?" he asks and I nod, watching him as he moves closer before I turn my head, looking out the window. I'm met with total darkness, my own face reflecting at me in the window. The place, as far as I can tell, is somewhere deep in the woods. I can hear owls and night creatures outside.

"Where are we?" I ask, turning to look at Carter again.

"In the woods," he purrs, and I lift my knees, drawing the blanket closer.

"Yes, but where?" I ask him.

"My mother's place. She built it with the forsaken," he says.

"She built this place?"

"Yes, they aren't all crazed. Some still hold some sense. Though she was too far gone by the time I found her," Carter tells me.

"The rest of the forsaken?" I ask.

"Dead. I killed them, and those that I didn't kill, your rogues did in the attack. It is perfectly safe out here," he tells me. I continued to watch him carefully, not liking the sparkle of excitement in his eyes.

"Safe enough to bring Taylor here when I go back for her," he says, and I have to fight back a snarl. "I know it isn't what you expected, but it is only temporary until the heat dies down, and then we will flee the country," he tells me, gripping the blanket and tugging it down.

"I need to use the bathroom," I tell him abruptly.

"There is an outhouse," he says, and I quickly get out of bed. The floorboards creak under my feet, and he watches me.

I try to take in my surroundings, yet when I move off the bed, the clang of chains makes me notice the thing around my ankle.

“Just precautionary, my love. I wasn't sure how you would wake,” he tells me as I stare down at the chain from my leg to the bed.

He climbs off the bed before pulling a key from his pocket and bending down, undoing the chain attached to the foot of the bed. How did I not notice that before? Now that I've seen it, the weight of it is all I can feel.

Carter grips the chain before pointing at the door. I look at it as he steps behind me

“I'll take you,” he whispers.

“That is unnecessary,” I tell him.

“The feeling through the bond tells me it is,” he whispers before giving me a nudge, and I clench my teeth but move toward the door.

“It is an adjustment; one you will get used to. One thing about rogues is we adapt,” he says as I grip the door. Ain't that the truth, but I won't be getting accustomed to this place.

Stepping outside, I'm smashed by the harsh coldness of the wind. I rub my arms before spotting the small outhouse. I didn't really need to use the bathroom, or whatever the heck that ice age contraption is, but the moment the wind touches me, I suddenly need to pee.

The steps creak as I step off the tiny porch, and I can see nothing but darkness and trees, showing how utterly alone I truly am out here. The grass is wet from dew; I wonder what time it is. Kalen will come for me. I know he won't abandon me out here, or he'll alert Everly and Valen. They'll be wondering where I am by now. They have to be.

“Ava?” I ask.

“I left her at the train station. I haven't heard any reports on what happened to her. My plans didn't go as expected in the city and my men were arrested,” Carter tells me with a growl as I make my way to the outhouse.

The door creaks as I open it and I frown. I would rather piss in the woods or ruin my panties; it seems more hygienic than this shit box—quite literally a box or trough to shit in.

“Door stays open,” Carter says, gripping the swinging door before it can shut.

“Where exactly do you expect me to go when you’re holding the chain you shackled me with?” I ask, trying to keep the anger from my tone. He huffs and clicks his tongue.

“Good point,” he says, letting the door swing closed. I’m plunged into darkness.

I roll my eyes before letting out a breath and pushing the door open again; I sure as shit don't want to fall into the damn thing, and there’s no light in here.

Carter gives me a crooked smile.

“There’s no light,” I tell him, and he holds the door open.

“Yeah, I never rigged the solar panels on that thing. I hardly stayed out here long enough to warrant using it,” he tells me as I notice the solar panels on the cabin. We appear to be on some huge mountain, and the wind up here whistles and howls between the trees.

“Don't fall in. The only bath you'll find here is the stream,” he laughs, and I look down at the makeshift toilet.

“Can you at least turn away?” I ask him, and he does, keeping one hand on the door, the chain in the other.

I squat over the damn thing and quickly pee, not wanting to touch it in case my ass develops ringworm or I get Tetanus.

“Are you done?” he asks when I pull my panties up. “Or do you want to suss out the woods a little, so you know you can't escape?”

“I'll take your word for it,” I tell him as I step out, letting the door swing shut.

I follow him back to the cabin, wondering how far out of the city we are; I can’t even see any lights, and I briefly wonder if Kalen and John's tracker I swallowed has a maximum distance.

Stepping inside the cabin, the air is a little warmer thanks to the fireplace. Carter moves toward the bed and locks the chain around the foot of it again. I sit on the edge, watching as he undresses, removing his shirt and moving toward the small kitchenette in only his jeans.

“Are you hungry?” he asks and I nod, keeping an eye on him while looking around the small space. A round table sits off to the side with some stumps for chairs.

A bearskin rug is sprawled on the floor beside the fireplace, and above it is a set of huge antlers. It reminds me a little of a hunter's cabin. There are even a few taxidermy pieces. One is an owl.

“You hunt?” I ask him, wondering if there are any guns kept here. He shrugs, not bothering to answer as he grabs a steel camping kettle and fills it with bottled water from a box on the floor, then sets it on a hook inside the fireplace.

“How did we get here? I didn't see your car or the road,” I ask him.

“I carried you. I had this place set up already. I was never staying in the city,” he tells me.

“So you didn't want to take over the city?” I ask him.

“No, that was my father's plan. I have no future there, and he won't forgive me for killing my sister. We tolerate each other, nothing more and nothing less,” he states.

“You killed her?” I ask, a little shocked.

“I put her out of her misery. That is no life for anyone—lying in a bed covered in bedsores, being pumped full of drugs with a tube breathing for you is cruelty, not a life. My father would have let her rot like that, so yes, I killed her,” he says while stoking the fire. “I have packets of noodles; not much fresh stuff, mostly canned food. It isn't much, but I will get more supplies tomorrow, or I can go hunt something if you like?” he says. I shake my head.

“No, noodles are fine,” I tell him. When he hands me the water bottle, I start to gulp the liquid down rather thirstily, but when I crane my neck back, I hiss and choke a little at the stinging sensation from his mark on my neck.

I lift my hand to it before he's suddenly in front of me and his hand is sweeping mine away as he grips my chin, turning my head away to examine it. I flinch at his fast movement, not expecting it.



"It's just my venom. It will probably be a little tender," he says, dipping his head before I feel his breath sweep over my skin, making it tingle. His tongue runs across it, making my entire body shudder as the bond flares to life.

He chuckles, pulling back. "I was afraid the bond wouldn't have the same effects, but I am glad it does."

"What do you mean?" I ask. My neck is now burning fiercely, developing its own pulsing throb.

"You didn't hear the rumors?" he asks, moving back to the fire; he grabs a kitchen towel and pulls the camp kettle from the fire.

"I was bitten years ago by my mother and attacked by the other forsaken, nearly killing me. My father spent years getting me treatment to lessen the effects. It prevented me from becoming crazed like the others, but I still developed the venom glands. I wasn't sure if marking you would kill you, though I am glad to see the marking gives you some form of immunity," Carter tells me.

What will that mean when we kill him? Assuming Kalen and John can actually find me out here.

"How far are we from the city?" I ask, changing the subject.

"Four hours, roughly," Carter tells me, pouring the hot water into a saucepan and dropping the dried noodles in it. I try not to let that bother me. Information is vital, and right now, I need to bide my time. I just hope the tracker can lead them to me.

ChapterForty-Six  
Zoe

I've been waiting with Marcus at Everly's place for hours since Marcus brought me here after getting the kids from school, yet Macey still hasn't returned home, and I'm beginning to worry. She hates leaving me alone and has always stuck to her times. One thing about Macey is she's never tardy, and her not being here when she said she would only adds to my anxiety.

Marcus pecks my temple as he passes me where I'm cutting up vegetables. We're making the kids dinner when Taylor came over, looking out of place without her mother; I feel out of place without her or Everly here.

“Can you try Mom again?” she asks, pulling a stool from the counter and climbing up on it. I glance at Marcus, who chews his lip, before I smile and nod to her.

“Of course, sweetie,” I tell her, about to retrieve my phone when Marcus slides his to me.

‘Have you notified Valen?’ I mind-link him, and I see him nod out of the corner of my eyes as I dial her number.

‘Any word from Kalen?’ I ask him via the mind-link, making sure Taylor doesn't overhear our conversation. He shakes his head.

The worry on Taylor's face tells me she knows something is amiss. Her mother rarely leaves her unless she's with us, but she had said nothing of the sort to Taylor or any of us that she would be running late. Her phone—which I know she would have had on full charge—goes straight to voicemail.

Valen said his father is unreachable too, and none of us have heard from John either. All we get is radio silence when we try their pack tethers, making me believe they can't be in the city or they would be able to be reached via mind-link.

“She might have gotten caught up with work,” I tell Taylor, trying to reassure her. Taylor nods sadly before going off back to Valarian and Casey, who are drawing happily at the table and discussing potential baby names. Everly and Valen are still in the hospital, and I know Valen called earlier to say he was going to collect Valarian after dinner to bring him to meet his sisters and mother.

Opening the mind link, I tug on Valen's tether and he opens it straight away. ‘How is Eve?’ I ask him.

‘Good. She's trying to breastfeed. One baby has a tongue-tie so she's having trouble nursing,’ he tells me.

‘Any news from your father?’ I ask him.

‘No, and I can't reach John either, but he seems close. I can feel his tether—it came back about 20 minutes ago. Something is going on.’

‘Everly can't contact him or Macey?’

‘I'm not adding extra stress to her by asking her. I know if she finds out, she'll go looking for Macey, and Doc said she can't shift for at least a week.’

‘Okay, well—’ My words cut off when I hear Valarian shriek.

“Pop, Pop!” he calls, rushing toward the hall when I get a whiff of John’s scent.

‘Hang on. John is here. I’ll speak to you in a second,’ I tell Valen.

‘Thank the Goddess, ask him where my father is,’ Valen says quickly.

‘Yep, will do,’ I tell him before cutting the link. I move around the counter toward the hall when Valarian suddenly backs up. His head turns to me and a frightened expression moves across his face, and I freeze in my tracks when I see John carrying Ava through the doors.

“Ava?” I gasp, rushing over to help him, throwing toys and the kids’ blankets from the couch so he can set her down while Marcus races over. I’m too shocked to properly get my bearings, yet the relief I feel upon seeing her nearly makes me sob as John sets her down before looking at us.

Marcus runs off again, returning with a bottle of water and handing it to Ava.

“My old pack doctor is on his way to check her over. Zoe, you need to watch Ava for me,” John says before turning to Marcus. “And you are coming with me.”

I look up at him from where I’m crouched beside Ava, helping her hold the bottle to her lips when John turns his attention to Marcus. Marcus stares at him and I see his eyes glaze over, obviously speaking to John through the mind-link. Trusting Marcus to keep me in the loop, I ignore them; right now, Ava needs me and I have to calm the kids down.

“Auntie Ava?” Valarian whispers and crushes her in a hug.

“I’m alright, I got lost,” she tells him, not realizing the kids knew or had some understanding of what had been going on. When Valarian lets her go, her hand weakly grips my arms and tears well in her eyes before flicking to the kids, who stand nearby, horrified; Valarian is crying and I see John rub his back and give him a kiss on the head.

“You’re okay,” she chokes out at me.

“I’m alive,” I tell her. I’m far from okay, but I will be one day. I have my village, and our village is family.

“Go get Auntie Ava a pillow and some blankets,” John tells Valarian, who runs off to get them. Ava smiles sadly when I feel the mind-link open up.

‘What's going on?’ I ask Marcus.

‘I need to help John and Kalen,’ he says, and I watch as he and John leave the room and head up the hall.

‘Where are you going?’ I ask him.

‘To find Macey,’ Marcus tells me, and I gasp, looking at Taylor over my shoulder.

‘What do you mean?’ I ask him, but he doesn’t reply. I stand up when he comes back out pulling on a jacket and his boots.

‘Where is Macey, Marcus?’ I growl through the mind-link, and he lifts his head, looking at me. I start to open my mouth and demand he tell me when Marcus points to Taylor behind me and I close my mouth, trying not to panic and scare her daughter.

“Marcus?” I ask him.

Marcus doesn't answer right away; the silence makes the skin on the back of my neck prickle, and my entire body breaks out in goosebumps as every fiber of my being tells me something is seriously wrong.

‘Carter has her,’ Marcus tells me, and I feel my legs wobble as I try to make sense of his words. Tears prick my eyes and he comes over and kisses my cheek.

Why would Carter have her?

“I’ll bring her home,” he whispers, and I nod my head. John comes out in a change of clothes and stops in the hall.

“Marcus?” he calls.

“Yep,” Marcus says before Casey rushes over to him with her arms up; he bends down, scooping her up.

“Where are you going, Dad? Can I come?” she asks.

“Not this time. I’ll be back soon,” he says, pecking her cheek, and setting her down before following John out. All I can do is stare in shock, trying to figure out

what is going on and how everything got so out of hand. Casey comes over and climbs in my lap.

"Where's he going, Mom?"

"To work, he'll be back soon," Ava tells her while worry gnaws at me. Chapter Forty-Seven

John

"Where are we going?" Marcus asks me, and I glance over at him as I pull out of the garage and onto the street. We're going to meet Kalen outside the city.

"To meet up with Kalen," I tell him.

"I just don't get why Carter would take Macey. We should be telling Valen. He'll find out, and he won't be happy we kept this from him," Marcus tells me, and I chew the inside of my lip.

Everly has enough on her plate, and I don't want to ruin what should be a joyous moment for her and Valen with this news. Kalen believes the same thing and doesn't want to taint the day even more for them at this time. We can handle this, assuming Kalen is able to pick up her location. That's the concerning part. We lost her, and her phone was switched off, so we can't even track it with the cell towers.

"John, either you tell me what's going on, or I'm contacting Valen," Marcus snarls at me, and I turn the radio down as we leave the city limits.

"Carter is Macey's mate. She bargained herself to get Ava back. We were supposed to ambush him, but then the council interfered, as you know, and ruined our plans. We thought we had it under control," I tell him.

"Wait, what? And you kept this from us? FROM THE PACK?" he yells, and I glare out the windscreen.

"Yes, because Macey asked us to! Think about it, Marcus. Think about what I just said," I snap back at him. Marcus falls quiet before he gasps, my words finally sinking in.

"Everly and Zoe wouldn't have allowed us to kill him," he murmurs, looking at me, and I nod. Macey knows that, and she's right.

“Did Macey ask you to keep this from them?” Marcus asks, and I nod again.

“Fuck! So what now?” he asks with a growl.

“We find Macey and Carter and—”

“You kill him, and it will kill Macey! We have to figure out something else. Everly will never forgive either of you for this,” Marcus says, sitting back in his chair and clutching his hair.

“And you will keep it to yourself. Valen will tell Everly, and—”

Marcus growls at me. “And he should!” he snaps, and I glare at him before pressing my lips in a line.

“I asked for your help, not your judgment! Either keep quiet, or I will leave you on the side of the road,” I tell him. Marcus curses and shakes his head.

“So, where are we headed?”

“To meet Kalen. We put a tracker on Macey, but we lost the signal. Kalen said you're good with tech. We need you to up the frequency, expand it,” I tell him, pulling into a gas station just outside the city limits. I jump out, popping the cap and filling the car up.

“What sort of tracker is it?” Marcus asks, climbing out of the car before I see his eyes glaze over. I keep filling the car up, knowing he's being mind-linked. He sighs and shakes his head.

“Zoe?” I ask him, and he nods, scratching the back of his neck and glancing around.

“Yeah, she wants to know what's going on,” he tells me.

“What did you tell her?”

“The same thing; that I'm helping you, that we're looking for Carter. But she's suspicious. For one, she knows Macey would never leave Taylor, and two, she wouldn't not answer her calls. She also doesn't understand why Carter would take her,” Marcus says when the pump clicks, telling me the tank is full.

“And you won't tell her. She hasn't contacted Valen or Everly?” I ask him, and he growls, not happy about lying to his mate.

“No, she said she would wait until I know what’s going on,” Marcus tells me, and I let out a breath of relief. The last thing we need is Everly out here looking for Macey after having a C-Section.

“Explains why she had us sign all those documents. I can't believe this. We need to find her! I come back without her, Zoe will fucking kill me.”

“We will. And Zoe won't. Besides, you're her mate,” I tell him, and he laughs.

“Idiot. There’s a reason Macey didn't tell them. She knew what their reaction would be and that Zoe and Everly wouldn't allow it. She knew Zoe would sacrifice her own mental health by allowing him to live so Macey could. Those girls are a package deal, John. Their bond outweighs any mate bond,” Marcus tells me, and I nod.

I swallow as I go in to pay for the fuel. He’s right; I can't return home to my daughters without Macy. I owe them both this much.

I owe my Claire to fix what I broke, owe her for destroying our family—and her; something I will live with for the rest of my life—but I will not live with knowing I destroyed Everly more.

Macey isn't just a rogue friend. She’s as much a sister to my daughter as Ava is. Therefore, she’s mine, too. And I won't make the same mistakes of the past. I protect what's mine.

As I head back to the car, the weight of the situation sits heavily on me. We can't fail. I have to bring her home to her daughter—to mine.

Starting my car again, I pull onto the old highway heading for the defunct power station where we’re meeting up with Kalen.

“If we can't pick up her location by the end of the weekend, we tell Valen. Just give them the weekend. They don't need this stress right now.”

“No, you have twenty-four hours, or I’m going to Valen with this myself. I can hold Zoe off for a day or so, but after that, she’ll go to Everly,” Marcus says, and I suck in a breath before nodding. Kalen will be angry, but it’s looking like we have no choice. We need to find Macey and bring her home.

Macey didn't have to fight for me and save me in the forsaken attack, yet she did. I owe her my life, and I will lay it down for her if needed, just like I would give my last breath if it meant bringing my Claire back. Now we just need to find her.

ChapterForty-Eight

Macey

The following morning, I wake to a pinch in my neck. I hardly slept all night as I fought the urge, yet my attempts to stay awake were unsuccessful; exhaustion eventually took me.

"Shh, my love, it is just a sedative," Carter murmurs as he pulls the syringe from my neck. My fingertips touch the spot. He handcuffed me to him during the night. I had tried to shift out of my restraints, yet he pounced on me before I even made it a step from the bed, which earned me the handcuffs for my efforts. He had also drugged me the moment he wrestled me back into the restraints. I cursed myself all night. I should have held out longer, earned his trust. All night I had stared at the ceiling, completely paralyzed. Panic courses through me as he stabs me again.

"It's just a precaution. This won't paralyze you completely, only stop you from shifting mostly and is more of a muscle relaxant. My father's invention; shitty man, but a smart one," he says.

There's so much I could say about his father's intelligence, or lack thereof, yet, I hold my tongue.

Carter waits for the drug to start taking effect, watching me as he gets changed. My limbs become heavy, though I still have feeling in them. He sets a bucket by the bed and my brows furrow.

"In case you need to use the bathroom. It should start to wear off just before I get back," he says. I growl at him, disgusted that he would even think I would use it. If that fucker thinks I'm using that, he is sorely mistaken. I would rather shit my pants and watch him clean me with no working water here; payback for keeping me locked up like a dog.

"I know it isn't ideal, but it's just in case. I won't be long."



My tongue feels thick in my mouth, so I smile at him, cursing him to the Goddess. He leans over the bed as if he sees nothing wrong with the entire scenario and pecks my lips.

I hate how the bond reacts to his affections. The Goddess really fucked up when she created us. No matter how vile and despicable our mates are, our bonds flourish and get excited from any form of attention. All I know is when I meet her in the afterlife, I have a few choice words for her about this entire mate bond bullshit.

One thing I've always envied the humans; they seriously have no idea how lucky they are to be able to choose their own destiny and who they allow in it. But no! We shun our fated mate and are punished with death, unless you're an Alpha and pack tethered. What a crock of shit that is. You really fucked that up, Moon Goddess! Shouldn't the Goddess be a feminist? She is a woman, after all!

"I won't be long. There's a town about an hour away, so try to rest, because tonight we complete the mate bond," he tells me, brushing his knuckles down my cheek. I turn my head away from him and he growls.

"We will complete the mate bond, Macey. I would prefer if you willingly accept that, but if not, I will make you submit," he says, and I turn back to look at him. He growls at me, forcing his aura out to show he is perfectly capable of what he threatened.

"Choose wisely, Macey. Sometimes it is better to give in," he says before walking out.

Yep, well, he just solidified it now. If I can't find a way out of these restraints, I am shitting myself. Let's see how willing he is then!

Whatever he gave me works pretty quickly. I find even lifting my head difficult, yet I can move a little, so that's something. After several tries, I manage to roll off the bed and hit the floor with a hard thump. I groan; the floor is harder than it looks, or maybe it's because I feel like dead weight. Once on the ground, I try to sit up, managing to prop myself up against the bedside table. Man, I feel so heavy, and my body tingles like it has pins and needles.

I glance around the room for the hundredth time, yet I know it's pointless. There's nothing here that would break the thick chain. And then what? Even if I could break the damn thing, I can't walk. I could try to roll my way out of here, or army crawl? I would be lucky to make it off the porch.

I stare at the plastic bucket before growling and smacking it with my hand and it skids across the floor by the fire. That took far too much effort for such a small movement.

Minutes pass as I look around the room before I finally give up and rest my head back on the bedside table, the angle making me stare off at the ceiling and fireplace. My mind wanders to Taylor.

What's she doing? What did she have for breakfast? Was it Everly or Zoe who tucked her in last night and kissed her forehead? Gosh I miss her.

Time slips by as I stare at the roof.

My eyes move to the huge antlers above the fireplace. I wonder what they're from and if the poor creature suffered?

I'm running out of time. He'll be back soon; I'm no closer to escaping, and I have no idea if Kalen and John are looking for me. The girls will be questioning my absence. They know I would never leave Taylor.

For some reason, my eyes keep going back to those hideous antlers.

I just need to hold out a little longer, I think to myself. Carter's words come back to me about having to mate with him and my entire body shudders with revulsion. A tear slips down my cheek. I want to go home—back to my daughter and back to my idiot boyfriend who thinks I don't want him because he has a bad leg. Fool of a man; what use is his leg to me? I don't care for his leg! Only his damn heart!

Once again, my attention is drawn to those antlers. But will they work?

I blink, my senses coming to me after my little pity party. How much time did I waste being a cry baby? How much longer do I have left? I'm not sure, but I have to try. So, with every bit of strength I have, I pull myself to my feet. My legs are

feeling a little better, though the pins-and-needles sensation makes each step agony, and my muscles keep locking up, not wanting to cooperate.

I stagger to the fireplace, gripping the mantle to hold myself up. Reaching one arm up, I tug on the antlers, trying to unhook the damn things from the wall. I finally manage it, but I'm not expecting the weight, and it crashes to the ground with a loud bang. I collapse along with it; the exertion was far too much. Yet now I have it down, how will I get it back up there? I'm getting more movement in my limbs, but nowhere near fast enough.

Shaking my head, I decide to figure that out later. For now, I need to find a way to break a piece off of this thing; this place has no knives, not even a damn spoon—it was terrible eating noodles with my fingers last night! Gritting my teeth, I use the fireplace to help stand before grabbing one side of the antlers and stomping on the end over and over, trying to crack one of the spikes off.

What feels like forever later, I manage to break off a chunk about the length from my elbow to wrist. As long as he doesn't look too hard at it, he won't notice I broke a piece off. I glance up at the tiny hook with a sigh. Now to get it back up there.

Getting it back on is another mission that leaves me staggering back to the bed covered in sweat. When I've caught my breath, I stare at the piece I broke off. It's pretty blunt, so I could definitely brandish it as a weapon, but only in this state; I would never get enough force behind it while sedated. At least it's something, and something is better than nothing. I tuck it down between the mattress and the headboard just in time, because it's roughly ten minutes later that I hear noise from outside. I hold my breath as the door creaks open and Carter steps in with a backpack over one shoulder. He toes off his shoes and leaves them at the door.

"Did you rest?" he asks as he walks through the cabin to the small kitchen. He sets some stuff down before rummaging through the bags.

"I need to use the luxury bathroom we have here," I tell him, and he glances over his shoulder at me.

"I see you are still in a mood," he states, and I look away.

“How about we go to the stream where you can bathe before the sun goes down? I bought toiletries,” he says.

“Sounds splendid,” I drawl.

“Tone, Macey or I will wash your mouth out with soap, so don’t tempt me. I am being nice. I don’t have to be,” he growls, and I swallow nervously. He’s right. I have to keep the bitch from my tone. It will do me no favors here. Chapter Forty-Nine

Macey

“I’m sorry,” I tell him, yet those words taste like poison on my tongue. He smirks before turning back to rummage through the backpack. He pulls out a silky, slip dress and tosses it at me; it lands on the bed. I grab it and hold it up. Hardly practical, but better than a bra and underwear.

“Don’t suppose you bought underwear?” I ask him.

“You don’t need them,” he says, and I chew my lip. I suddenly wish I had a period. I bet he would change his tune then.

Carter comes over to me and passes me a granola bar. I try to unwrap it, however, my fingers are not cooperating properly. I have a good chunk of my mobility left, though I’m a little worried about trekking in the woods like this.

Carter takes it from me and opens it, peeling back the wrapper before handing it back to me.

“You should have all your feeling back soon,” he tells me as he kneels next to the bed. He pulls my legs to the edge, rubbing the sides of them before gripping my foot. After taking the key from around his neck, he undoes the padlock before rubbing my ankle as I watch.

If only he wasn’t a psycho, I could get used to the tingles from the mate bond—the way my heart races when he’s close, his intoxicating scent. If only he wasn’t responsible for destroying so many lives, I could have come to love him. The bond yearns for him, calling out for him despite my mind knowing I can’t keep him. That doesn’t stop me wishing things were different, so I could have my mate.

“Can you wiggle your toes?” he asks, and I try. They move to his satisfaction, and he smiles before leaning down and kissing the top of my foot.

“I can carry you. It isn’t far,” he tells me, placing my foot down before walking over and grabbing the backpack. After placing two towels and the bag of toiletries in it, he tosses it over his shoulder, then scoops me up and heads for the door.

Carter is right, it isn’t far. The moment he sets me down, though, he rummages through the bag and produces the handcuffs. I didn't see him slip them in the bag.

I growl and fold my arms.

“Macey!” he snaps, and I glare daggers at him. Carter sighs and glances around at the river that flows slowly. “Macey, give me your hand.”

“I won’t run; you would catch me if I did,” I tell him, and he seems to think for a second. I lean forward and grab the bag at his feet, rummage through it, and pull out a bar of soap and some shampoo. Carter sighs loudly above me before crouching down next to the bag.

“You hold my hand then, and I won’t cuff you,” he says. “Deal?”

At least I won’t be handcuffed. I nod my head. Carter starts removing his clothes and I can’t help but admire his toned body, at least until he removes his pants and I know he plans on using that thing between his legs on me, which makes me look away. I don’t remove my bra and underwear.

He offers me his hand and leads me to the river before walking into the water. I follow and he sits down. The water isn’t that deep, and even sitting, it only comes up to his chest. I sit next to him, my hand still in his when he pulls me into his lap.

Instead of becoming angry and trying to shove him away, I allow it; hoping to gain a little trust. The last thing I want is to be drugged while he has his way with me. Carter takes the shampoo that was tucked under my arm.

“Since I’m sitting on you, can I at least have my hand back?”

“Will you run?”

I shake my head, and he lets my hand go. I start lathering my skin with the soap when Carter grips my hair and turns me sideways on his lap.

“Dip your head back.” he says softly, and I do, letting him wet it. He turns me back before pouring the shampoo in his hand and setting the bottle between my thighs. He washes my hair and rinses it out while I sit there awkwardly.

“I won’t hurt you, Macey, relax,” he says. Won’t hurt me, but making me submit doesn’t fall into that category?

When he unclasps my bra, however, I growl at him, clutching the front and losing the soap.

“Almost lost it,” Carter says, producing the soap I dropped. He tugs on my arm covering myself. “You have nothing to be shy about,” he says, and I fight the urge to tell him to go fuck himself. He tosses my bra to the grass beside the river before insisting on washing me. Despite me not wanting him to, I have to admit I love the feel of his hands on my body. The bond makes his touch pleasurable, sensual, yet I do my best to ignore it. All too soon, though, we head back to the cabin. Carter lets me walk but keeps a strong grip on my hand, as if he thinks I’ll run. Though I know that would be a stupid thing on my part.

“I have a surprise for you,” he says, tucking me under his arm as we climb the last incline to the cabin. The sun is going down now, and I look out above all the trees—no one would hear me scream, no one would know I’m out here if he killed me, there’s no place to run to, and I’m not even sure where I am.

Carter leads me back inside before chaining me back to the damn bed. I move to the front of the fireplace, trying to warm up. The temperature has significantly dropped, and this thin nightdress is hardly warm. Carter, noticing me shivering, grabs the blanket from the bed and drapes it over me before going to the kitchen. He returns with a block of chocolate. I blink at him; yep, chocolate will really take my mind off being kidnapped, held against my will, marked, and all the other shit he’s done.

“Thanks,” I tell him, trying to muster as much excitement as possible. He chuffs before going to cook dinner. Tonight’s dinner consists of Irish stew in the can, though it tastes better than the noodles and is more filling.

As darkness swallows the place, my nervousness amps up exponentially and I can see he’s getting impatient with my excuses of saying ‘I’m warmer by the fire’ or

the constant 'I need to pee'. He even went so far as not allowing me water after the third time of claiming I needed to pee.

"Macey," Carter says, patting the bed. I open my mouth.

"I know you're stalling, and I know you don't need to pee, or go for a walk, and it isn't cold in here," he pats the bed and I look back at the fire, earning a growl from him. "One," he snarls, and I look at him.

"My patience is running very thin, Macey," he growls, and I feel his aura slip out. The hair on my body stands on end but I'm not completely defenseless against it now he's marked me. Nevertheless, it still hurts like a bitch.

"Two," he growls, forcing the crushing pain down on me. I grit my teeth, trying to feel for my own nonexistent aura in an attempt to push back against him when he pummels me with his aura, making me scream and double over. Sweat coats my skin and I glare at him

"Your choice, Macey. Get here or find out what happens next, but it won't be pleasant. You will submit to me. You have been rogue for too long and are no match for me yet," he snaps, and his eyes flicker to the monster that lives inside him. Carter growls and goes to get up when I raise my hand.

"Fine, fine," I tell him, and he drops his aura while I catch my breath. I finally climb to my feet and make my way over to the bed. The entire time, he watches me as if he's getting ready to strike the moment I make a move wrong. The moment I'm close enough, he reaches over and yanks me onto the bed.

"See, that wasn't so hard," he purrs before kissing me. His kiss is gentle, his touch is gentle, yet my skin crawls and he growls. I can feel his frustration through the bond.

"Why are you being difficult? We are mates, Macey, it is inevitable," he purrs, nipping at my chin and working his way to my mark. He sucks on it and tingles flood my body, and an involuntary moan escapes my lips.

"I know you hate me, but we can get past that," he says.

"I can't have kids," I blurt. I don't know why I blurted it, maybe hoping he would run like every other man, yet all he does is look down at me.

"I'm aware, and I don't care. You are my mate."

"You don't care that I can't give you an heir?" I ask, a little shocked.

"No, and we will have Taylor once my father finds a way back into the city to retrieve her for us," he says, dipping his head down to capture my lips. Yet, his words make me fight harder to block the bond. All I can think is his father was going to take my daughter. Over my dead body, he would touch my daughter.

Carter, not realizing I shut down at his words, continues tasting my skin while all I do is stare. My mind is all over the place until I feel him slide the dress up over my hips, snapping me out of my troubled thoughts. I grip his hands and he growls, but I push on his shoulder and he looks at it. I suck in a breath and push him to roll onto his back, which he does reluctantly, it's clear he doesn't trust me. He leans against the headboard, watching me cautiously.

"What are you playing at?" he asks. I figured he would find my abrupt change of mind suspicious.

"You're right, it is inevitable. But that doesn't mean it has to be unpleasant, right?" I ask before climbing between his legs. His eyes weigh heavily on me as I reach for the waistband of his pants. Chapter Fifty

Valen

Zoe has come to drop Valarian off at the hospital and I smile when I see her car pull into the parking lot. While she parks the car, I make my way over to her before opening the back door. Quickly unclipping his seatbelt, he hops out of the car excitedly, wanting to see his sisters; he brought the plushies he helped pick out with him. I glance in the car and notice Taylor and Casey are both in their car seats too, which is a little odd; it's pretty late at night.

"Where are Marcus and Macey? Also, have you heard from my father?" I ask Zoe, who chews her lip nervously.

She glances in the back at the girls before climbing out of the car and ushering me to the rear of the vehicle. Valarian climbs up onto the hood of the car and waits for me while clutching the blue and green plushies; Zoe glances at him as if to make sure he's out of earshot.



“John returned home with Ava,” Zoe whispers, and I blink at her, dumbfounded because nobody told me Ava was found or handed back. Why had no one told me? This is good news, assuming she’s alright, and Everly will be relieved to know her sister is okay.

“What do you mean? Is she okay?”

“She’s fine. She was a little dehydrated. John had his old pack doctor check her over,” Zoe tells me.

“And no one thought to tell me?” I whisper-yell.

“No, because your father and John didn't want to ruin your first night with your babies. But there’s more. Macey cut a deal with Carter; she swapped places with Ava.”

My brows furrow at this information. Why would she swap places with her? It makes no sense. And what would Carter want with Macey? I open my mouth to say something when Zoe speaks first.

“John and Marcus went to help your father look for her. That’s why you can't get a hold of anyone. They told me not to tell you.”

“I’ll send men out to help them search. Whereabouts in the city are they looking for her? I can send scouts out to help.”

“I’m not supposed to tell you, but Macey isn't in the city. They have a tracker on her; Marcus called me just before you did. They picked up a signal, but it’s weak and not giving them an exact location,” Zoe tells me, and I curse, shaking my head.

“Just go take Valarian in to see his sisters and tell Everly her sister is fine. As soon as I know what’s going on, I’ll let you know. I told Marcus he should call you.”

I growl, knowing they were doing this behind my back. “Please do, because apparently, no one thought to inform me!” I snap, and she cringes.

“They didn't want to ruin yours and Everly's day.”

“It has been nearly forty-eight hours since they were born. Someone should have fucking told me by now! Get hold of Marcus and get him to fucking call me! He’s

been ignoring my calls,” I snarl at her, and she nods her head before climbing back into the car.

My head is all over the place. They didn't tell me, and now they are Goddess knows where and could be walking into an ambush for all they know. But it explains the silence through the pack link and why everyone was ignoring my calls. Even Everly has been worried because she was expecting her father and mine to be here by now, especially with how excited they were.

“Is everything okay, Dad?” Valarian asks as he rushes over to grab my hand.

“Everything is fine. Are you excited about meeting your sisters?” I ask him.

“Yes, and Mom. I don't like being away from Mom. I brought the plushies,” he says, showing me.

“The girls will love them,” I tell him, giving his hand a squeeze before we navigate our way to the maternity ward. As we get closer, I can hear them crying and I pick up my pace.

Everly still can't shift to heal for a few more days and struggles with moving much. The moment I open the door, she beams when she lays eyes on Valarian. He rushes toward her excitedly, where she's trying to get one baby to latch, while one cries in the bassinet. The third is lying between her thighs asleep, having just been fed.

“Can you grab her?” she nods toward the bassinet, and I wander over, plucking her bundled-up little form out of the crib.

All three babies inherited my genetic mutation. All three girls have amber eyes and dark hair. We still haven't picked out names yet. I have an idea for one name, but I have yet to run it by Everly. So, for now, they're still babies A, B, and C.

Moving to the chair beside the bed, I rock baby B in my arms while Valarian drags a chair over to the other side of Everly so he can kneel on it next to the her. He places his hands on the side of the bed, peering at baby A sleeping on her legs, sucking on her fingers.

“They're so small,” Valarian whispers, stroking Baby C's foot while Everly attempts to breastfeed. She's finding it harder to nurse this time with three babies and no

supply. We've been supplementing with formula, yet she's still determined to try to give them as much breast milk as possible.

"Are you being good for Auntie Zoe, Auntie Macey, and Pop?" Everly asks Valarian, sweeping his hair from his face. I need to cut it; it's getting too long, and he's been complaining his hair is messy. Zoe had tried to cut it for him last night, but he refused to let her touch it. Valarian looks at me. I swear that boy is too smart for his own good. The look he gives me is far too knowledgeable for a five year old. I wait to see if he mentions Macey being gone.

"Yep! Pop brought Auntie Ava home," he says before showing the baby the dinosaur plushie. Everly's head whips to the side to look at me.

"Ava's back?" she stammers the words out, and I nod.

"Carter gave her back. But we'll talk later when Valarian isn't listening," I tell her. Her eyes well with tears, and she swallows but nods her head, turning her attention back to Valarian and the girls.

"Can I hold one?" Valarian asks excitedly, reaching for the baby on her legs.

"Wait! Wait, you need to be careful. Come here," I tell him, and he climbs down off the chair and rushes over as I stand holding baby B in my arms.

"Sit in the chair, and I'll help you hold her," I tell him.

Valarian does, holding his arms out. I place her in his arms but keep a firm grip under her bundled butt and head in case he drops his arms. Valarian looks down at her in awe and sniffs her little head.

"She smells like Mom," he says before kissing her little head. The baby squirms in my hands and opens her eyes, and Valarian gasps.

"She has our eyes, Dad!" he squeals, inspecting them before smiling brightly.

"They all do," I tell him, leaning closer to kiss his head. Valarian plays with her tiny fingers before he leans down and kisses her nose.

I kneel while holding her—my back hurting from the hard, blue hospital chairs—while Valarian coos and makes babbling noises. When my phone starts to ring in my pocket, the vibration makes me stand, and Valarian pouts when I take his sister away, setting her in the bassinet.

“Go sit with Mom; I’ll be back in a minute,” I tell him while I pull my phone from my pocket.

Everly shuffles over on the bed carefully and he climbs up next to her with my help. Once I see all the kids and my mate are secure, I walk out of the room. It was Marcus calling me when I saw the screen.

Shutting the door behind me, I quickly answer it. “Forget to tell me something?” I snap at him.

“I know. I know. You can kill me later. We need your help,” Marcus says, and I growl at him through the phone.

“Did you find her?”

“We think so. We have an approximate area. But the search area’s too big. We need men out here. And we’re in the forsaken territory. It would be good to have someone who has immunity besides your father out here to go in first,” Marcus tells me.

Fuck, my father and I both have some strange immunity to forsaken bites from the mutation handed down, which I kind of hope is handed down to our children. Few people know about it, and it isn't something that we publicize. Though with how many bites we both had after the forsaken attack, they probably figured it out when we didn’t get sick. Alphas have a little more immunity to the venom in general, but the forsaken bites had no effect on me and my father at all besides a burning sensation.

“Send me the coordinates and I’ll send scouts and warriors out. I’m on my way,” I tell him, hanging up. Everly is already staring at the door when I walk back into the room, and I know she would have been straining to listen, which is why I shut the door. I could feel her curiosity while I was on the phone.

‘What is going on?’ she asks through the mind-link while glancing down at Valarian. I know she can feel my worry and anger through the bond; I should be out there with my men.

‘Carter has Macey,’ I tell her, and she purses her lips. The look of fury on her face is as angry as I feel.

‘So, why are you still standing there?’ she replies, and I smirk before moving toward the bed. I lean over Valarian and peck her lips.

“Come on, Valarian, I need to drop you off at home,” I tell him, and his lip quivers, not wanting to leave his mother and sisters. I hate to be the one to break his heart.

“He’s fine here. You can help me with your sisters, right?” Everly asks him, and he nods excitedly.

“I want to stay. I can look after Mom,” he smiles.

‘You should tell Tatum,’ she mind-links, and I know she’s right. Tatum had managed to use his crutches earlier and walked down to see us. I think he thought he would find Macey here because he looked pretty disappointed when he asked where she was and I had no answer for him. He had stayed for an hour or so and said he wanted to apologize to her and that he didn't mean what he said.

I get it; he feels useless not being able to walk properly and doesn't want to be a burden on her. The nurses scolded him for walking down because he has an infection in his leg that requires extra surgery to clean it out and they forced him back to his room.

“I’ll tell him before I leave,” I tell her, gripping Valarian's face.

“Behave for your mother and stay in this room. Don't leave. Your mother can't chase after you right now,” I warn him, and he nods his little head.

“He'll be fine. I'll see you soon,” Everly says. I nod to her, kissing each of the kids quickly.

‘Make sure you come home to me. You are not leaving me with four babies to raise by myself,’ she says through the mind-link.

‘Not even the devil himself would stop me from coming home to you. Or them,’ I tell her, and she nods, yet I can tell she’s trying not to cry. She doesn't want me to go but knows I have to if we want to find Macey and have everyone come home safely.

My father and hers can handle themselves, but we aren't sure what they’re walking into, and each new Alpha is stronger than their father; it means Carter is

stronger than them, plus he was forsaken once, so we aren't sure what it means in terms of his bite.

As I leave, I swing by Tatum's room, stopping at the door. I don't know how to tell him Macey is in trouble, yet he has a right to know. He loves her and Taylor, and after seeing him today, I know he wants her back. Swallowing guiltily, I push the door open to find a nurse in there checking his vitals while another is redressing his leg—the room smells sterile, and I can smell antiseptic strongly in here. He looks up at me.

“Late-night visit, Alpha,” he states, and I nod.

The nurse checks his dressings once more before smiling gently.

“I'll come back and finish up,” she tells him. I wait for her and the other nurse to leave, and Tatum pulls himself up higher on the bed.

“Everything alright?” he asks.

I sigh and shake my head, moving closer to the bed. “It's Macey,” I tell him, and he instantly perks up at her name.

“Is she here? Did she bring Taylor?” he asks.

“Carter has her, Tatum.”

His eyes widen and he instantly tosses the blanket back. I grip his shoulder.

“Everly wanted me to tell you. I'm going after her, but you are in no state to travel,” I tell him, trying to shove him back onto the bed.

“If it were Everly, would you be sitting around?” he growls at me, and I press my lips in a line.

“The doctor has told you, you can't shift.”

“Fuck the doctors,” he growls, standing, and I grip his arm. “I'm coming, Valen. That's my girl and my daughter's mother. You don't get to tell me something like this and expect me to sit around and wait for you to return,” he snaps. I curse.

“Fine, but we're leaving now, and you are to hang back when we get there,” I tell him, and he nods, though I have a feeling him hanging back with patrols isn't happening.

“Let's go,” he growls, shaking my arm off and moving toward the door. When we step out, the nurse's eyes widen.

“Tatum, you should—”

“Leave him,” I tell her, and she backs up as he moves past her, ignoring the worried look of the nurse. Nothing anyone could say is going to stop him from shifting to get to her if he needs to—not even the risk of losing his leg.