In One Year part two

3. In One Year 2

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A year had passed, and somehow Laura was now talking to me. Though it was nighttime, I could still make out some of her facial features. She still looked the same as I remembered: big eyes, a button nose, and full lips. The only difference was that she had dyed her hair red. She had always been a brunette, and dyeing our hair was something we had planned on doing together. It was like a funny game, planned after I would have mated with Paul. We would dye our hair and go to a werewolf club looking completely different, having crazy fun. But we never got to do that. With all the deaths trailing me like a shadow, my life had become frozen while theirs continued on, untouched by misery.

"You should join us," she offered. I gawked at her in confusion. "Just a few of my friends. We're just hanging out."

"I...I don't think I should," I stuttered, my brain still struggling to process everything. I should be angry at her. I should be yelling at her for abandoning me when I needed her the most. But I couldn't. My anger and my words somehow got stuck on my tongue.

"Come on, Sahel. It's been a while," she insisted. I narrowed my eyes at her. Why was she acting as if we hadn't stayed away from each other for a year? Why was she speaking to me like I was still her best friend, just avoiding a social gathering? "It's been over a year, Sahel. I'm sorry. I missed you," she added.

I definitely did not deserve this kind of apology. I had done nothing wrong, yet she treated me like a disease and expected everything to just go away because she said she was sorry and missed me.

I should have slapped her across the face, or I should have turned my back on her and walked away. But I didn't. I was a coward, a pushover, nothing. So I let her pull me towards the bonfire.

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Complete and total silence. That's what happened the moment I arrived at the bonfire. Everyone had their eyes on me, and deep inside my bones, I knew I had made a mistake. I should not have agreed to Laura's offer. I had been foolish because somehow, I still had a soft spot for her.

I was the odd one out here, even though I had grown up with most of the people present. I had even gone to the same school as them and attended parties with them. But everything was different now. Even the air around us somehow felt and smelled different.

"Hey, Laura! Are you excited for tomorrow?" It was the girl I remembered as Leila who asked her. They were sitting next to each other on Laura's left, while a young, attractive man whom I didn't recognize sat on her right. It was even strange to see Laura here. There was a time when Laura complained about not liking Leila, something about her being fake and lying about being a natural blonde when she was, in fact, dark-haired. But I guess things had changed. They looked like the best of friends now. Who was the fake one now? For a minute there, I thought I was a coward for accepting to join the bonfire because Laura begged me, but Laura was the bigger coward. It didn't take long for her to find my replacement, a former supposed nemesis.

Laura beamed at her, acting shy like a love-stricken teenager. I was curious about what was happening tomorrow.

"Of course!" Laura exclaimed as giggles erupted from her mouth. She really looked like a love-stricken teenager.

"Look at you blushing like a virgin bride. We all know that you're not a virgin, but you are indeed a bride. By this time tomorrow, you and Floyd would be... well, you know, f*****g" Leila blurted out as if it was the most normal thing to say. I choked on air but forced myself not to cough. That caused me a lot of distress, but it wasn't as bad as hearing those crude words come out of Leila's mouth. I wasn't a saint myself, nor was I a virgin. I had given my virginity to Tyler, but I believed those were intimate moments that needed to stay intimate.

"Language, Missy!" Laura playfully smacked Leila on the arm before erupting into a fit of laughter, and the others joined her, except me. I was surprised by the events playing before my eyes. The guy seated on her right placed a huge kiss on her lips, and I figured that would be the Floyd in question.

Laura was getting mated tomorrow. A lot had been happening while I drowned myself in sorrows, while I was trapped by the hatred of my pack members.

Laura was no longer a virgin. She was the same person who claimed that even her chosen mate would not touch her until all the mating rites had been performed.

Laura was casually hanging out with up to ten people, when she was once a person who hated crowds.

Laura was allowing people to speak such crude words about her having s*x with her mate in public. She was the same girl who once claimed that she hated such things and even PDA. But here she was, allowing her chosen mate to devour her lips in front of over ten people.

All of this happened in just one year. I stared at Laura. She was definitely not the same Laura who was my best friend. This Laura was different.

Leila's eyes caught mine, and a smirk formed on her face. I didn't have to be a seer to know that she didn't like me one bit, and she was definitely out to get me, even though I had done nothing to harm her, just like I had done nothing to the pack that now despised me.

"Leila, did you invite Sahel to the ceremony?" Leila asked. The bonfire provided enough light to reveal the malice in her eyes.

"Yeah, I did," Laura responded casually.

"Do you want to be happy?" Leila asked Laura, and I knew where she was heading with her words. I should have gotten up and left at that point, but I stupidly didn't.

"Definitely, Leila. Where are you going with this?" Laura narrowed her eyes at her.

"Nowhere, actually. I was just wondering why you would invite someone negative and potentially curse your union by inviting her," she boldly pointed at me.

All the air in my lungs was sucked out, but I still didn't get up.

"Leila, don't," Laura warned.

"Oh, come on. We all know what she is. How is it normal to lose three mates? What did they even see in her in the first place? She's not even pretty," she smacked her lips.

Everyone fell into silence.

"I told Justin not to get involved with her, but he didn't listen. I would have been a better choice. He would still be alive, and this slut wouldn't have killed him!" she almost yelled.

I immediately got up. I had no idea that Justin was that close to Leila. I clenched my fists tightly, angry but knowing I couldn't do anything. I could maybe throw a punch, but the rest of the people here would support her. I gritted my teeth before doing the only thing I could do.

I walked away.

Tears fell freely as I strode down the training grounds. I could hear Laura calling my name, but I didn't stop. I kept marching on, crying my heart out.

Laura caught up to me and held my hand. "Sahel, wait! I'm sorry for what Leila said. I'm sure she didn't mean it."

I forcefully released myself from her grasp. "I'm sure she meant every word she said. What the hell do you think you're doing, Laura? It's been a year, a whole freaking year since we last spoke, and now you're acting like nothing happened," I lashed out, tears still flowing.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, Sahel," she pleaded in distress. If she had said that to me a year ago when I had tried to reach her for two weeks, I would have accepted. But now it was pointless. Laura and I had been best friends for as long as I could remember, and I had always imagined that we would be friends forever. But I was wrong. Some relationships are too hard to fix.

"It doesn't matter anymore. I've moved on with my life, and you can move on with yours. Have your mating ceremony and live happily ever after," I stated before wiping my face aggressively with my palms.

"I really want you to come, Sahel. We always planned it that way," she said sadly, and she looked like she meant every word.

I chuckled. This had to be a sick joke. "Things are different now," and with that, I walked away without sparing her a single glance.

Talia's Anger Part One

1607 Words

4. Talia's Anger part One

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I had to wait near my house for a while to calm myself down before I could think of going in. I knew I would look horrible in the state I was in, and I already felt horrible on the inside. It didn't help that I was also an ugly crier. I didn't think I would be able to face my family in this state. They had already been through a lot because of me, and I had no intention of causing more harm.

I don't know how many minutes had gone by, but when I felt a bit better, I finally walked into the house. My father was in the living room, uncomfortably lying on one of the couches, fast asleep with a beer bottle by his side. The TV was also turned on, and a soccer match was going on. I was quite surprised he was asleep in the first place since my father had always been a huge football fan. I wanted to wake him up, but I didn't want him to notice that something was wrong with me. He had always been a good observer.

As I was about to make my way up the stairs, I heard my mother call my name from the kitchen. I froze immediately.

"Sahel, is that you? What took you so long? Did you run into some trouble?" she yelled from across the kitchen.

I was thankful that she didn't make any move to see me physically. I just needed to make it to my room, wash my face, and go to bed. Maybe cry some more before I go to bed, but I knew that no one would find out.

"Yes, it's me, Mom! There were more customers at the store. Everything went fine," I lied effortlessly. She didn't need to know what had happened. It would devastate her. She already felt bad that she couldn't help me get my life back. How could I possibly tell her that I was banned from the last store that had been graciously accommodating me for months, and my former best friend talked to me after a year and somehow embarrassed me? I couldn't.

"Okay, that is good, honey," she yelled back.

"Yeah. Good night, Mom!"

"Good night, dear."

I finally made my way to my bedroom and plopped down on my bed. Tonight was unexpected, tragic but still unexpected. I never imagined Laura talking to me again. I heard on to hope after a month passed and we had not spoken, then two months, and by the third month, I had already given up. Laura was different now, happy. A part of me had wondered how we lived in the same pack, yet she managed to avoid me effortlessly and live her own life. While I had been barely existing, she had been living her best life.

I expected the mating ceremony. Surely, one day she was bound to get mated. But what I had not expected was Leila. Justin never told me he was involved with her, but Leila's claims pointed to the fact that they had been close and maybe romantically involved. If he liked her, why did he choose me? He could have gone for her and not killed himself. Leila surely had a distasteful character, but she was pretty, and a lot of people seemed to tolerate and like her, even Laura. They... they might have been good together.

I exhaled deeply.

I continued to stare at my ceiling, and I didn't realize the time until my eyes became heavy, and sleep enveloped me.

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Justin haunted my sleep in the form of nightmares. I kept seeing him at his desk in his bedroom, writing his suicide note and shooting himself repeatedly. I desperately tried to stop him, but I couldn't. I tried to wake up, but I couldn't. The cycle continued, and it felt like I was losing my mind. Eventually, my brain forced me awake, and I found myself drenched in sweat, gasping for air.

It felt so real—I could feel him, but he couldn't see or hear me. This was the first time something like this had happened, and I knew it was triggered by the events of last night. I used to dream about Justin, Tyler, and Paul, but those dreams were usually peaceful, filled with memories of the moments we shared. I would wake up with tears in my eyes, missing them.

I got out of bed and peeled off the hoodie and sweatpants I had worn last night. It was around six in the morning, the break of dawn, and the sun had not yet risen. I made my way to the bathroom and washed my face, seeking some comfort, before taking off my bra and panties and stepping into the shower.

After showering and brushing my teeth, I threw on the first pair of shorts and top I found in my wardrobe. I put my black, frizzy hair up in a high bun and headed to the kitchen. Since I couldn't go back to sleep, I might as well start breakfast.

I had finished preparing the eggs and toast when my youngest sister, Leah, entered the kitchen. She still seemed half-asleep.

"Hey Leah!" I greeted her with a simple smile.

"Hey Sahel, good morning," she replied, waving back before taking a seat on one of the kitchen stools.

I prepared a plate for her and handed it over. She mouthed a thank you. "How was your night?" I asked, curious.

She sighed heavily. "I had to work late on a school project. It wasn't easy at all. And things are already rough at school," she said, speaking the last sentence quietly. I froze.

"What do you mean school is rough?" I asked, my fear growing. Was Leah facing problems at school because of me?

"It's nothing, Sahel. I can handle it," she shrugged, munching on her fried eggs.

I narrowed my eyes. "Are people bothering you because of me?"

She didn't respond.

"Leah, please tell me," I pleaded.

She opened her mouth to speak but got cut off when we heard a loud slam of the front door. We immediately rushed to see what was happening.

Talia was pacing around the living room, fuming. She was still wearing the same clothes as yesterday when she stormed out of the house. Our parents had also come downstairs, awakened by the noise.

"Talia, hey! What's going on? Did you just come in? Did you sleep out last night?" I asked, questioning her.

Talia stopped and glared at me intensely. I had never seen her look at me like that before.

"Talia, honey, is everything alright?" our mother asked, concerned.

"How can everything be alright? Sahel has practically ruined all our lives!" she exclaimed in frustration.

"Talia!" our father warned.

"What is it, Dad? You all act like Sahel's curse hasn't affected us. It has and it still is !" Talia spoke out, and my mother gasped.

A single tear slipped from my eyes. I knew my situation was affecting them all, but hearing those words from Talia broke my heart. It was the bitter truth.

"I'm sorry," I choked on my tears.

She stared at me. "What are you really sorry for, Sahel? It would have been better if you hadn't killed those men who tried to mate with you. Then Haden wouldn't have broken up with me!"

"You and Haden broke up?" I muttered. Haden was Talia's boyfriend, and they had been together for three years. It had all ended because of me.

"Are you deaf, Sahel? He broke up with me. We were intimate all night, and then he decided to end things because he thinks I'll kill him, just like you killed those men!" she shouted, her voice piercing through the room.

My parents' eyes widened. I couldn't tell which part surprised them the most—the fact that Talia was sexually active, the offensive language she used, her blame on me, or the revelation that Talia and Haden were no longer in a relationship. I suspected it was all of the above.

"Your sister has nothing to do with those deaths. She's been unfairly accused," my father spoke up, regaining his composure.

"Really, Dad? Really? Whether she killed them with her own hands or not, she's somehow involved. Three men died, and they were all connected to her. She's the problem!" Talia ranted.

My mother was already in tears by this point.

"I'm so sorry, Talia. I can talk to Haden. We can try to fix this mess," I pleaded, walking up to her. But she took a few steps back, creating distance between us.

"Stop saying that, Sahel. You can't fix this unless you can bring those men back to life. Maybe then Haden will take me back, or Leah will stop getting bullied at school just because she's your sister," she said.

My head snapped in Leah's direction. Her eyes twinkled with sadness. That's what Talia's statement meant—Leah was being bullied because of me, and I had no idea. She was suffering because of me.

"Leah, you're getting bullied? When did this start?" our dad asked, concern evident in his voice. Our mother was already hugging Leah by her side.

Talia glared at me one last time before making her way up the stairs, leaving the rest of us behind.

I felt suffocated. The room suddenly felt small, and I quickly rushed to my room, collapsing onto my bed as tears streamed down my face.

Talia's Anger part two

1580 Words

5. Talia's Anger 2.

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I heard a subtle knock on my bedroom door, enough to jolt me out of my sleep. I had cried myself to sleep.

My mother walked in while I was sitting up on my bed. "How are you doing, honey?" she cooed with a sad expression on her face. It was understandable; I looked pitiful, and my life felt pitiful.

"I have no idea," I truthfully confessed. My emotions were all over the place. I didn't know what to feel or how to feel. I needed to run or do something to escape, but I had nowhere to go, and I didn't have enough money to even think about starting a new life somewhere else. I was stuck here.

"Sahel, honey, I spoke with Leah. She will be fine. She doesn't blame you for anything," she stated, trying to reassure me. But that didn't change the fact that it had happened. Leah had been enduring a horrible life at school all because of me. Whether she blamed me or not, it was still because of me.

"Talia thinks otherwise," I shrugged, trying not to look her in the face. It broke me to see her worry about me every single moment.

She sighed before forming a sad smile. "I'm sure Talia didn't mean those words she said. She was just hurting."

"Because of me," I painfully pointed out. It was the truth. Haden most likely wouldn't have broken up with my sister if it weren't for my situation. They had been together for three years, and people in the pack expected them to be mated soon in the future. But now, it wasn't going to happen all because I managed to bring my bad luck upon her.

"Oh, honey!" She rubbed my hands, trying to comfort me. It was soothing, but sadly, it wouldn't fix anything. "Things will not always be like this. It will get better," she added.

"Why me?" I choked as I struggled to hold back my tears. "Why did it have to be me who has to go through this? They were all good guys. I didn't kill them, I really didn't." I couldn't hold back the waterfall from my eyes.

She pulled me into her body as I whimpered in pain. She rubbed soothing circles against my back. "I know you didn't kill them, Sahel. No matter what, my baby, I will always love you and be by your side."

"Thank you, Mama," I cried.

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There was a second knock on my door that same day. After my mother had comforted me, I had locked myself in my room, sitting on my bed, gazing out of the window as time passed. It was now around 4 p.m.

"You can come in," I said, and the door opened, revealing my mother. She was dressed in a simple dress, and her hair was in a bun.

She walked up to me. "Sahel, we will be attending Laura's mating ceremony. I was hoping you could come. She told me she would personally invite you, though everyone in the pack is usually invited for these events."

"I am not going," I swiftly responded. Laura had spoken to my mother before speaking to me, so last night didn't just happen out of the blue.

It didn't matter. I couldn't go. My presence there would surely ruin everyone's mood, and I would be humiliated again. If I could not change my situation, I could avoid putting myself through the pain of embarrassment and suffering. And the way to do that was by staying away from everyone.

"Laura was once your friend. She really wants you to come," she pleaded softly.

"Once, Mom. Once. She was my friend in the past, and she chose to abandon me. It makes no sense that she would want to fix our broken relationship now. She owes me nothing, and I owe her nothing as well."

She stared at me for a while, then exhaled deeply. "It's fine, Sahel. Do whatever makes you happy. I won't force you. We're leaving now, and we'll be back soon." She got up from the bed, placed a kiss on my temple, and left my room.

I lay back down on my bed, staring at the ceiling. My mind went back to the time when Laura broke up with her first boyfriend. He had cheated on her with her cousin, and she came running to me in tears.

She slept over at my place that day after spending the entire day crying. But Laura was always good at recovering quickly. She had always been a strong-minded person. The next day, before I woke up, she was already fixing breakfast for my family. I was surprised to find her whisking eggs, with a bright smile on her face that would not have indicated that she had cried her eyes out the day before.

Flashback.

"Riley was definitely not my chosen mate. Look at me, Sahel. I am good-looking, even sexy at times. I am completely perfect. Riley is the fool," she said with a bright smile. "Sahel, never let an asshole treat you like trash. And even if I become an asshole, kick my ass."

I laughed. "I will definitely hold you accountable for that, Laura."

I got up from my bed and walked over to the bathroom. I washed my face and stared at my reflection in the mirror. I wished things could go back to the way they were, but they can't. Laura must look beautiful right now. She always claimed that she would wear the whitest of white and a green garland on her head. She would look like a forest princess.

I smiled.

Maybe I would go. I would just stay far away from everyone.

After refreshing myself, I dressed in a black sweatshirt and pants. I used a cap to cover my rough hair and my face, and then I left the house.

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Laura looked absolutely beautiful, wearing the green garland she had always dreamed of. Her dress was the whitest of white, and as she walked toward her mate, he smiled brightly at her. She looked completely happy.

I watched them perform the mating ritual from behind a tree, keeping my distance from the beautifully decorated ceremony held in the training grounds.

When the rituals were complete and her mate placed a kiss on her lips, everyone erupted into cheers. They would have done the same for me if only...

I had seen enough. Although Laura would never know I was there, I was glad I had come. It was a beautiful thing to witness.

As I was about to leave, my eyes met Janet's. She wore a scowl on her face. I should have run away, but somehow I stayed frozen in place, watching as Janet angrily walked up to me and landed a slap on my face, causing me to almost trip to the ground.

"You came to ruin this ceremony with your filth!" she spat loudly. If the slap hadn't gotten anyone's attention, her raging voice certainly did.

The entire pack's attention fell upon me. My eyes met Laura's, and I sadly smiled at her.

"Why are you here?" Janet aggressively demanded, pulling my attention back to her.

"I will be leaving now. I am sorry for bothering you," I apologized and turned to leave. But she held me back, her strength surprising for her age.

"I don't need your apology. You should apologize to my son instead. Paul didn't deserve to die, but you killed him," she spat.

"She's right. Justin didn't deserve to die either. My son didn't deserve to die. I should have watched him get mated, just like Laura and Floyd today!" Faith chimed in. The death of their sons had made them best friends, always united in making my life miserable.

"She did not kill your son. There is no proof of that," my mother fired back, pulling me behind her.

"Enough!" Alpha Eric boomed. "This is a beautiful ceremony, and you will not ruin it with this," he warned in his authoritative voice.

"She's the one ruining it with her presence. She should be kicked out of this pack or, better still, killed, just like she killed our children," Janet spat with bitterness. My heart broke, and a part of me agreed with them. Maybe I should be killed. Perhaps then they would find the peace they sought. My presence was a painful reminder of their loss.

"I agree with Janet. Sahel deserves to die," Leila spoke up with a smirk.

"You have no right to speak, Leila. Leave!" Alpha Eric commanded. Leila frowned but quickly scurried away. No one could resist an Alpha's command unless they were another Alpha.

"Maybe they're right. Maybe I should be killed. I am evil," I found myself saying.

My mother gasped, and Leah, Talia, and my father stared at me with wide eyes. The pack members were stunned as well. Laura looked as if she wanted to cry, but I didn't want her to. Today was meant to be her special day, and I had ruined it by showing up.

"Sahel, leave!" Alpha Eric commanded with his Alpha authority. I ran away, but I didn't go home. Instead, I ran into the forest, and I kept running until my legs gave out. I stumbled to the ground and let my sorrow consume me as I hugged my body, whimpering.

The Attack

1465 Words

note: Trigger warning , This chapter may contain graphic depictions of violence

6. The Attack

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The sun's rays beamed into my eyes, causing me to stir. As I slowly opened my eyes, I was greeted by the sight of trees and the delightful sound of birds chirping in the air and flying around. It was a beautiful scene.

As I stretched my body, I felt the pain in my muscles from sleeping on the hard ground. Memories of the previous evening flooded in, reminding me why I had slept in the middle of the forest in the first place. I hoped Laura's ceremony hadn't been completely ruined by my interruption.

I got up from the ground and brushed off the leaves, grass, and dirt that clung to me. That's when I noticed a familiar figure approaching. It was Ted, one of the patrol guards. He had sandy blonde hair, a sharp jaw, and a crooked nose. Though he was still attractive, his aura felt negative.

"You shouldn't be out here this early in the morning," he said with a stoic expression, but his eyes held an unsettling glint. Despite being part of my pack, we had never spoken before. I had only seen him around.

"I know. I'll be leaving now," I replied in a groggy voice.

"I can keep you company if you want. People say that I can be quite accommodating," he said with a smirk. The evil that once shone only in his eyes had now spread across his face. He approached me steadily, and I tried to step back, but he kept coming closer until my back was against a tree, trapping me.

He ran his fingers across my cheeks, and fear instantly tensed up my body. I wondered what he was trying to do.

"I'm going now," I said, trying to sound as strong as possible. But my voice came out quivering, which seemed to amuse him. He was enjoying seeing me in fear.

"You're definitely not going anywhere now," he stated as he pressed his body against mine. I could feel his arousal against my thigh. "We should have some fun. I promise you, you'll enjoy it," he purred into my ear. A shiver ran down my spine. I was incredibly uncomfortable, and I definitely did not want this.

"I'm fine, and I want to leave now, Ted," I demanded.

"You are quite beautiful you know, it is only a shame, you have to go out like this," he purred into my ear. A shiver ran down my spine. I was incredibly uncomfortable, and I definitely did not want this.

"Go out like this, what do you mean?, answer me Ted," I demanded.

"Oh, someone is getting feisty, maybe the rumors are true, maybe you really killed those men," he blurted out, causing my eyes to widen. I slapped him across the face, but he chuckled and faced me with anger in his eyes. Before I knew it, he forcefully grabbed me by the neck and slammed my body against the tree trunk.

"I was trying to be nice so we could do this the easy way, but I see that you like it rough, I was trying to make your death pass quickly, you should not be alive if those men have to die," he sneered as he choked me. He was incredibly strong, and my attempts to push him away were futile. He was draining the strength out of me, making it impossible for me to even shift.

"Let me go!, I did not kill anyone, it was not my fault, I did not kill them " I choked out, but he only smirked.

"Of course," he said, flinging me like a rag doll to the side. I crashed into another tree, feeling pain shoot through my body as I gasped for air. Before I could regain my composure, he loomed over me, climbing my body. He extended his claws and slashed against my chest ripping my clothes and drawing out blood, he was really going to kill me. I screamed out in pain

"Please don't do this, spare my life" I cried , but it was in vain. He wouldn't budge, he slashed me again.

I tried to get up but he pushed me back to the ground. He landed a punch on my face, causing me to cough out blood. I was getting weak. It had been years since I trained, and I was completely out of shape.

"Say your goodbyes" he smirked as he moves his claws closer to my neck ready to strike.

"Dean, what are you doing? Get off her now! The Alpha demands her presence!" I heard Dean's voice. He was also a pack guard.

Ted froze on top of me and hissed before quickly getting off. "You're lucky today," he said, and he left as if nothing had happened.

Dean stared down at me as I tried to catch my breath. "You managed to kill three men, but you couldn't handle this one," he said casually. "Get up, the Alpha is looking for you. Your family has been searching for you all through the night," he added.

After a struggle, I managed to get up, feeling pain all over my body and having difficulty steadying myself. Dean looked at me again. "You need to be fixed up before you meet him. Follow me," he said, and he walked away.

It was a struggle to keep up with him. I knew I had werewolf healing powers, but it didn't magically happen like that. I needed to rest for at least a few hours. I held onto the material that covered my chest , trying to maintain some decency as I stumbled behind him. The thought of almost being killed ran through my mind, and I struggled to stay focused.

Dean didn't seem to care. He witnessed what happened but acted like it wasn't a big deal. He acted as if I deserved it. We may not be close or friends, but I was still a pack member. Regardless of what I was being accused of, I didn't deserve to be die, why would I be made to suffer for a sin, I did not commit.

I followed him quietly, in pain and in tears. It seemed like pain and tears chased me every single minute. This was not the life I wanted to live. I didn't want to live this way. May be death seemed like a better option. If I wasn't loved in this life, then death would be a choice. I knew my family loved me, but I felt like I was dragging them down with me. They were falling alongside me.

Dean managed to avoid going through the pack's open grounds where people were inside, to avoid strange looks, and I was grateful for that. Some of my pack members, especially Janet and Faith, would have reveled in seeing me in pain. We continued through the woods until we reached the pack house. Dean led me through the back door and into a room.

"Freshen up now. You have ten minutes. Thankfully, Ted didn't get into your pants. I'm sure you'll find a polo shirt to wear in the wardrobe. I'll be back soon, and be quick," he said before leaving.

The loud bang of the door made me jump a little. My body was still shaking from the recent events, but I managed to follow Dean's instructions. I made my way to the restroom. My reflection scared me, but it wasn't too frightening. My face was red, and one side of my cheek was swollen.

I rinsed off the blood in my mouth and washed my face and body thoroughly, thankfully the s***h at my chest was not deep, wincing in pain throughout the process. Ten minutes wasn't enough to completely clean myself.

I fought hard not to cry. All I wanted to do was cry, but nothing was changing. It was becoming pathetic.

After washing my face, I slowly approached the wardrobe. My ribs still hurt, but it wasn't as painful as the impact against the tree bark.

I knew it would leave marks, but I didn't want to look at them right now. All I wanted was to go home, but I couldn't because the Alpha was seeking my presence. I needed to report Ted, and he needed to be punished for what he did and tried to do to me.

If Dean hadn't acted like it didn't matter, I would have actually thanked him. He indirectly saved me by arriving on time, which prevented Ted from going any further.

I picked up a dark blue shirt from the wardrobe.

After putting on the shirt, feeling pain throughout my body, Dean walked into the room without bothering to knock or anything. "We're leaving now," he said sharply.

The Proposal

1559 Words

7. The Proposal

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"Oh, finally, you are here!" Alpha Eric smiled for a second before his face contorted into shock. My parents were also present, and they stared at me with similar expressions on their faces. There was an older man present whom I did not recognize, and he maintained a straight face. "What happened to her? She looks like she fought a pack of wolves," Alpha Eric queried.

I was about to respond, but Dean beat me to it. "I found her in this state. Maybe she tried to hurt herself after what happened yesterday."

I blinked in confusion as my gaze focused on Dean, who just lied easily. Even his heartbeat was so steady that no one would be able to detect it was a lie.

"Oh, Sahel!" my mother cried, rushing over to my side, while I tried to make sense of everything. Why would he be covering up for Ted? I did not hurt myself; Ted tried to kill me.

"Sahel, I know life has been difficult for you, but you do not have to harm yourself. There are still people who care for you, your family, and I, your Alpha," Alpha Eric said with a subtle smile, his facial expressions softening towards me. I had never seen him like that.

"That was not what happened, I—"

"All will be fine, Sahel," Alpha Eric cut me off. "I even have good news for you," he cheered.

"Good news?" I muttered in confusion. My mother was smiling so widely, as though we had won a lottery.

"Yes, there is someone here to see you. They have a proposal for you, one that I am sure you will love and will get things back to normal," he said.

I raised an eyebrow in confusion. Was it really possible to get anything back to normal around here? Had they possibly found a way to raise the dead?

"This is Elder Ambrose. He is the one here to see you. Elder Ambrose, this is Sahel Rivers, the girl we spoke about," Alpha Eric introduced.

I turned my attention to the middle-aged man sitting on the black sofa to my right. He was dressed in a black fitted suit and held a cane. He smiled at me softly.

"It is finally nice to meet you. I have heard good things from your parents. Lucy and Sam here have been praising you nonstop, but I am sure that is what parents do," he laughed in a strong way, just like his voice.

I was still confused. What was really going on? Whatever it was, it could not be more important than Ted trying to rape me and Dean trying to cover it up, even though he had witnessed it all.

"What is this all about?" I asked.

"Someone is seeking a mating with you," Alpha Eric answered.

My eyes widened in shock. "Him!" I almost yelled. I know my life was horrible, but do I have to be whisked away to mate with an old man because I have somehow become undesirable to my peers and generation? This was completely ridiculous.

Ambrose burst out into a fit of laughter, and I narrowed my eyes at him.

"You have quite a sense of humor, my dear. Of course, it is not me. It is my nephew, Alpha Killian. He is the Alpha of the SilverMoon pack."

"An Alpha? Why?" I asked, still in shock. Were they being serious right now? An Alpha was willing to mate with me.

"Sahel!" My mother scolded. I shrugged.

"Sahel, I assure you everything is okay, this is a wonderful mating, you get to become a Luna" Alpha Eric stated.

I had no issue with that, this was somehow a miracle or something , I had never imagined being a mate to an Alpha but why would an Alpha choose me and I know my story was not only heard in this pack.

"Why me?. I am cursed" I blurted out

My mother gasped "She does not know what she is saying, she is definitely not cursed" she chuckles in a panic.

"It is okay Lucy. Sahel I know of what you have being through, three mates dying before the mating ceremony is indeed tragic but I am quite certain that you are not cursed, I don't believe in such nonsense" Ambrose responded

My mother released a breath of relief, okay fine, he did not think me bad like the rest of my pack members but that does not answer why they would choose me, I did not know Alpha Killian personally, I have heard of him, just like everyone else, he was quite powerful in the region and he controlled the strongest and biggest pack down south.

"I know you are curious about this whole thing my dear but I want to let you know that your parents are good people, your father is a very renowned man and mating with one of his daughters would be a blessing to any family, your family's strong gene is something to boast of" Ambrose explained

My mother was smiling from ear to ear while you could see the pride in my father's eyes, they were really happy about this. I should be as well but I am scared, I am not all giddy in mating with an Alpha, I knew nothing about him and he would know nothing about me either, why was he consenting to this all thing if he is has powerful as people claimed, he could choose better brides, daughters of other alphas or betas in other packs but somehow they were choosing me with my predicament, what if he suffers the same fate like the past ones, it would be more tragic, I was already in hell for being blamed for killing regular pack members but if Alpha Killian dies my suffering would be ten times worst, Blue-moon pack already hated me then SilverMoon would hate me as well, why was no one reasoning this.

"I am grateful for this opportunity but I cannot accept" I stated

"Sahel!" Her father warned this time, there was a frown in his face, I have never seen him look at me this way.

"Why would you want to reject this opportunity?" Ambrose asked.

"I—I do not want to be blamed for his death. I already have enough blood on my hands," I dropped my head down in shame.

"Killian is an Alpha. He cannot be killed easily. He is always guarded. We do not believe you are responsible for those three mates' deaths. There is no proof that you were involved. It is sad to say, but your pack members are being ridiculous for blaming you," Ambrose assured.

I was about to respond when my mother beat me to it.

"She does not know what she is saying. She is letting her fear control her. We accept the offer, Elder Ambrose. We thank you for this honor," she said, smiling brightly at him for a second before sending me a warning glare.

I held back. I do not want to upset her. My mother has stood by me throughout this time. If this will make her happy, so be it. But if Alpha Killian dies, I will die with him.

So I stay silent.

"Very well, I see we have come to an agreement here," Alpha Eric says.

"Of course, the mating ceremony will be held here in your pack in a week's time. This is Alpha Killian's photograph. He could not be here because he has very important things to attend to today, but this will help you get familiar with him a bit," Ambrose handed me the picture, which I accepted.

I look at the picture. He was quite attractive. Raven hair, dark eyes, sharp jaws. Though he had a stoic expression, he looked breathtaking. Another reason why it was strange that he would agree to mate with me. I was pretty, but I was not extraordinarily beautiful like him. He could do better. He could have gone for the most beautiful girls. He could have chosen someone without stains on their clothes, without blood on their hands.

"Oh, he is beautiful!" my mother gasps, snapping me out of my train of thoughts. I had no idea that she was looking at the picture.

"Yes, he is. He took after his mother. She was an extraordinary woman," Ambrose praised.

"Where is she now?" I asked curiously.

"She is dead, along with my brother Walsh, the former Alpha. They both passed away in a tragic accident when Killian was seventeen," Ambrose answered.

"Oh!" I muttered quietly.

"That is so sad," my mother said.

"It is alright. Killian was a strong boy, and he is a stronger man now. He has lifted SilverMoon pack to greater heights," Ambrose stated with a smile.

"Exactly," my father and Alpha Eric chorused.

"Thank you all for accommodating me for this short while. I will be leaving now. Sahel, I will be seeing you next week. Take care of yourself before then," Ambrose stood up from the sofa, walked to me, and patted my shoulders.

"I will see you out," Alpha Eric stood up from his seat.

Anticipation

1959 Words

8. Anticipation

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Three days have passed. I don't know what plagued my mind more: Ted trying to kill me or Alpha Killian's possible death. Ted plagued my dreams every time I closed my eyes, turning them into nightmares. While I was awake, I kept anticipating a call about Alpha Killian's demise. I don't wish him death, but it feels like the only outcome I can see right now.

It has only been three days, but it feels like an eternity waiting. I'm constantly in fear, though no one knows it. I can't tell anyone. Talia and I haven't spoken since that dreadful morning, and I'm too ashamed to face Leah. I don't think I'll be able to talk about anything with her without feeling guilty. I can't possibly burden her with my problems while she's dealing with her own. I know the problems at school won't magically disappear, even though my parents have gone to sort things out. Bullying doesn't just go away in a day.

I would have spoken to my mother about how I'm feeling, but I'm holding myself back. It's beautiful to see her acting positive. She has been gushing nonstop about how I'll soon be living my happily ever after. But will it really be my happily ever after? My father is a no-go area. I see his struggle trying to keep everything under control, and I don't intend on burdening him any further.

I know nothing about Killian. There's just a picture that I occasionally stare at. His eyes aren't welcoming in that photo; they hold anger and pain. He probably knows very little about me as well. Maybe he was also given a picture, but sadly, I fear the only thing he would know about me is that I have three dead mates on my tail.

"Sahel, what do you think about this dress?" my mother asked eagerly and excitedly. I glanced at the dress. It was indeed beautiful. I had chosen not to go to any shop to buy a dress. That would have made it the fourth time, and it would have been too traumatic and heart-wrenching for me. But my mother managed to find a way. She brought the shop over to us at home. She paid one of the store attendants for a home service, and now we were in the sitting room going through several dresses.

"It's okay, but I would prefer something simpler," I responded truthfully. The dress was indeed beautiful, but it looked too extravagant for me. It was a maxi floral dress with ruffles running from the bust to the bottom and around it. It would have been perfect if I were a bit more excited, but I'm in pain.

"Sahel, this isn't too much. This is the fifth dress you're rejecting, and they were all beautiful and okay," she reasoned, narrowing her eyes at me. Even the attendant, Lily, nodded her head in agreement.

I shrugged. "I just want it to be simple."

She sighed. "Sahel, are you okay? You've been acting off. Well... you're always off, but since the talk with the Alpha, you've been different. Is this about what Dean said, about you trying to—"

"I did not try to hurt myself," I cut her off. Some one was trying to hurt me

"Then what happened?" she asked, worry lines creasing her forehead.

I glanced at Lily, who was watching us curiously. "It's nothing. Everything is just overwhelming," I said. I didn't want to talk about this in front of Lily. She's part of this pack, and I don't want more of my business out there. They already know I'm in pain, but they would be pleased if I were in more pain. I won't give them that satisfaction. "The dress is fine. I'll take it," I added, getting up from the couch.

My mother smiled. "But wouldn't you want to try it on?"

"I wear a size eight. If this dress is in size eight, it'll fit. I'd like to rest now," I responded.

She nodded. "Sure, sure. Lily and I will sort out the rest of the things." She waved.

"Okay," I said, and I left the room.

Talia's bedroom door was slightly open when I got to the hallway. I peeped through the hole and saw her lying on her bed, facing outside the window.

Her breathing was quite stable. I knew she was awake, though. And then I heard it, a whimper. I almost missed it, but I heard it the second time. Talia was crying.

That was enough for me to enter her room. She jolted up from the bed immediately when she sensed a presence, my presence. Her eyes were bloodshot red, and she had a scowl on her face directed at me.

"Get out!" she yelled, pointing at the door.

I bit my lip in frustration, but I took a step closer. "I am so sorry, Talia. I didn't mean to hurt you. I didn't mean for all this to happen. I—"

"But it happened because of you. You f*****g ruined my life, and now you get to run off with an Alpha to some happy-ever-after!" she cut me off with her yelling.

"You know that is not true. You know the circumstances of my life, Talia. You know everything. You know I would never want to hurt you like this. You are my sister, and I love you!" I cried out as tears ran down my cheeks.

Talia stared at me for a few seconds, tears streaming down her eyes as well, before she fell to the ground, wailing and grunting in pain.

I forced myself to walk over to her, despite the possibility that she might push me away. I sat on the floor beside her and pulled her into my body. Surprisingly, she didn't resist. Instead, she cried against my chest, and I could feel her tears soaking my blouse.

"Why would Haden do this to me? Why would he treat me like that?" she cried.

I wrapped my hands around her tightly. "I want to say that he doesn't deserve you, Talia. He truly doesn't. Because you don't deserve that. It's partly my fault, not yours. You don't deserve to suffer because of my own problems."

"I'm so sorry, Sahel. I hurt you too. I was so angry. I know what you're going through, but I had to release the pain that I was feeling, and I ended up dumping it on you. I'm really sorry," she said, pulling away from me and wiping her eyes.

"I know you didn't mean to. I just felt bad. You, Leah, Mom, and Dad are all suffering because of me," I smiled sadly. "I don't know what to do to fix all of this."

She smiled back, equally sad. "I can't imagine what you're going through right now. Mom says you really don't want this mating thing with Alpha Killian. I understand, but maybe this is what you need, a fresh start somewhere different. I don't want you to go away, but I fear you'll suffer more in this pack."

"I know," I sighed. "But what if he doesn't make it that day, like the others? What would happen to me then?" I wiped the tears from my face.

"We will be here for you regardless," she said, pulling me into another hug. This would have been a good time to talk about what Ted did, but I still didn't. Talia was still healing, and I didn't want to dump my problems on her.

"Thank you," I said, finding a bit of comfort in her arms.

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It was around five in the evening. I had just woken up from my nap, which ended tragically because of Ted. Now, I was sitting on the ground in the graveyard. In my dreams, he succeeded. Dean was there, but he was watching and smiling as Ted sucked out life from me. All I could do was cry, and no one came to save me, and then darkness ,then I would wake up. It has become a recurring nightmare every time I sleep.

I couldn't possibly continue like this. Would this demon follow me to the SilverMoon pack? Would Ted come for me again?, to finish me off, why was he doing this?

Was he watching me right now?

Even if I managed to tell Alpha Eric, there would be no evidence. Dean would not support me, and no one would believe me, even with my family's support.

"I hope you guys are not suffering as I am. I hope you all found peace," I said. It was something I repeated each time I visited their graves. They were all good to me. They didn't deserve to be six feet under. It should have been someone like Ted.

"I'm getting mated in four days' time," I chuckled sheepishly to the stones carved with their names. They were buried side by side, so I sat in the middle, facing Paul's gravestone. Justin was on his right, just a meter away, while Tyler was on his left, a few meters away. "He is an Alpha. Maybe he will survive. Maybe whatever is inside me that got to you guys won't be strong enough to put him down," I added.

I paused for a second as a lone tear slipped from my eye.

"I don't want him to die!" I cried. "They will hate me even more. More people will despise me. My family will suffer even more. My mother is ecstatic. She's grinning from ear to ear. Her positivity is beautiful. I wish I could feel what she's feeling right now."

I pushed my hair behind my ears and adjusted my sitting position. "I'm trying to be strong, but I feel like I'm crumbling with each passing day. This mating thing isn't the solution I want, but it might be the solution I need if Alpha Killian survives. I would be able to leave this place, and my family might regain some normalcy again."

I exhaled deeply. Maybe Janet and Faith will hate me less if they knew I wouldn't be staying in the same pack with them. They even suggested I get kicked out. They're right. I understand their pain. They must feel worse than I do. No parent deserves to lose a child. No one deserves to go through that. No one.

I paused again, but this time because I heard rustling bushes close by. I snapped my head in that direction and immediately got up from the ground.

I froze when I saw Ted come into view. There was a smirk on his face. "You really talk a lot, don't you? You couldn't just stay still the other day, could you?" he said, coming closer.

I stepped back, warning him, "Don't come closer."

"Why? I think you and I should have lots of fun. I'm sure they would love to watch," he gestured at their graves.

I frowned. That was disrespectful.

He got closer, but I wouldn't allow him to do this. So, I did the only thing I could do to defend myself: I shifted.

He didn't expect that. A frown settled on his face. I growled loudly at him. I definitely wasn't strong enough to take him down, but I had the advantage now. I was faster in my wolf form, and I made a run for it. Thankfully, I was close to the pack house. He wouldn't think to pursue me there. He wouldn't want anyone to find out what he intended to do. And so, I continued running and running, despite the several stares I got from passersby. I kept running until I reached home.

Thursday

1697 Words

9. Thursday

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Thursday, the day I had been eagerly anticipating, and yet there was no news, no calls, no messages—nothing. Alpha Killian might still be alive, but it was hard for me to believe it.

Throughout the past five days, I hadn't allowed myself to think about what would happen if Killian survived. How would he see me? Did he truly want this? What would his pack think of me? How would I survive as a Luna when I could barely survive as a regular shifter? But deep down, I knew I was far from being a regular shifter. Regular shifters didn't go through what I had been through.

I hadn't come across Ted since that evening by the gravesite. I knew he was lurking around, watching. Maybe that was why a part of me was grateful that I was leaving. But another part of me worried for my sisters. Would he go after them if he succeeded in killing me or was I the only one in the package, maybe I was, I had to tell someone. I had to tell my father. But for now, I had to hold on. I couldn't create a disturbance before the ceremony.

I had been trapped in my house since that day. My mother had been handling the entire process, and I was grateful for that. She had tried to involve me in the planning, but I had simply told her that I would go along with whatever she decided. This wouldn't be my first time planning a mating ceremony, regardless of whether it ended well or not. But it would definitely be my last. I wouldn't put myself through such trauma, especially since I might be dead before it even happened.

"We're leaving for the pack house soon," Talia informed me from the doorway of my bedroom. She had one hand on her hip and was resting on one leg.

"Okay," I responded. She sighed and stepped into my room, sitting on my bed beside me.

"I think everything will go smoothly. If something went wrong, they would have informed us by now," she assured me, but it didn't ease my concerns.

"Maybe... What if they forgot to tell us? I'm sure everyone in the pack is waiting for some news."

She sighed again before offering a soft smile. "Well... they'll be astonished this time," she chuckled.

I smiled back. "That would be a miracle."

"You should go and get dressed now. Mom says the lady helping you get ready is at the pack house."

I would have preferred to get ready at our house, but the ceremony would be held near the pack house, and it was customary for the female shifter to descend from the pack house to the ceremonial grounds. I had never reached this stage with my past three mates. With Justin, I had come close, but I never got to that point. I found out Justin was dead before I even left my house.

"Sure."

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It was strange driving to the pack house, there were lots of stares as I drove back seat with my two sisters beside me while my father drove and my mother was by the passenger seat.

Everyone was curiously gawking, maybe they were also surprised that I had not heard of any negative news of Alpha Killian.

I was trying hard to not gaze out the window but I could not help myself, their face were painted with confused looks that made a pit grow in my belly.

We finally got to the pack house and we made my way to the room I will prepare from while why father went over to see the Alpha.

The room was big but quite simple.

"Please Sahel, I will need you to take another shower, the drive here was quite dusty" my mother commented softly, her was quite bubbly, one would think that she was the one that was mating.

I quietly compiled, the bathroom was also quite simple just like the room, My mother passed me a shower gel before exiting the bathroom leaving me to myself.

I let the shower water stream down my body, everything still felt like a dream that one minute from now, I would wake up back to my sad reality not that this one was any better.

A loud bang in the door was what snapped me out of my thoughts "Sahel! Mom thinks you are spending an awful lots of time in there" it was Leah's voice.

"I am coming out now" I said and I turned off the shower, and got out wearing a light blue robe I found in the restroom, wrapping my hair with an equally blue towel.

I was quite surprised to see Laura present in the room, she was smiling brightly at me.

"Finally Sahel, come sit" my mother pulled me to the dress, forcing me to sit. "Laura is here" she added.

Laura walked up to me, and I stare at her through the mirror, she looked even more beautiful than ever, she was literally glowing, her mate mark was well exposed in the pink off shoulder dress she was wearing.

" I am happy you came that day" she said "I know things are not perfect between us but I really want to be here, we made a promise to each other and you kept your end of the bargain"

"You don't have to, I am sorry my presence almost ruined the ceremony"

"Oh!. Not at all Sahel…, Janet and Faith are still…, emotional but it was uncalled for, you did not ruin anything" she smiled, I blinked.

"Was that what you were feeling when you abandoned me" I blurted out and she shrieked, I know that I should not have mentioned it now but I might never get to, Laura was my best friend and my sister but she abandoned me the time I needed her the most.

"I—I" she stutters " I don't have any excuse for what I did, I let my family dictate for me"

"Yeah we do a lot of things for our families but you were once family to me but I guess I was not family to you" I had to put it out there, I knew it would hurt her but it would be nothing compared to what I have had to go through.

She did not respond this time we just stared at each other, there was sadness,and maybe guilt in her eyes but it was too late for that, maybe in the future we might be friends again but that would not be happening now, I have to make myself happy not fight for people that were neither willing nor ready to fight for me.

"You guys can make up for lost times later. Sahel!, Stella is ready for you" my mother stepped in having not heard a single bit of our conversation, we were not in any possibility making up for lost time, we were simply dealing with our weird relationship.

Stella, a petite young woman with bronze caramel skin and massive luscious curls hair came forth, I have never seen her in the pack before

"She is from the neighboring pack" my mother whispered in my ears "I do not trust anyone here to make you look beautiful" she added also in a whisper.

Laura just stood there as Stella helped me fix my hair backing it in a half down half up style before fixing petal clips on it. She was only done with my hair but I appeared much brighter than I usually am, I looked like I used to five years ago.

"All done!" Stella gushed dropping the make up brush. I stared at my reflection in awe while my mother rushed over to me

"Stella you definitely outdid yourself" my mother praised, Stella smiled sheepishly, she was quite a shy person.

"You look beautiful Sahel" Laura commented, and my sisters joined in

"Absolutely beautiful" Talia and Leah chorused

"Mom, Dad called to inform us that Elder Ambrose is already here" Talia said

My mother clapped enthusiastically "Wonderful!. What of Alpha Killian?"

"He said he was on his way and I should tell Sahel that he is very much alive" Talia added, I do not realize that I released a breath of relief until I see Laura look at me with shock on her face.

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I was beginning to doubt everything. I was trying my best to be calm, but I couldn't help it. Killian had not yet arrived, yet everyone was already seated outside, including the Elder priest.

I do not know how many times I have stared through the window to check if there was any sign of him.

He should have been here by now, but he wasn't.

My mother had already left the room about an hour ago, leaving me with Talia, Leah, and Laura, who were constantly gawking at me as I paced around the room . I was trying my best not to freak out. I kept thinking that the moment my mother would return, she would bring the bad news that I expected would have come earlier.

"Maybe you should sit down for a while," Talia suggested, but I do not want to sit. I feel if I do, I will cry. What was the meaning of all this?

I do not respond.

"Sahel, Talia is right. You should sit down for a moment," Laura said with worry laced in her voice.

I do not even bother to look at her because I fear that I might end up lashing out at her. No one asked her to be here.

And then the door finally opens, revealing my mother.

"He is here!" She announced those three words that seemed to complete me at that exact moment. Killian is alive.