

Chapter 184: Waking

Claire

I'm slow to come awake. I feel groggy and sore, sore like I haven't felt since the first timeline. Oh my goddess! Was it all a dream? Am I back in the hell that I used to live in?

'Damara?' I call to my wolf, panicked.

'I'm here,' she says, and she sounds exhausted and far away.

'Where are we?' I ask, feeling terrified to open my eyes. I can hear voices nearby.

'I'm not sure,' she says, falling back into the darkness of my mind.

I feel tears prick my eyes and begin sliding down my face. What if it was all a dream? What if none of it was real? What if...oh, I can't even consider all the terrible things that happened, that are still real, if all of this was only a dream.

"Claire! Claire, open your eyes, baby! Open your eyes!"

Alpha Tereshan. He's ordering me to open my eyes.

I open my eyes and I see Alpha Tereshan leaning over me.

"I'm sorry, Alpha," I say, not sure what I'm apologizing for, but I must have done something wrong. Maybe Ivy punched me. Maybe that's why my stomach hurts so badly.

"Claire, it's me, Tereshan," he says frowning down at me.

I nod. "I'm sorry for whatever I did, Alpha."

He takes my head in his hands. "Claire, look at me. It's me, Tereshan, your mate. Do you remember? I'm your mate. You're my Luna."

I frown at him. "It wasn't a dream? It was real?"

"Baby, I'm not sure what you're talking about. You're not making any sense."

I think for a moment. If it wasn't a dream then...

"Why am I so sore? Why is Damara so weak?"

"Claire, do you remember going into labor? Salvatore was in distress. Dr. Baron had to sedate you and then Sal had the cord wrapped around his neck. You lost a lot of blood, and we think Damara was weak from protecting Sal until the doctor could get him out. Do you remember any of that?"

Like a wave, the memories come crashing back.

"Oh my goddess!" I say, trying to sit up and instantly regretting it.

"No, baby. Don't sit up. You need to rest. Damara isn't healing you and the doctor had to slice your stomach open to get Salvatore out."

"Is he....is he..." I feel my heart constricting, hoping my baby is okay.

"He's good. He's really good. But you, on the other hand, are still weak and need to heal. So, you rest and let me bring him to you."

He turns to walk away, but I grab his hand. "For a moment....for a moment, I thought it was all a dream. That none of this was real."

He leans down, kissing me gently. "It's real. I love you more than

anything in this world, except maybe our son. You'll see when you meet him."

He kisses my forehead then steps away from the bed, turning to a bassinet I didn't see before. He lifts out a small, wrapped bundle and he turns, leaning over me.

"Claire Colton, I'd like you to meet your son, Salvatore Colton."

He places him in my arms, careful not to let him touch the part of my body that is in terrible pain. The moment I lay eyes on my son, I know exactly what Tereshan meant. I knew I loved my little boy, but now, seeing him, it's true love at first sight.

The tears coming down my face have switched from fear and regret to love and happiness.

"He's so beautiful," I say, looking him over. He's wrapped up in a blanket and has little mittens on his hands and a little soft hat on his head. I can see the dark hair on his head, just like his father's. I look up at Tereshan who is smiling down at both of us.

"He's got your hair," I say.

"He's got your beautiful eyes," Tereshan says.

"He does?" I ask, looking back down, but my son is sleeping, his little lips moving in his sleep.

"He's already a good eater. I had to feed him several times over night and this morning."

I look up at my mate. "How long have I been out?"

"The doctor wanted to keep you sedated overnight, then he took you off the sedation and it still took a while for you to come out of the

anesthesia. Seeing how much pain you're in, I'm glad I agreed to keep you sedated overnight."

He strokes my cheek. "You said Damara is still weak?"

"Yes, I could barely hear her. Between that and the pain, I thought...." I stop, unable to say what I thought.

"That will never, ever happen again. You are mine and I am yours. And now, we have our sweet son to make us a true family."

I hold my son until he begins to fuss. Tereshan tells me that the doctor doesn't want me to nurse for another day because of the medication in my system. So, Tereshan shows me how to bottle feed our son. I watch him, looking like he was born to be a father.

"How long did you say I was out?" I ask him as he carries our son in his arms, feeding him his bottle.

He turns and looks at me. "Just overnight."

"You look like you've been doing this for months. You're a natural at it."

He looks back down at Salvatore. "I always knew I wanted to have a child, a son, an heir. I just never knew it would feel like this."

He turns back to me, and he has the same soft, sweet look on his face he does with me. "You've given me so much, Claire. So much more than I could have ever dreamed or ever knew that I wanted. I didn't know that I could love you more than I did, but I swear I do. I love you more and more every day of our lives. You, my sweet, amazing, strong mate, are the best thing that has ever happened to me."

He turns back to our son. "And this little man, this gift of life that you have given me, is the second best thing to ever happen in my life."

After he finishes feeding Sal, he brings him back to me and I kiss him before Tereshan lays him in the bassinet. Then he turns to me, kissing my forehead.

"Sleep baby. I'm not going anywhere until you are released. Get some rest and let Damara rest. Once you start to heal, we'll head home. The pack is anxiously awaiting news of your recovery."

Tereshan sits down and I feel him take my hand as I fall back to sleep. I sleep off and on for the rest of the day and somewhere in the middle of the night, the doctor agrees that I can start nursing Salvatore.

Tereshan sits beside me as the nurse shows me how to help him latch on. When he finishes on one side, Tereshan takes him to burp him before helping me settle him on the other side. Afterward, I fall back to sleep and the next time I wake, I don't hurt as badly.

'Damara?'

'I'm here. I'm trying to heal you, Claire, but I'm still weak,' she tells me.

'Don't overdo it. Have you seen our pup yet?' I ask her.

'No,' she says, and I can feel her excitement.

I look at Tereshan who is sleeping in the chair beside me. The moment I move, his eyes flash open and he jumps up.

"How are you? How do you feel? How's Damara?" he asks in rapid succession.

"She's getting stronger, but she'd like to see our pup," I tell him.

I watch as his eyes darken and Magnor pushes forward.

"Is she strong enough to come forward to see him?" he asks.

"I am strong enough to see our son, Magnor," she tells him, pushing forward.

Tereshan picks him up, putting him into our arms. The four of us looking at our sweet boy.

Magnor leans forward, kissing the top of our head. "You did such a good job protecting our pup, Damara."

"Thank you, mate," she says, leaning up to kiss him before she pulls back.

Dr. Baron kept me one more day before finally releasing me. Tereshan got everything packed up and put me in a wheelchair, since he can't carry me, and our pup and I'm still not completely healed. He then had the nurse strap a carrier to his body and put Salvatore in the carrier against his chest.

When he wheeled us out of the room, I realized that when Tereshan said the entire pack was worried about us, he meant that they were here, in the waiting room of the hospital, waiting for us to be released.

Everyone stops talking and turns as we walk out. I feel a flood of love and happiness from the pack as they see me.

"Thank you all for coming and being here to watch over our Luna as she heals. It will still be a couple of days before she's back to her usual self, but she is healthy enough to come home and our son, Salvatore is as well." Tereshan announces.

There are quiet cheers as the pack congratulates us on our son. Tereshan takes a moment to lift Salvatore out of the carrier and show him to the pack, before he wheels me out of the pack hospital, most of the pack following behind us as we go.

As we get to the packhouse, I stand up out of the wheelchair, ready to

walk up the stairs, with Tereshan's assistance.

I turn to the pack. "Thank you all, so much! I love every one of you and appreciate you looking out for me and my family while I was healing."

There are a bunch of 'We love you, Luna,' and 'So glad to have you back, Luna,' replies as we turn to head up to our bedroom.

When we walk in, I stop, looking around.

"Oh my goddess, Tereshan! We never got any baby furniture!"