

Chapter Sixty-Four: Endurance

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Phera POV:

The room is cold and dim, the only light a sliver that slips through a crack above me. I hang from the ceiling, suspended by ropes soaked in wolfsbane, each thread seeping its venom into my skin, burning every inch they touch. My feet barely graze the damp floor, my body strained and suspended in a cruel parody of flight.

Every moment is a battle against the pain that tracks my body. I've endured beatings that left me gasping for breath, each blow a stark reminder of my helplessness in this dark place. I'm sure I have a couple of broken ribs and because of the fucking wolfsbane in my system I'm not healing as quick. I may as well be human at this point. The bruises on my skin are a spectrum of pain, blooming in purples and blacks, a visible testament to the cruelty I've faced.

Above my heart, a reminder of how close I've come to death—a steel rod impaled just centimetres from my vital artery, left there by my captors as a brutal warning of my precarious grip on life. It throbs with a persistent ache, a constant pain that pulses with each beat of my heart. I have no doubt it was probably laced with wolfsbane as well. I wonder how much my body took before it shuts down from the poison.

Memories of how I got here are fragmented, broken shards of glass in my mind. I trusted Josh, believed in a shared past that I thought meant something. That trust

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was repaid with betrayal as he stood by, his face an emotionless mask, while I was bound and subdued. I tried calling to him with every punch that landed across my face, every blow to my stomach but nothing. At the end I clamped my lips shut and denied giving anyone the satisfaction. They could break my bones and will but they wouldn't hear me beg.

The irony of my situation cuts deeper than any physical wound. As a future Luna, I've always been a protector, a leader. Now, rendered so utterly powerless, I battle a different kind of enemy: despair and the fear that perhaps my mates won't find me in time. What if my body gives up before they find me what would they see? Would they ever be able to move on?

But even as darkness tries to engulf me, my spirit refuses to yield. I think of Damon, Axel, and Zane—their faces, the love we share, the promises we made to each other. This thought becomes my armor against the assault of hopelessness.

With each moment of pain, I fortify myself with thoughts of revenge. My mates will come and when they do there will be hell raining down here. They are out there, I tell myself, fighting through every obstacle to find me. Their love is my shield, their determination my sword. I do not know when they will come, but I cling to the certainty that they will. Until then, I'll endure. I'll survive. Not just for myself, but for them. With those thoughts I feel my body giving in. My eyes drooped, body shutting down to give way to the pain but then suddenly water so cold that could be compared to the arctic is splashed on me making me glup in air so intensely that every breath is difficult to take especially with the rod so deep

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embedded.

The chill of the water shocks me back to a brutal awareness, each drop on my skin a frozen bite, pulling me from the edges of darkness into a harsh, painful reality. My body jerks reflexively, a gasp tearing from my throat as the cold seeps into my bones, making every ache scream louder.

As I lift my head, water dripping from my hair, my vision clears, and I'm met with the sight of him—the man whose presence has been a constant source of terror since I arrived. He stands there, a dark silhouette against the dim light of the doorway, his height and build imposing, a stark reminder of my vulnerability.

His skin is olive, almost glowing in the low light, and his eyes, dark and cold, watch me with a detached amusement that chills me deeper than the water. There's a cruel cruelty to his lips as he steps closer, the floorboards creaking under his weight.

"Look at you, the mighty Luna of Red Moon, reduced to nothing," he taunts, his voice dripping with disdain.

The words sting, but it's the slap that follows that truly jolts me. His hand strikes my cheek with a force that snaps my head to the side, the sound echoing off the stone walls. I reel from the impact, the taste of iron blooming in my mouth as I bite my tongue. Anger flares within me, hot and fierce, battling the icy hold of fear.

"Why are you doing this? Who the fuck are you" I manage to spit out, my voice hoarse.

He laughs, a sound devoid of humour, filled instead with malice.

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"Because I can, bitch. Because your mates, those proud Alphas, they're nothing here." His words are venom, designed to wound.

But it's his next words that freeze the blood in my veins. With a sickening smile, he leans in close, his breath foul against my ear.

"You want to know who I am, Luna?" he whispers, mockingly gentle. "My name is Rex Evan, half-brother to Larry Evans. Yes, the very same, the father of your beloved Alphas." 1

The revelation hits like a physical blow, staggering in its implications. Rex Evan, a name unfamiliar yet now marked by a blood tie to my mates, a connection that speaks of deep-seated vendettas and hidden skeletons.

"Why?" The question is a whisper, torn from the depths of my confusion and despair.

Rex steps back, his smirk broadening.

"Oh, Luna, it's a long story. A tale of betrayal, of rightful claims denied. Your mates' father wasn't the saint they believe him to be. And now, his sins, they're yours to suffer."

His laughter fills the room as he turns and walks away, leaving me alone with the weight of his words and the biting cold. The door slams shut with a finality that echoes in the hollow space, a reminder of the cage I'm in.

But now, with a name and a connection revealed, the shadows of the past begin to weave into the tapestry of our present struggles. Rex Evan, the half-brother scorned, the enemy hidden in plain sight. Did the triplets know of

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him? Why hadn't anyone ever mentioned him? Actually a better question was did anyone even know of him? And as I hang there, the pain of the slap still stinging, questions race through my mind, tragic events that had happened to the pack over the years. Was it this bastard Rex behind them?

Whatever it takes, I need to survive this. I need to return to my mates with the knowledge of this threat, with the truth of the blood that seeks to destroy us. I need to find a way even if it means seeking help from the same person whose sight I've come to hate. Rex's dark promise hangs over me, a looming spectre of more pain to come.

As the echo of the door hinges fades, my heart pounds against the cold ache left by the previous encounter. I'm barely given a moment to gather my frayed thoughts before the door creaks open again. This time, it's Josh who steps into the dim light, his expression unreadable, his presence a confusing blend of relief and renewed fear.

Despite the fury simmering within me, I bite back the barrage of accusations threatening to spill out. I watch him silently, each movement he makes tracked with wary eyes. Without a word, he approaches, his steps measured, the distance between us closing with an inevitability that tugs at my defences.

He doesn't speak as he reaches my side. Instead, he focuses on the makeshift bandage, his hands surprisingly gentle as they work on the bindings. The silence is heavy, filled with all the things I want to yell at him, but the urgency of my physical pain keeps me grimly quiet. When he finally gets to the steel rod lodged right above my heart, his voice is low, almost regretful.

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"Take a deep breath," he instructs, his fingers poised at the end of the cold metal. I comply, tensing as I draw in a shaky inhale.

The pull of the rod through flesh is a raw, searing agony that tears a hoarse curse from my lips. Josh works quickly, pressing a clean rag against the wound to stem the bleeding, his actions efficient but no less brutal for their necessity.

After a moment that stretches taut with pain and effort, he leans back, his task complete. His eyes, once familiar and warm, now hold a distance that chills me more than the damp air of my prison.

"You've met Rex then,"

Josh states more than asks, his tone a mixture of disdain and caution. It's not a question; it's an acknowledgment of the hell I've just encountered. Trying to leverage this moment, I muster the strength to speak, my voice a harsh whisper.

"Josh, what's going on? Why are you here with him? Who is Rex, really? Is he really the triplets uncle?"

Josh pauses, his features hardening as he considers my questions. For a moment, I think he might finally reveal more, peel back a layer of the mystery shrouding this nightmare. But then he shakes his head, a decision cementing behind his guarded eyes.

"He's dangerous, Phera. More than you can imagine," is all he offers, his voice low, fraught with an unspoken warning. "And he's not sane, not entirely. Be careful around him. That's all I can say."

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Frustration wells up inside me, mingling with the throbbing pain of my wounds.

"Josh, please," I push, desperation colouring my tone. "I need more than that. Help me understand why this is happening."

He stands, his figure a silhouette against the dim lighting.

"I can't. Just... just try to stay alive." His advice is grim, his departure swift as he turns and leaves the room, the door locking behind him with a definitive click.

Left alone once again, the gravity of his words weighs heavily on me. 'Stay alive.' As if survival were just a matter of will when every second here is a battle against both physical agony and creeping despair. But Josh's warning about Rex sticks with me. represents.



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