

Breakdown in Communication

Eric was awake when Haley woke up. I was just resting my eyes. I almost smiled as I could practically hear the wheels already turning in her mind. A weird feeling was coming over me. I felt the strong urge to give her a hickey. I knew she had my mark, but all the people coming to the conference knew I'd intended to make her my chosen mate. She was my fated mate though, and I'd rip their eyes out if they so much as attempted to flirt with her.

For some reason when it was time to go, I had a feeling of dread. What was going on with me? I loved the summit. The drive was going well until my brothers all linked me at once. Darrin asked, "Did you tell her about Claudia?" I tensed, "No, it's not relevant. She's my past. Haley is my future." Darrin groaned.

Jackson grimaced and asked me, "Why not tell her then?" I growled and answered, "We were busy, and it slipped my mind. She's never cared about my past before, she won't now." Jackson sighed, "Claudia is different Eric, and you know it. You didn't love Claudia, but you cared about her; you still do." I growled, "Does everyone forget Claudia is the one who ended what was between us?" Harold sighed, "No. We did not forget that." I shot them all glares, "Good."

Haley of course noticed the tension. She was my whole world. How could my brothers not see that? They were all glaring at me. I glared back. I was so in my head I didn't notice Haley observing us. All three of my brothers linked me. Jackson was their spokesperson, "Tell her. As men in relationships, we are telling you, you really should tell her." I tightened my hands on the wheel and told her it was nothing. They were making a big deal about nothing. Haley popped out it was so uncomfortable.

I yelled at my brothers, "FUCK! Seriously you guys need to get your shit together! I didn't want her to leave. I need her with me right now. You guys know that." Molly stared at me for several moments. Eventually, she snorted and told me, "You are the one that needs to get it together, Eric. Claudia is not the type of woman to take losing you lying down. Haley is vulnerable right now, and you're not doing anything to help her. Claudia will do everything she can to get under Haley's skin." I growled, "For what purpose? Claudia broke up with me, remember? She was done, and I didn't care."

Jessica scoffed, "She'd do it for fun. She's a bitch. A bitch who has always wanted you to care about and love her. You love Haley, and that will grate her nerves." I rolled my eyes and scoffed, "For fun? Seriously Jessica? I know you don't like Claudia, but personal opinions don't matter here."

Jackson sighed and offered, “Everyone but you and Lucas can see what she is. Well... and dad, but that’s not the point. The point is, she’s trouble. She messed you up when you were together, and she’s already started again. You haven’t even spoken to her.”

I gripped the wheel and told them, “You guys are the ones bringing her up. That has nothing to do with Claudia or me. That’s your issue.” Darrin rubbed his eyes telling me, “We are trying to help you. Just let us do that. Let’s just avoid Claudia altogether. Tell me you don’t feel the same sense of doom about this whole thing that we do. If you don’t, I’ll worry in silence. I know you though, you’ve had that look in your eyes that you’re on the lookout for danger. The trouble is you don’t see what we all do as danger. It’s Claudia.” I closed my eyes briefly. He was right in one sense. I do feel like something is brewing. I felt an odd sense overtaking me the closer we got to the summit.

I answered honestly, “Yes, I do feel that same sense of foreboding, but it’s not Claudia. She’s not the awful person you all make her out to be.” Molly sighed and told me, “She’s dangerous. She will lose it about Haley being pregnant.” That was probably true. Hell, I knew Molly was right about that. Claudia would be broken up about Haley’s pregnancy. I admitted out loud, “That’s true I suppose. Claudia really wants a pup, but she will understand. Haley is my mate. Plus, I’m not going to seek her out to tell her Haley is pregnant. Claudia might not find out.” Jackson scoffed, “It’s the talk of the summit already, Eric. Our rescue of her and the fact that she’s pregnant is what everyone is talking about. The fact that you found your long-awaited mate was already the topic of conversation. Damon’s actions only made you and Haley MORE of a hot topic than you already were.”

I really didn’t want to hear it. Something inside me felt incredibly pissed off about the way they spoke of Claudia. It had been that way since I met her. Before, I couldn’t have cared less about the rumors about Claudia. Then we met. Everything changed after that. My brothers and their mates hated her, but they didn’t know the real Claudia. She just wanted to be a mom.

I shook those thoughts. I felt the need to have Haley close to me. I announced to the car, “I’m going to link Haley and tell her to come back. All of you, cut this out. There’s been enough Claudia talk already. None of it was even brought up by me. You’re making a mountain out of a molehill. Claudia is in the past, and I’m done listening to you disparage her.” All of them glowered at me. Haley came back.

She looked at me with such understanding that guilt hit me hard. I quickly shook it off. This was insane. I didn’t have anything to feel guilty about. I told Haley the truth, it was nothing. I could probably keep Claudia away from her. It wasn’t like I’d planned to introduce them in the first place. I hadn’t even known Claudia was coming until Caleb told me. I did want Haley to know I only loved her. She was my Angel. We were two halves of a whole. It was just that my half had a much

more colorful past than hers. I didn't want it to touch her any more than it already had.

I just wanted her to enjoy the rest of her pregnancy. The beginning of her pregnancy was horrible, and she deserved to relax. Haley announced that she might ride with Miley back home. I'd kick my brothers out of our car before that happened. Besides once we left there'd be no need to talk about Claudia.

We checked in, and quickly went up to our suite. My brothers slammed their doors, and I dragged Haley into our room. I needed her. It felt like something inside me was pushing me to have her right now. It felt like someone was going to try to take her again. For some reason, I thought that if she found out about Claudia and myself trying to have pups she'd leave. It made sense to me because Haley was pregnant. Knowing I'd actively tried to have pups with someone else might be too much for her right now. I needed to protect her. I buried myself in her, losing track of time again. I'd never let her go, I couldn't.

Jesus Mary mother of Joseph. What am I? A fucking virgin thanking my wife for having sex with me? When Haley went into the bathroom, I buried my hands in my head. I needed to get it together. Jackson knocked and said we needed to get downstairs. We came out and everyone was staring at Haley, which I ignored until I felt her anger. I growled at them through link, "You guys are upsetting her. Cut it out." None of them bothered to answer me.

We met up with the rest of our group we'd brought. Miley looked pissed off too. Oh good, two angry Hackura women together. This is going to go so well. I saw the moment Haley put her game face on. It gave away nothing, but I still felt how upset she was in our bond. While it was a good thing she could put on a good face... I found that I hated it. I didn't want her to have to pretend she was ok. Haley's face blossomed into her real smile, and I felt genuine happiness from her when she spotted Lucas.

Our group and Lucas' tensed when Haley mentioned she wanted to hunt down a werelion unless it was a psycho ex of mine. FUCK! Harold linked me, "Seriously..." I rolled my eyes. Claudia wasn't a psycho, but clearly even Lucas knew she was here. Jackson linked, "Seriously, take Haley aside and explain it all... quickly" I growled at my brother through link, "ENOUGH! Claudia isn't psycho, and she doesn't want to kill Haley." Darrin replied, "Just like Vanessa didn't want to kill Haley?" I sighed, "That was completely different! Uncharmed... Vanessa wouldn't have wanted to kill Haley."

Dylan Frost hummed, "Trainwreck in three, two, one." What the shit? At that exact moment, my worst nightmare happened. Claudia's voice echoed across the hall. I saw several eyerolls across multiple groups. Several women tensed and shot looks

of disdain behind me where Claudia must be. Jackson linked, "It's probably not the best moment but... I fucking told you so, you idiot."

I turned and spotted Claudia coming towards us. I felt uneasy. It was invading my soul. I just wanted to get out of here. I greeted Claudia with little to no familiarity. I felt a pang of sadness to treat an old friend and lover this way; however, I would spare Haley's feelings. Claudia's eyes flashed with hurt. She turned to Haley and they started talking. I barely held in a sigh. This wasn't going to go well.

Haley made it a point to mention she was my wife and mate. Claudia's face looked pained. CHRIST! How could Claudia not know that at this point? Everyone was talking about our wedding. Haley cussed left and right, and Claudia raised an eyebrow. She was never one to cuss at events or in public. She sarcastically commented on how softly spoken Haley was, turning to me with hurt in her eyes when she said I didn't call to tell her. Honestly, it never crossed my mind. Maybe it should've, we were quite close at one time.

Haley wanted a proper, full name introduction. My jaw dropped when Claudia called Haley a little girl. I closed my eyes. Claudia was just blindsided. She wasn't trying to be rude. Oh god. Haley's guard was going to materialize and haul Claudia off to Hackura jail or something. As soon as Claudia said her last name, hatred, anger, and aggression slammed into the bond so hard I almost growled. I looked sideways at my mate. Haley told Claudia her full title, emphasizing her Hackura last name. I didn't recall Claudia having anything to do with the Hackura. Jackson linked me, "Um, did Claudia piss off the Hackura?" I was about to respond when Claudia called me by my name. Haley cut her off telling her to address me by my title.

My mouth dropped and Jackson snorted, "Oh, I think Claudia did piss off the Hackura." Darrin linked me and my brothers, "I feel like I need popcorn. Dylan has the right idea over there. Does anyone think we will get an explanation as to how they knew each other's names and not faces?" I growled, "SHUT UP DARRIN!"

Everyone was holding back laughter except me when Haley explained how using a Hackura's title worked. I actually didn't know that. I winced when she commented how young Haley was. I might have left my body when Claudia announced that we tried to have a pup. Oh, shit fuck balls mother fucker. Jackson linked, "I really did tell you so." I growled, "I got it the first time you said it."

Blade materialized. I linked my brothers, "Shit, he's going to kill her, isn't he?" Darrin replied, "One can only hope. Then our problems are solved." I growled, "Claudia is just blindsided, and lashing out. She doesn't deserve to die." Jackson scoffed, "Yet your young mate is holding her own and she's been blindsided. She also clearly hates Claudia. Are you not even slightly curious as to why the nicest

girl I've ever met hates Claudia this intensely?" I frowned "That's not my main concern at the moment. Haley's life isn't in jeopardy. I am curious what's going on. I will ask her later."

Haley offhandedly mentioned that I had a guard. Excuse me? My guard? I have a fucking guard? I'm an Alpha for Christ's sake, I don't need a guard. I linked Jackson, "We might have to put a meeting on our calendar with Titus. I do not need a guard." Jackson smirked, "Maybe you do, they could be on Claudia patrol should she make it out of this encounter alive." I glared at him. Haley spoke to Blade in Latin. I needed to start learning Latin, but I didn't need to know the language to know that the discussion clearly wasn't Haley telling Blade it was all good. Great, now Blade was going to be watching Claudia like a hawk.

What the hell happened between these two? How would Claudia know she shouldn't address Haley by her name? Darrin linked my brothers, me, and their mates, "Does anyone know how Claudia should've know that? I call Bjourn and Marcus by their names and no one ever threatened to teach me any manners." Jackson snorted, "We all have. Haley never even showed any sign she was upset by it either." I sighed, "Maybe it is about me." Molly snorted, "Not everything is about you, Eric. This is clearly something much deeper than you fucked her once upon a time. I actually have a pretty good guess about who this concerns."

Claudia spoke to me, addressing me by my title which just felt wrong. I told her to call me by my name. I was surprised I didn't go deaf when Haley shouted at me in our link. Claudia smiled and thanked me. I quickly walked away from Claudia so we could all move on. I needed Caleb to figure out how to avoid Claudia the rest of the summit.

Jackson linked me, "You're missing quite the staring contest, big brother. The hatred between these two women is one hundred percent mutual." I just wanted to keep moving and then get back to our room, but we had a few hours of talking to do. Haley and I were arguing over link. Claudia's words about her being young clearly hit a nerve. Which surprised me. Her age has never bothered me and she knew that. I sighed. Maybe my brothers were right. I should've told her what she was walking into. Foolishly and maybe selfishly, I thought we could all avoid each other.

Haley excused herself to go to the restroom. I got a little nervous when she had been gone for a while. Lucas walked up to me without Dylan which I found surprising, but I welcomed the change all the same. Lucas asked, "Are you heading upstairs, Eric? I was hoping we could talk." I nodded, "Sure Lucas, just give me one second." I turned and spotted who I was looking for. I called to her, "Miley." She walked over towards us, looking pretty annoyed with me. She crossed her arms and asked, "Yes?" I told her, "Please go make sure Haley is alright. Tell her to come upstairs to our room." Miley frowned asking, "Why wouldn't she be

alright?" I sighed, "She just went to the bathroom a while ago, and she hasn't come back." Miley's eyes narrowed, "I'll find her." She walked off. My instincts were screaming at me to go find Haley myself, but I knew Miley would.

Lucas, Harold, Jessica, Jackson, Molly, Caleb, and I walked to the elevator. Just as the doors were closing a hand appearing stopped them. A sobbing Claudia got in the elevator and hit her floor. Harold linked me, "For the love of god. DO NOT ask her what's wrong. Lord knows what lie we'd hear about those crocodile tears." I rolled my eyes. Could my family get more dramatic about this woman? I cleared my throat and asked, "Claudia? Are you alright?" She sobbed out, "What? Yes... I'm fine." I sighed.

Something in me just wouldn't let it go. I said, "Claudia you're sobbing. You are clearly not fine." Claudia turned to face me and put her hands out saying, "It's nothing, Eric. She's young and it's understandable." Her hand was dislocated. I growled, "Who is?" Please god, do not tell me I missed another confrontation between these two.

Claudia sobbed, "It's just that I dated her brother too, and she thought I was taking him away from her. She hated me. She resented me, and the fact that he wanted to spend time with me. He is a really important person in her life. I understand... I do.... it's just that she's the Hackura princess and they all love her so much. I don't want to die, Eric. Please don't let me die."

Fuck me. It had to be Marcus. This was about Marcus. Great. I grounded out, "Claudia, Haley is not going to kill you." Claudia sobbed some more. Lucas moved to hold her. Claudia said, "I just... her brother and now her mate. God, no wonder she hates me. She said if I went near you, she'd kill me." I tensed and told her, "It must be a misunderstanding. She didn't mean that."

Claudia would've fallen to the ground if Lucas wasn't holding her. She cried out, "She taunted me. She threw it my face that she got pregnant with your pups but I couldn't. I'm so useless! She's going to have me killed. All of her brothers would do it, only Marcus liked me. The others hated me because she did. Marcus constantly talked about how much he loved his little sister." The doors opened for her floor and Claudia stepped out. I told her, "I'll speak to Haley, Claudia it will be fine."

As soon as the doors closed again Molly spoke, "What a load of shit! You'd better get yourself a canoe and a paddle if you are daring to wade into that shit storm, Eric." I growled, "This is about me and Marcus. I can't have Haley behaving this way. She's not rational about Marcus! He is her rock. We all know when she went to the Hackura she needed him."

Jackson cautioned, "Eric, I highly doubt it went down the way it was just portrayed. That doesn't sound like Haley at all." I growled. He was right, but my anger was all consuming. Logically, I knew Haley would be the last person who'd throw not being able to get pregnant in anyone's face. She's seen what that does to other women. Thor linked, "She wouldn't. You know that doesn't make sense. Claudia is a liar, Eric."

Part of me knew Thor was right, Haley wouldn't do this. Another part of me was furious over Claudia's tears. Thor asked, "Why do you care that she cried? In the car you said you didn't even care if you saw her. Her tears should mean nothing." He was right again, but they did... for some reason.

We made it to our suite. I slammed the door open only to see Haley wasn't here yet. I grabbed anything I could find and threw it. Maybe I should've left her at home in charge of the pack. How the fuck could I do that though when she wasn't fully recovered? The very thought filled me with dread. Thor growled at me, "Claudia is not our fucking mate. Talk to mate." I ignored him and my brothers. After a while even Lucas tried to calm me down. It was like an unknown force was making me infuriated. The thought of Claudia's death enraged me to a degree I didn't understand.

I smelled my mate's scent and whirled to face her. It was as if someone else took over my body, and I was a bystander. We argued... I internally winced at some of the words that came out of my mouth. Haley even made valid points and offered that there were witnesses. That Claudia had twisted the entire encounter. The witness was from Lucas' party. Thank GOD it wasn't Dylan. Why did I think of finding witnesses? Claudia spoke against my Luna. Why didn't I have this checked out? What is wrong with me?

Shit, maybe Claudia misunderstood. She just desperately wanted a pup. Maybe it all just got twisted in her head because she was so upset about me finding my mate and having pups. I felt like the world's largest asshole. Then Haley was gone.

The Alpha blood in my veins roared at her defiance. I destroyed everything left to destroy in the room. Darrin shouted, "Eric, pull yourself together." Happy to find a target for my anger I yelled at him, "She IGNORED ME!" Darrin rolled his eyes, "Technically, you didn't finish not telling her to leave." I punched him. He simply smiled and asked, "Do you feel better?" I growled, "Maybe."

Lucas cleared his throat, "Eric, Claudia must have misinterpreted what happened. You know how much she wants a pup. I linked Dylan to find the pack member Haley described. He will be here shortly." I nodded my thanks to him.

Jackson shook his head at us both, "What is wrong with you two? Claudia clearly lied. Can you not just say she lied? Stop trying to excuse it. Eric, if you don't want

to lose Haley, I suggest you get it together. It's not as if Haley doesn't have options. Her Hackura family would love to have her in their realm WITH your pups. GROW UP! Hell, Aiden would probably love to have her back too."

I recoiled at the thought. I sputtered, "They wouldn't keep Haley from me. She wouldn't want to be away from me. No, her fairy side needs me. I... I can't lose her, Jackson." Darrin snorted, "Really, because someone would've thought you couldn't lose Claudia." I shook my head, "NO... no it's Haley. I don't know what came over me. Someone tell me I didn't actually say the words teenage fit of jealousy." Lucas laughed a little and said, "You threw in something about pregnancy hormones too."

I linked Haley telling her to come back and she called me an ass. My stupid Alpha blood couldn't handle the order being denied, and I just made it worse. Darrin interrupted me as I was about to respond to her again. He cleared his throat, "Maybe don't link her right now. Let's all just take a second to calm down. This time, Haley took Molly and Jessica with her. She's not hurt and she has company."

I growled, "In a fucking bar without her guard or any warriors." Jackson rolled his eyes and added, "She's also apparently in a great deal of pain." I frowned, "I feel anger from her not pain." Jackson sighed, "According to Molly, Haley was laying on the floor and barely crawled to a booth. Molly said Haley keeps rubbing her chest. Molly also said Blade is there. He waved to her." I growled in frustration, "FUCK! Her fairy side isn't healed. Tell them to come back."

Jackson raised his eyebrows, "Right, I didn't think of that. Oh wait, I did. Apparently when Jessica and Molly said she should come back, her response was something along the lines of she will act like a hormonal teenager if she's accused of being one." I grimaced.

Lucas' pack member walked in looking very nervous. Dylan looked far too gleeful. He smiled, "Here you go, Lucas. I brought Felicia post haste and this story gosh... it's a doozy! Can I just say... I ADORE that Eric's mate and Claudia are clashing, it's GOING to be the highlight of the summit. I find this all a bit obnoxious though. I avoided him like the plague while she was taken, and Claudia just HAD to come and stir up a shit storm! I'm both excited and HIGHLY offended."

I snarled, "Dylan, shut up." Lucas spoke quickly, "Felicia, you're not in trouble. Eric's mate mentioned you were a witness to the confrontation in the bathroom. Claudia and Haley's accounts aren't the same. We just wanted to hear from you what happened." Felicia spoke, "Well, if I was a betting person Eric's mate has to be telling the truth. She's a fairy, and they can't lie."

I cringed. I knew Haley couldn't lie. Why didn't that occur to me five minutes ago? Felicia continued, "Claudia Harden was the aggressor and the problem. She

was really rude. Claudia cornered Princess Luna Haley. She just flipped out when she found out Haley was pregnant. Honestly, Claudia said some pretty mean things I'd rather not repeat; however, Alpha Eric, your mate didn't seem bothered at all. She handled it quite well. You should be proud."

Shame filled me. I should've asked. Why didn't I ask? Why did Claudia always bring out my worst instincts and self? Dylan said, "Aww Felicia, don't be scared because Alpha stick up his ass has no fun. I'll be your voice. Beta Dylan IS HERE for you! From what I have been told, Claudia called your mate fat before finding out she was pregnant. Then assumed the pups were the product of her being raped. She also implied you'd have forced our precious, wonderful, pink loving fairy to get an abortion if that were the case. She also threw it out there that you and my Alpha used the make the beast with two backs every so often. My Beta blood says she's trying to get your pink loving fairy to leave you. This should upset you... greatly. Go kill her, for the team... come on!" I growled, "Anyone who tries to make her leave me will die." Dylan nodded, "Exactly... so OFF WITH HER HEAD!" I yelled, "LUCAS!" Lucas quickly ushered Felicia and Dylan out of the room.

I sighed as they left and pulled out my phone to call Marcus. He answered immediately, "Eric? Is Haley alright? I don't understand what I'm feeling from her right now." I sighed admitting, "No, she's not." Darrin motioned to put it on speaker phone. I did and kept talking to Marcus, "What is your history with Claudia Harden?"

Marcus groaned, "Tell me Haley and Claudia didn't meet at the summit?" I sighed, "They did and apparently Claudia spewed hate, and Haley threatened to kill her. Claudia was distraught in the elevator with us. I snapped at Haley and she popped away with my brother's mates." Marcus sighed, "She said she wouldn't run from you. I'll text her. She probably did threaten to kill Claudia. To be fair, Claudia doesn't like Haley either. Obviously, you know Claudia and I have a past. Honestly, she wanted all my time, but Haley needed me. I bluntly told Claudia that Haley came first. I mean for god's sake, Claudia is a nice girl, but she's not my fucking mate."

I wanted to groan. Claudia completely misinterpreted her relationship with Marcus. I linked Jim, "Ask Miley where Haley is." Jim replied, "Ok..." After a few moments he answered, "Miley doesn't know but she's texting her now, and she's pissed. Dad and I are coming to your room."

Marcus cursed, "Shit." I groaned asking, "What now?" He sighed and told me, "Haley's pissed at me now for not asking what happened." I sighed, "She's definitely pissed at both of us then."

Bjourn's voice came over the phone, "What have you two done now?" Marcus explained and Bjourn laughed. He told us, "That woman is a fucking curse. I told you then and I'm telling you now, stay away from her brother. Our sister loves almost everyone, even to a fault. That she despises Claudia prior to meeting her should tell you something."

Marcus groaned, "It's a misunderstanding that Haley refuses to believe." Bjourn laughed, "That should tell you something too, brother. I'll text her. She won't be upset with me. I feel the same way about Claudia." I asked them, "What happened with you guys? Haley called her an attempted murderer before she popped out." Bjourn spoke, "Since my brother is incapable of sharing this story without bias, I'll tell it. Claudia and Marcus tried to have a baby."

I winced. Darrin laughed, "So did Eric and Claudia." I glared at him. He shrugged. Bjourn continued, "I'm sure that went over well with my little sister. Back to the story, Torvi and Marcus decided to end their off period, and no child resulted from Claudia's heat. Marcus took Torvi to dinner in the human realm. Torvi left the table feeling unwell. Claudia appeared to talk to Marcus the second Torvi was out of sight. Torvi called Haley, and Haley immediately popped to heal her. Haley maintains Torvi was poisoned and would've died. Claudia says that it was just food poisoning because she wanted Marcus to talk to her. Marcus felt nothing severe from Torvi and feels Claudia's version is accurate."

Jackson interjected, "How come Haley didn't meet Claudia in the restaurant?" Marcus said, "Because she immediately popped Torvi home for healing. She popped my mom back to the bathroom. Mom questioned the staff and we found out it was Claudia." Jackson asked, "Haley didn't do her truth thing because?" Bjourn laughed, "Because Marcus made her promise not to. He believed Claudia; it was the only time my siblings fought. This makes two times now brother, and it's over the same person." I groaned, "So this is because she thinks Claudia tried to kill Torvi? Ok, I can see how Haley be upset, but she still can't threaten to kill her." Bjourn laughed so hard he started crying.

Finally, I asked, "What is it, Bjourn? Bjourn's amusement was clear when he answered. "Oh, this is CLASSIC Haley. She didn't threaten to kill Claudia. She simply told Claudia what would happen when Claudia told her she would sleep with Eric again. Or rather, Sasha did." Marcus groaned, "Shit." I replied, "What does that mean? I would never sleep with Claudia again. I have Haley. She's my fated mate and we are marked. Haley is it for me." Bjourn replied, "Oh, I know that or there would be hell to pay. The penalty for sleeping with a royal Hackura's mate not on an off period is death. That's not a threat, it's the law." I groaned, "Well, I see how Claudia misconstrued it though."

Bjourn laughed again and yelled, "OH MY GOD! Eric, tell me you didn't say Haley was having teenage hormonal jealousy fit?" I groaned, "I might have said

something like that.” Bjourn laughed for several minutes before saying, “You’re screwed, dude. Apologize, profusely. This shit is better than cable. I’m telling dad I’m staying with you for a while when you return home.” I sighed, “I will apologize when Haley comes back. I cannot believe this entire thing happened from a misunderstanding.”

Jackson snorted, “You, Marcus, and even you, Lucas are snowed by Claudia. This happened because she fucking lied to you, Eric. Blatantly and maliciously. Then, you didn’t ASK your mate what happened. You yelled at her for something she didn’t even do. Granted, your actions were nothing compared to when Haley was taken. There was no jumping through windows like a lunatic; however, you caused this by listening to the woman we told you to avoid.” I wanted to growl but he was right. This was my fault.

Molly and Jessica walked back into the room without Haley. I growled, “WHERE IS SHE?” They both frowned. Jessica offered, “She was in Miley and Jim’s room, I seriously doubt she’s there now.” I sighed and asked Jim, “Will you go check, please?” Jim nodded and took off.

Jessica glared at me, “You know Claudia told Haley that you needed a wolf by your side. Haley thinks she could be right. She’s afraid you’ll resent her if your pups can’t shift.” My eyes widened, “I would never resent Haley. I don’t care if the pups shift. It would be nice, but I don’t care.” Molly sighed, “I think you will have a tough time proving that now, Eric. Haley knew she needed you for her fairy side, but she said she wouldn’t come back. She’d rather have that physical pain than know the pain of you not believing in her.” Pain hit me like a bolt to the heart.

I couldn’t locate Haley’s location in the bond. Something told me that was intentional. I knew she was here in the hotel though. I sat down and put my head in my hands. I spoke, “I… I didn’t think. Haley can’t think that. Nothing is more important to me than her and our pups.” Jessica scoffed, “Really? Because for a minute there, I could’ve sworn Claudia mattered more. I told you she would be vicious. We warned you.” I told her honestly, “I don’t know what happened. It was like I lost control of myself, and not to Thor. To something else entirely.”

Jackson raised an eyebrow and told me, “You’ve never said that before.” I shrugged, “It’s how I feel around Claudia.” Lucas admitted, “I feel that way too.” Jackson made a face, “Well, that’s… Interesting. I’ll have to look into that with Caleb and Dylan.”

Jim came back into the room and announced, “They weren’t in our room.” I sighed and told him, “Link Miley and ask her to come to our room.” He nodded. Caleb sighed and spoke, “Eric, you are my Alpha. We have friends since you were in diapers, and I love you like a brother so know I say this with that in mind. You’re being an idiot. I don’t know why you would believe a word out of the harpy’s

mouth. She's a pathological liar." I sighed, "Claudia just wants a pup so desperately. I think it's breaking her down that she's not able to be a mother."

Jessica laughed then said, "Are you kidding me? She would be a terrible mother. She's the most selfish woman I've ever met. Here's the thing, Claudia hurt Marcus. Whether Marcus believes Claudia or not about trying to kill Torvi, HALEY believes it to be true. In HER mind, hurting Marcus, who until she met you was the most important person to her, makes Claudia enemy number one. He's her savior Eric as well as her brother. Think about it in her shoes. No one had ever shown Haley kindness in public, and then Marcus swoops in. He forced all the questions to stop and took her to a home where people love her. Claudia hurt Marcus by striking at Torvi. You know in her shoes; you would not let that stand either. Now, Claudia is here making moves trying to ruin your relationship, and you don't even see it. Haley is alone in trying to keep your relationship and your pups safe."

I growled, "Claudia wouldn't hurt my pups or Haley." Molly scoffed, "I'm sure Marcus thought the same thing about his mate. Tell me Eric, Haley said it was going to take Claudia trying to kill her for you to believe her that Claudia is a bad person. She also said that there had better be witnesses or someone catching her in the act with a weapon for you to believe her. Is she right?"

Pain coursed through my entire being at the thought of Haley's death. I clutched my chest and Jackson put his hand on my arm. Eventually I whispered, "Claudia won't try to kill Haley. I can't be without her, and everyone knows that. Claudia will respect that." Molly sighed, "So Haley is right. You won't believe it." I stood and announced, "I will kill ANYONE who tries to harm my mate or my pups." Both girls looked away from me.

Miley stormed into the room. She glared at me and asked, "What do you want, Alpha?" I stared at her then nodded, "So you land on your cousin's side. I know I was wrong; I just want to know where Haley is. We need to talk." Miley smiled and informed me, "I will always be on her side. I was about the whole Torvi and Marcus too. It should tell you something that Torvi was also on her side. I can't tell you where Haley is." I sighed, "I really didn't want to do this. Jim, ask your mate where mine is." Jim groaned, "Miles... baby..." Miley cut him off, "I can't tell him either. It was the Princess's command." Jessica added, "That's true. Haley commanded her in front of us."

I broke the chair in frustration and yelled, "I NEED HER BACK! She's in pain! I can feel it! Not just emotional pain. She is in physical pain. Her fairy side isn't fully healed yet." Miley scoffed, "Oh, so now you need her? NOW you're concerned about her pain? What about when Claudia wags her little finger and asks you to jump. Haley is right. Men are stupid and blindsided over Claudia. Marcus is one of the smartest people I know, and she had him snowed. Now there's you."

She glared at Jim and added, "I swear to God Jim if you go near that wench, I'll chop your balls off." Jim shivered and rubbed Miley's shoulders, "I don't like her, baby. At all. You know that." Miley glared at him, "Whatever. Haley is in pain, but your stupid ex-girlfriend shoved all her insecurities to the forefront of her mind. She can't come back right now, Eric. Not that she doesn't want to; she can't."

I frowned asking, "What does that mean?" Miley sighed, "You don't know the Haley we met when Marcus brought her to us. The Haley you know isn't the one we are used to seeing. She's shaken and she thinks you're going to stop loving her and pick Claudia or some other wolf over her." I scoffed, "That's ridiculous." Miley shrugged, "So you say, but in Haley's mind you've taken the side of now two wolves without asking hers. Do you really trust your mate, Eric?" I sighed, "I do, I really do. Claudia just made so much sense with the deal about Marcus. I know what he is to Haley. It made sense she would hate her for taking his time."

Harold sighed and offered, "As much as I hate Claudia, I have to agree. Claudia did make sense bringing Marcus into the equation. I didn't think it went how Claudia portrayed, but I believed Haley threatened to kill her." Miley rolled her eyes, "Claudia always does make sense to those of the male persuasion. I'm also sure her crocodile tears were on point; however, NONE of you have cause or reason to doubt Haley." Darrin sighed, "I mean we've all been worried because she's not in a great head space... Then add in someone who hurt Marcus... not to mention the fact that Claudia wants to bang her husband... It would be understandable."

Miley rolled her eyes, "Look, Haley is and always will be one of the kindest human beings. Even when you cross her she's practically mother fucking Teresa; however, you cross those she loves and she goes full Hackura. So, I don't care whose line of reason you believe in the situation with Marcus. Whether or not Claudia tried to kill Torvi, she has ADMITTED to making her sick, and that's FUCKED UP. She's a bad person, and Haley isn't. You all should've asked Haley what happened instead of flying off the damn handle. For the record, I'm not just lumping Eric into that massive overreaction. All of you Alpha males stood around without saying ONE goddam word in her defense. At least I can leave this room knowing had Jim been here, he would've asked her. He would've stood up for her, even and let her tell her side of the story. In case you forgot, the first time Haley met Jim she saved him AND NICK. Then she healed your mates. Which is why Jessica is here pregnant and Shana's at home with babies. Haley mounted a defense and saved your pack that was left behind during the first summit. She even saved your mother to the detriment of herself and her children. She has done NOTHING but save and help you fucking pricks. Then you throw it in her face every time some wolf says otherwise by not taking in her previous action into account. Get it the FUCK together, all of you."

She took a deep breath then continued, “Even Marcus, who adores her, couldn’t see through Claudia’s bullshit. They would’ve lost that special relationship they have if Titus hadn’t forbidden Marcus from seeing Claudia again. Then after twenty-four hours of no communication... Marcus was Marcus again. Oh, and if any of you so much as breathe a word to Haley that that’s why Marcus stopped seeing Claudia, I’ll chop your balls off with a spork!” With that she turned and left.

Everyone filed out of the room. I was pissed at myself for not seeing things more clearly. I needed to apologize, but I couldn’t do it over link; it needed to be in person. Haley was willing to hurt herself to not be near me. It hit me like a ton of bricks, I really did not deserve her. I failed my mate and broke promises. She needed space, and I had to give it to her. Thor linked me, “Let me talk to mate when we see her. She’s mad at you not me. She may talk to us if it’s me in control.” I sighed, “It’s not a bad plan, but I need to apologize to her.” Thor agreed, “You do. You know I hate Claudia.” I sighed, “Yes, I know Thor.”

Thor closed our link and I was left alone with his thoughts. It was interesting that Marcus had to be ordered by his father not to be around Claudia. When she broke up with me and left my feelings for her immediately evaporated. I’d felt nothing for her but trepidation and annoyance when we arrived. Why did I blow up at Haley after seeing and speaking to Claudia? My mind whirled until I fell asleep.

When I woke up and inhaled, I immediately smelled my mate. I reached for her, but she wasn’t there. The events of last night came back to me. I groaned; I am such an idiot. Haley had clearly been in our room though.

I rushed out the door of our room and looked around hurriedly, much to the surprise of my family. I sighed in defeat when I realized Haley wasn’t there. I hung my head. Jackson asked, “What’s wrong, Eric?” I sighed, “Haley was in our room at some point. I thought maybe she was out here. No, actually I figured she wasn’t, but hope abounds I suppose.”

Jackson looked at me sadly. Eventually he said, “We will get this all straightened out. I guess we will just tell everyone that Haley’s not feeling well today.” I nodded, “It’s not like it’s a lie.” Molly snorted, “Just be prepared for rumors to start that Claudia caused problems with you and your mate, once it’s established she’s not with us.” I frowned, “People wouldn’t say that.” Molly rolled her eyes, “Oh Eric. Claudia WILL start that rumor once she confirms Haley isn’t with you.”

I linked Jackson, “If Claudia knows what’s good for her she will not do that.” Jackson snorted but didn’t reply. We headed downstairs. I took a breath and entered the room. Alpha Summers and his Luna immediately came up to me and asked where Haley was.

I was about to explain when Haley materialized by my side. She looked beautiful; I couldn't look away. Jackson linked me, "Alpha Summers asked if she is in fact pregnant." I answered without looking away from Haley. Luna Summers wanted to speak to Haley. When she started to walk away from me, and I grabbed her and pulled her back. I was starting to panic. She could disappear again because I'm an idiot. I wouldn't get to talk to her. Jackson linked me, "She's obviously going to stick around. You can let her go."

I kissed Haley and threw all my feelings into our bond. I watched her as she walked away. She truly was beautiful. When she turned to her side I saw her little bump and I couldn't suppress the jolt of lust went through me. Possessiveness lit through me. Haley was mine, and she was carrying my pups.

I was surprised when lips touched my cheek. I turned to see Claudia standing beside me. I frowned. Thor bit back a growl. Claudia spoke before I could. She apologized, "I owe you an apology. I'm truly sorry, Eric. After thinking about the situation and calming down, I believe I misconstrued your mate's words; I do hope I didn't cause a problem. Especially since she's not with you today." My eyes went down to where Claudia's hand was resting on my arm.

Molly snorted retorting, "You think too highly of yourself, Claudia. Haley is right over there, speaking with Luna Summers." Claudia's eyes narrowed when she spotted Haley. She frowned briefly before turning back to me and smiling. She said, "Oh, good! I see you got it all sorted out." I nodded. She kept her hand on my arm.

I was about to say something about it when Claudia laughed and said, "Oh Eric, my father wanted to speak with you about a few things. Can we step out to talk to him?" I looked at Alpha Summers. He pursed his lips and said, "We could all go. I do have some things to discuss with you as well, Eric. I agreed, "Alright. Let's go." I turned to look for Haley, but she and Luna Summers were gone. I linked Jim, "Tell Miley to find Haley. She was just talking to Luna Summers; they are both gone now." Jim sighed, "Alright, Eric. At least she was here. That's a starting point."

Claudia led our group out the door. Haley felt strange in our bond. I figured it was whatever she was doing to keep her location from me. When we went around the first corner the sight that greeted us had my blood boiling. Haley was breathing heavily, and her eyes were blazing gold. Asher Harden, Claudia's youngest brother, was on the floor groaning in pain. I saw red.

Haley explained the situation in such a Haley way that if I wasn't pissed; I would've laughed. I had Asher by the throat in seconds. Claudia said Haley was lying, but I knew she wasn't. Alpha Harden showed up and said we should hear

Asher's side, his side was irfuckingrelevant. Claudia asked me to let him explain. After an internal debate, I decided to let him hang himself. I dropped him.

I felt Haley's pain and looked at her, but I didn't see a wound. She probably healed it. If this fucker drew blood, he was a dead man. Asher explained his side. Our entire party stared at him in disbelief. I was about to defend my mate when Haley stood up for herself. All her points were based on fact and logic.

Claudia pointed out Haley's guard didn't show up; that actually didn't make sense. Where the FUCK was her guard? We came up with a plan for them to be in this realm FOR HER. I was about to link Jackson to send someone to see if they could find her guard... which was honestly a fool's errand. I'd have to call Marcus or Bjourn to find them. I wanted a fucking explanation for how someone touched my mate when Haley sent me her hurt, pain, and anger.

I staggered and stared at her in confusion. We were having the mother of all communication issues, and it was my own damn fault. I had no clue why Haley was so upset right now. Haley lost it after Claudia hurled inaccurate accusations, and I couldn't even blame her. I barely managed not to scoff when Haley said her guard let her handle assholes. They used to do that. They should've gutted him like a fish after their new directives. It didn't make sense. Blade would've lost it. He pulled a knife and was ready to kill over Claudia not calling Haley by her titles. What the fuck is going on today?

Luna Summers stepped out and backed up Haley's version of events. Then added in a few details that Haley left out some details. Thor yelled in our connection, "HE LICKED HER FUCKING FACE?!" I lost it. I vaguely heard Alpha Harden offering something for recompense. What the fuck ever. As if I cared what he offered.

Claudia put her hands on my chest in an attempt to calm me down, or protect her brother, I honestly didn't know. Her touch was pissing off both Thor and I at this point. Haley's fairy allure was mentioned. She had allure, but everyone knew to keep their fucking hands off her because Haley is FUCKING MINE. Haley laughed and pointed out the inaccuracies in Claudia's statements.

She was right. Everyone loves to point out to my mate that she is a partial fairy. There were full blooded fairies here with more allure than Haley. Yet Asher went after my mate instead of them. If he could control himself around full blooded fairies, he should have no problem with my mate. I sighed. Maybe we should just go home. This whole thing had been a disaster from the start. Haley stormed off. I turned and said, "Lucas." It was all I needed to say to him. He understood and took off after Haley.

Alpha Harden asked again about whatever he offered for recompense. I waved my hand, "Whatever is fine, Alpha Harden." I turned to my target and hissed, "Asher, you put your hands on what is mine." I asked, "Which hand was it, Luna Summers?" She smiled, "His right hand, Alpha Eric." I reached out for his hand. My intent was clear. Claudia screamed, but I didn't care. I grabbed his hand and twisted it until it broke.

Asher screamed in pain. Claudia cried and slapped me in the face, demanding, "How could you do that? IT WAS HER FAULT!" I growled at her, stunning everyone including myself. I yelled, "Haley didn't do anything wrong! She was merely minding her own business and talking to another Luna. Your brother touched her; she's fucking mine, Claudia. He said he wanted her body and HE LICKED HER FACE! I will always defend what's mine and everyone knows that. The only reason he's not dead is because he's an Alpha's son. He should've never been allowed to set foot in this building with his lack of control. He's a danger to all the women at this conference. He's a predator and you all should do something about that before I do."

Claudia cried, "How can you say that? He's my brother! Do I mean nothing to you anymore, Eric?" I told her honestly, "You used to mean a great deal to me; however, my mate is my world. I understand we've had issues here between you two. I know you guys have some weird messed up past interaction; I just don't care. You insulted her. You dared say those pups weren't mine. I'm the only man she's been with. Those are my fucking pups. I would've been in agony if she'd been with someone else. Everyone knows that."

Before I could continue, Miley showed up out of nowhere and punched Claudia in the face. Alpha Harden did nothing which I raised an eyebrow about. Asher looked somewhat happy for a brief moment. Jim grabbed Miley and held her back as she yelled, "YOU FUCKING BITCH! YOU DID IT ON PURPOSE, DIDN'T YOU? Marcus told you how Haley feels about being touched, didn't he? YOU SET HER UP! YOU HAVE NO IDEA THE HELL THAT WILL REIGN DOWN ON YOU!" With that parting line, Miley took off like a shot.

I turned to Claudia and studied her, "Claudia, that had better not be true. You had better get down on your hands and knee to praying I NEVER find that accusation was true." Haley's emotions suddenly slammed into the bond. She felt so upset and disgusted I almost threw up. Jackson grabbed me and asked, "Brother?" I straightened up and announced, "We are leaving for this session. Luna and Alpha Summers, I will find you two and we will talk to you more later." Alpha Summers nodded to me.

Our group walked off. We strode towards the elevators. Alpha Nick Kyle told me, "Well, this has been a summit for the books." I snorted, "Not a good book." I

begged the moon goddess silently for the elevator to move faster. The doors opened and we saw Lucas was pacing. Dread hit me.

I asked him, “She popped away from you, didn’t she?” Lucas nodded, “She didn’t look good, Eric. She said it was time to fight fire with fire. She was irate you agreed to let Claudia come into your home.” I interrupted him asking “I did what?” Darrin cleared his throat, “I don’t think you were listening, but that was the recompense Alpha Harden offered you. Claudia is coming to do chores in our home.” I sighed, “Well that’s not happening. Jackson, we will have to talk to him later, she’s not coming to our home. Especially considering what happens in any wolves home is dealt with by the Luna. Haley might swallow nails before letting her in our house.” Molly snorted and added, “Not to mention Claudia doing chores is laughable. She doesn’t even know how to turn on the sink, and I’m not exaggerating.”

Lucas cleared his throat. We all looked at him. Lucas lowered his voice, “She looked really bad. She said her skin was crawling from being touched. I was surprised because of how the two of you are. She turned green. I always thought that was an expression, but she actually did.”

I frowned and motioned us to the door of our suite. We filed into the room. I was about to link Haley when Miley stormed into the room. Jim breathed a sigh in relief. Miley looked at me with a calculating expression. She told me, “Haley needs you. So, here’s the thing, you will NOT talk to her. You will hold her and comfort her. If you say one word....” I cut her off nodding, “You’ll cut my balls off. What about Thor? Can He talk to her?”

Miley considered that for several moments, then she nodded, “Yes, but if Haley doesn’t want to talk to him he stops.” Nick came bursting into the room with Haley’s guard. Sasha and Blade looked very confused. I glared at them and yelled, “WHERE WERE YOU? You let her get mauled and licked by some random wolf! Did I not make it clear that no one should get that close to her?”

Blade hissed, “Was tricked. Don’t know how. She was there, but not.” I looked at Sasha, “His broken English is normally fine, but not right now. Explain.” Sasha looked bewildered and offered, “We were following who we thought was Princess Haley. I don’t know how we didn’t know it wasn’t her. It was almost like magic to be honest. When Nick spotted me because I was getting a drink, he said Haley had been attacked. When Blade and I looked at the girl we had been with, it was obvious it wasn’t her.”

I heard a pop. It felt like the world suddenly righted. I turned to see my mate and growled as shock coursed through me. Haley’s appearance was declared normal for what happened when she was touched. This was apparently why her family looked at me like I had six heads when she touches me. Oh, my poor Angel. Her

skin was bright red from where she'd scrubbed herself raw. I felt guilty. It wasn't enough to break Asher's arm. I should've killed him for what he did regardless of the fact that he was an Alpha's son. I linked Jackson, "Order Haley some food. She needs it and so do the pups." He linked back, "I will. Eric, she looks really bad." I nodded, "I'll fix it."

I picked Haley up. I couldn't help but smile feeling Haley's annoyance about the fact that she already felt better. Nothing felt more right than having her in my arms. Thor pushed through in our link, "You said I could talk to mate." I sighed, "I did. Go ahead. Even though all I want to do is talk to her." I let Thor come forward. He cleared his throat. Haley turned around and smiled at him. Thor felt triumphant about the fact that Haley would talk to him. Thor told her, "Eric is sorry, little mate. He hasn't said it yet because he wants to say it in person and not over link." Haley started sobbing and my heart broke.

Haley spoke through her tears, "I just don't understand why I don't even rank high enough in his eyes that he didn't ask me what happened. He just believed her. Him and Marcus just always believe her and she's a liar." Thor soothed her, "I know she is."

Haley pushed back to look at him. She studied him then asked, "You know?" Thor nodded, "Yes, I don't like her either." Haley's brow furrowed, "That's not normal, is it? Don't wolves and their humans usually agree on who they like?" Thor thought about it before he answered her, "Actually yes, it is strange. Eric just admitted that Claudia makes him act crazy. There were other words used, and Lucas felt the same way. Dominic, his wolf, doesn't like her either." Haley frowned and asked, "Did my lion sleep with her too?" Thor nodded and she continued, "And what about your dad, does he like her?" Thor thought about it, "Yes, he does. He thinks she's a nice girl." Haley's frown deepened, "So does my dad." Thor continued to hold her.

After a few moments of silence Haley offered, "That's weird. All the men she's had sex with don't act like themselves with her. Lucas's wolf doesn't like her either?" Thor shrugged, "Not one bit. Even Fang, Dylan Frost's wolf, hates her. Fang usually finds most people entertaining. Jackson is looking into how they feel around her." She nodded, "I'll think about it as well."

After a few moments of silence Haley whispered, "Are you going to be disappointed if the triplets can't shift?" Thor laughed, "I don't care if they have twenty fingers, and two heads. I've wanted pups for so long. I will accept them, as will our pack if they can't shift. We aren't a normal pack as it is. Our pups will be perfect no matter what because they are half you and half me."

She asked, "Will you resent me if they can't shift? Will Eric?" Thor growled, "Neither of us care about that, little mate. What is this about?" She shrugged. Thor

held her tightly and said, "Please tell me. I can feel this hurts you." Haley wiped away a tear and admitted, "Claudia said you'd need a wolf by your side." Thor growled, "Claudia is a moron, who has no idea what she's talking about." She snorted a laugh and asked him, "Can you tell Eric that?" Thor smiled, "I do, often. Claudia's wolf, Rhea, doesn't even like her if that makes you feel better. What will it take for you to talk to Eric so he can apologize?" My wolf was a good one. Thor linked me, "I'm so glad you noticed."

Haley didn't even pause before she immediately answered, "That bitch isn't coming into our home. You tell Eric he has a choice. It's her or me. If she enters our home to do chores, I'm going to Hackura realm until she leaves. I don't care if my fairy side revolts. I'm not sitting around waiting for that psycho to poison me with lemon and kill me or our children. She'd blame Mrs. Blanch too. Or she'd say some shit about how she didn't really mean to hurt me; she just thought lemon would give my food a little kick. Which Eric would believe because he's an ASSHOLE who is wrapped around her little finger."

I took back over and said, "Haley, I'll leave and let you keep talking to Thor, but it's not a choice. It's you. It will always be you." Haley sniffled, "It wasn't me yesterday." I pulled her close, "I'm so sorry, Angel. I made a giant mistake, again. I'm so sorry." She hiccupped, and asked "Why would you agree to let her in our home?" I pulled her back and looked at her. I told her honestly, "I didn't know what I agreed to. I was so angry about Asher I wasn't even listening to what they said." She buried her face in my chest and whispered, "You still want her."

Now I was astonished. I pulled back so I could see her eyes. I told her, "I don't want Claudia in any capacity. Why would you think that?" Haley frowned, "I felt your lust when she walked in today." I laughed at the serious miscommunication. I told her, "Haley, I was looking at you. I didn't even see Claudia until she kissed my cheek."

Haley pushed me away and slapped my arm. She pointed her finger into my chest, "That shit ends now! She's been all over you, and you've done nothing about it. I'll rip her lying fucking face off if she touches you one more fucking time." I smirked, "How very werewolf of you." She growled, "Fairies are possessive too, Eric." I frowned, "Not usually over people." She hit my arm again, "Well, I'm a different kind of fairy. Also, how could you think her argument over my guard made sense? That was so hurtful Eric!" I put my hands up and pull her back down to me.

I kissed her forehead and said, "I do realize this communication breakdown we are having is one hundred percent my fault, but it's not what you think. Her statement made sense because while you were being held captive your guard was told and agreed that no one would get near you. Regardless of whether you could handle it or not. I was concerned about them." Her face went white and she asked, "Are they

alright?" I nodded and quickly answered, "They are fine. They somehow got confused on who you were." Haley growled, "OH that bitch!" I grimaced, "Don't worry Miley punched her pretty hard."

Haley frowned, "You don't think she had anything to do with confusing my guard, do you?" I frowned, "I'm not ruling it out. I just don't see why she would." Haley scoffed, "You wouldn't. I'm still really fucking mad at you." I nodded, "You should be. I promise I'm going to do better Haley; I'll make this up to you somehow. Even if it takes me the rest of my life." Haley frowned, "Don't break this promise, Eric. Please." I nodded. We laid there holding onto each other for several moments.

I wanted to hear her side of the Torvi, Marcus Claudia situation. Thor linked me, "Don't do it." I replied, "I need to know." Thor sighed, "You are a glutton for punishment." He might be right. I asked Haley, "Why do you think Claudia was trying to kill Torvi?" She hissed and I held up my hands. I told her, "I'm not saying you're wrong. Last night in the elevator, Claudia said you were jealous about her being with Marcus. That she took up too much of his time. I just want to understand your side since should've asked about yesterday."

Haley surprised me when she laughed. She asked me, "You're joking, right? Even Marcus, whose head is in the clouds about her, not unlike like you; would tell you that was the other way around. She was no threat to me; she was an off period potential mom. If I were going to be jealous of someone in Marcus' life it would be his mate, Torvi."

The truth of that statement hit me like a hammer. I questioned, "Ok, why do you think Claudia tried to kill Torvi?" Haley sighed, "Because she did. It took a lot of my healing power to save Torvi's life. I've healed food poisoning and hangovers. Torvi's insides were burning up inside her body. She was dying when I got to her. Why Marcus and my dad doubt that, I really don't know. Bjourn believes me, and so does Torvi. Torvi didn't speak to Marcus for months even though they were back on."

I cautiously asked, "Could it have been an accident?" Haley rolled her eyes, "Sure Eric, you can accidentally burn someone's insides instead of meaning to give them food poisoning. It's not like there's a fine line between food poisoning and murder." I sighed, "I don't think Claudia is that bad of a person." Haley hissed. I held my hands up, "I agree giving Torvi food poisoning is wrong and over the line."

Haley had tears streaming down her cheeks. She spoke, "If that's what she had done, you would be right. It would be over the damn line. God damn it Eric, it's really going to take her trying to kill me and our children for you to see her for who she is, isn't it?" I growled, "NO ONE will harm any of you. When we go

home she will be a bad memory. I haven't seen her since our breakup. This is the first time, and I can't say this inspires keeping in touch. I didn't want to before, and sure as hell don't now." Haley smiled sadly, "If only that were true, it's not her fucking style to go the fuck away."

Miley came in our room without knocking. She looked between us. She said, "Hales, you need to heal yourself and put your dress back on. Your makeup looked flawless earlier too. I'd put it back just like it was so that bitch doesn't get the satisfaction of knowing she upset you." Haley nodded and healed herself, then snapped her clothes on. We exited the room together. Jackson nodded to the food he'd ordered. I quickly handed the sandwich to Haley. She smiled and ate it. Jackson cleared his throat and pulled on his shirt.

He informed me, "So, we have a meeting with Alpha Harden in ten minutes. He insisted that his children... well the two that are here anyway, attend." I nodded, "Haley why don't you..." She hissed, "Seriously? Suggest I let you meet with Claudia alone. Go on, just fucking suggest it, Eric." I sighed. I wasn't about to upset her anymore. I shrugged defeatedly, "Alright, let's all go then." We headed to the elevator. When we got to the ground floor, he led us to a meeting room.

I walked in with Haley's hand in mine. Alpha Harden frowned asking, "Why is she here?" I growled, "She has more right than your children to be here. She's my mate and Luna." Alpha Harden paled at my tone. He gestured to the chairs across from them. Once we sat down he spoke again, "Well, let's get started then. What's the problem with the recompense?" I told him, "Send someone else. Claudia will not enter our home for obvious reasons." Claudia gasped exclaiming, "Eric, we have been close for years!" Haley scoffed at her.

I replied, "You and my Luna dislike each other. You accused her of being a whore, in public. Then said it was her fault your brother attacked her." Claudia sighed, "Eric, I just... I was trying to protect you. It did look bad. I know my brother; he would never do that." Haley interjected, "Yet he did. It looked bad for you and your family, not me. You wanted to place doubt in his mind, and you kept fucking touching what is mine."

Claudia cut a look at Haley. She ignored most of Haley's statement and hissed, "Your allure caused it." Haley snorted, "I've seen and felt at least ten fairies here. I didn't hear about any attacks on them. As neither of my brothers are in attendance, regardless of how the fairies view me, it would've been brought to my attention if they were attacked. I'm their princess even if they are giant pains in my ass." Claudia snorted.

Alpha Harden sat forward, "My daughter is under a lot of pressure. I've heard a lot about your mate, Alpha Eric. I wondered if she would consider trying to heal Claudia. She obviously cannot conceive, which of course you remember. She's had

multiple attempts on her heat and no pups. The rumor is your mate has healed many members of your pack. I thought with Claudia in your home, they could resolve their differences. Your mate would see that Claudia just longs to be a mother.”

I stared at him then asked, “You’re asking my mate a favor after your son attacked her. Is that what you are saying?” Haley spat out, “Are you fucking kidding me? No. Not only hell no, but hell fucking no. How DARE you ask anything of me, after everything she’s done to my family. Fuck this shit.”

Haley sat forward and stared at Asher. She asked him, “Why did you approach me?” Claudia growled, “Marcus made you PROMISE not to do that! I’ll call him.” Haley nodded, “Go ahead and call him. I promised not to do it to YOU. Last I checked, your brother isn’t you. I wouldn’t be able to ask if I’d promised, which you know. It must suck to not be as smart as you fucking think you are.”

Haley turned her attention back to Asher. She asked again, “Asher, WHY did you approach me?” Asher replied immediately, “Claudia told me to get you alone and kiss you. She and Eric were supposed to walk around the corner and see you.”

I growled. Haley simply smiled and asked, “What happened to my guard, Asher?” Asher smiled, “I know a witch who cast a confusion spell. Claudia was certain they wouldn’t let me near you after one almost cut her for disrespecting you.” I was growling so loud you could barely hear his answers. Alpha Harden was glaring at Claudia who was looking at Haley with hatred.

Haley ignored all of that and said, “Thank you Asher, now why were you supposed to kiss me for my mate to see?” Asher shrugged, “Claudia wants Eric.” Haley nodded, “We all know that. She wants Eric because...” Asher smiled picking up her statement, “Because he was supposed to make her his Luna after they broke up. She loved him, but he didn’t love her. Father just wants her to have Eric’s pup for an alliance. Claudia wants that too, but she wants Eric. All of Eric, and you’re in her way. She rejected her mate for him. Then her breakup plan didn’t work. Father sent her away to Europe after the deal with your Hackura family. She just got back and wanted to rekindle things with Eric. She was beside herself when he showed up with a wife who was also his mate. She didn’t know you were his fated mate. No one in our pack wanted to tell her because she’s a little crazy.”

Jackson linked me, “Can I say holy shit?” Caleb said, “Well, this ends badly.” I glared at Alpha Harden. I told him, “Your recompense is rejected. You children plotted to harm my mate. To try to tear us apart. To take her FROM ME KNOWING we are fully mated. If either of them comes near my mate again, I’ll kill them. Come up with a better proposal and submit it to Caleb. I don’t want to see your fucking faces ever again. After the recompense, we will dissolve our alliance. I will never stand with anyone named Harden.” I stood to leave.

Haley's voice paused my steps, "I echo that sentiment, Alpha Harden. If your daughter values her life, hell if YOU value your daughter's life, keep her away from my mate. She conspired against the crown of the Hackura family, she tampered with my protection. As it stands, she may have a few months to live before my father processes the paperwork. You better prepare a proposal for my father as well; something tells me another fine is coming your way. That is if you manage to keep her fucking head on her shoulders this time."

Alpha Harden glared at Claudia who was growing paler by the minute. Claudia whispered, "Marcus would never let you hurt me." Haley scoffed, "Marcus would kill you himself for what you did to me. Don't think for one second you mean anything to my brother. You didn't then, and you certainly don't now. You'd better pray he doesn't come fucking visit you. If he doesn't, it will be because Torvi would stop speaking to him if he saw your lying fucking face ever again. So, you should thank the woman you tried to murder for however long you end up living before your execution."

Claudia stood declaring, "Marcus won't be upset about Asher. My brother touched you. So what? It was already handled. Eric already broke his arm." Haley popped in her face then called the wind to throw Claudia against the wall.

Haley shouted "As his neck isn't broken, and he's still breathing my husband did you a kindness. You would do well to move on from this Claudia, leave Eric alone. He's not yours, he's fucking mine. You think Marcus' problem will be Asher? You are completely disregarding the fact that YOU set me up. You fucking lying bitch! You seem to need things spelled out for you so here it is. I'm not the only one bearing a mark on my neck. Eric has mine as well."

Claudia gasped. She couldn't be serious. I'd announced we were fully mated. I pulled the collar of my shirt to show my mark. Claudia sobbed, "Why Eric? Why would you do this to me?" I grabbed Haley and we all walked out of the room. I pinned her against the wall and whispered into her ear, "I'm sorry, Haley. I'm so sorry." I would make this up to her. I would never doubt her again.