

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 21

Chapter 21 He's Lucky

We leave the next morning.

In all honesty, I can't believe I like this better than the break. I like the forestry all around, the constantly changing scenery. And the lack of hormonal males.

Days jump by and as time pa**es, Luke gets more and more snappy.

"Stop wasting time, Hazel, get up!" I hear a hard voice

"Shut up," I mumble as I push myself up from my sleeping bag

Grumbling, he all but yanks up his stuff and gives me a low-key glare. Ignoring him, I pack my stuff and we start walking again. Luke silently and with the speed of a cheetah, me munching on biscuits and following as fast as

possible.

"Slow down, will you?" I finally say, my breakfast long finished

"Keep up, will you?"

I put up with him for another hour before my patience reaches its limit.

"You're being lazy." Luke snaps at me

"No," I cross my arms "You're being irrational. We cant run our way towards the finish line."

"Hazel," he grits out "stop arguing. We're going on. Now."

Okay, Elise, you know what happens when both people start acting like idiots. You have to be the mature one right now.

"Luke," I say calmly "We need a little break, just a breather. Then we'll go on, yeah?"

"I don't want a break,"

"What we want isn't always what we need." I give him a look

I hold his stormy gaze with my steady one. Luke works his jaw, his eyes narrowed a millimeter as he stares at me. I don't back down.

“Fine.” He finally grits out

With a sigh of relief, I lean against a tree. Maturity; one thousand, Luke; nine hundred ninety-nine.

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“I’m going to go make sure the perimeter is clear,” Luke says before disappearing behind the trees

Goddess, can’t he sit still? Rolling my eyes, I sit down and take a deep breath of the fresh air. A few moments later, I pull my gun from the waistband of my jeans and check the ammunition. How did I forget to reload this?

I make my way towards the weapon bag and shuffle through it, looking for one of the ammunition boxes. I

stumble upon a small plastic bag, curiously, I pick it up and see what’s inside.

“Huh,” I take out one of the gla** bottles inside and observe the fluid inside. I pull the cork out and take a sniff.

Horrified, I pull away from the contents of the bottle. Wolfsbane.

“What are you doing?” I whirl around, Luke is standing a foot away from me

His eyes flicker to the bottle in my hands, when he looks at me again, his face is set in a hard glare.

“Didn’t I tell you not to go through my things?” he snaps, s*****ing the bottle and bag from my hands

“Is that…” I hesitate “Is that wolfsbane?”

Luke’s shoulders stiffen as I say that, he doesn’t answer me, simply puts back his things and zips up the bag.

“The coast is clear, we’re moving on.” He says

Luke starts walking, I stare at his back in sheer disbelief before I jog up to him.

“You didn’t answer me,” I say “What’s in those bottles?”

“You seem to have figured that out on your own,”

“Why do have wolfsbane?”

“I have my reasons,”

I jog a little faster and come up in front of him, causing him to stop. Luke gives me an irritated look, I offer him my steeliest glance.

“All the participants have their wolves locked up,” I say “I don’t think we have any chance of using that on rouges.

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What are your reasons then?”

“Drop it, Hazel.” He walks past me

I spin around swiftly grab his arm. Luke’s eyes snap towards me, darker than usual, the storm more intense.

“Tell me, Luke.”

“Hazel,” a low growl of warning leaves his throat

I narrow my eyes at him “Why won’t you just tell me? What’s so secretive about—

“Will you just mind your own damn business for once?” Luke rips his arm away from me, I flinch at his harsh tone “I have been tolerating you and your childish behavior for longer than any sane being should be forced to. You keep complaining, you don’t listen to me and you have no sense of privacy. On top of all that, you dare to demand answers from me?”

I almost feel myself shrinking back. I feel my throat getting dry, a lump already forming in it. I open my mouth, to apologize? To tell him he’s not an awesome partner either and keeps triggering me on being an omega? I would never figure that out since Luke beats me to it.

“I pity the man who would have to spend the rest of his days with you,” he looks at me like I’m a bug under his shoe

“he’s lucky to have escaped you for this long.”

My thoughts vanish in a puff of smoke. People say we are honest about our feelings when we’re angry. So that’s what

Luke Winters thinks about me.

In my head, I find a whole speech that could make him regret saying those words, make him guilty. But when I open my mouth, only a few words tumble out.

“We should get going.”

Almost taken aback, Luke stares at me for a moment, cold silence wraps around us. Then he turns around and starts walking. I follow behind him, keeping my eyes on the ground. I don't want to trip now.

You're not worth my words, Winters. I ignore the dull burn behind my eyes. And I'm not in a habit to waste myself on the unworthy.

...

Two days.

It has been two days since I last spoke to Luke other than 'Yes.' 'No.' 'You decide.' I've spent the majority of my time thinking about mom, Carlos, and the jobs I can get after leaving the pack. Mom was saving up some money for my 'wedding' when I meet my mate. Now that that's out of the picture, we can use it to rent a room or maybe an apartment after we leave.

Luke has been more antsy than usual. Many times, I notice him glance at me, almost as if he wants to say something, but he never does. Not that it will make a difference anyway.

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“It's your turn to keep watch,” Luke says while we eat salted cord for dinner

I nod, counting in my mind the money I can save up if I take two jobs. I don't go to any inst**ute and with my werewolf stamina, I can easily manage.

“Hazel,” Luke says, stressing the nickname, I don't look at him “Did you hear me?”

“Yes,” I say calmly

Finishing my food, I stand up and lean against a tree, arms crossed across my chest. I can almost feel Luke's gaze on my back before he opens his sleeping bag and shuffles inside.

I don't say goodnight.

I look up at the starry sky, the almost full moon. My mind wanders to everything, nothing.

He's lucky to have escaped you for this long.

My mate won't think that... Would he?

I shake my head. Seriously, Elise? After years of taking taunts from your pack, you'll let this snob's comments rattle you?

But somehow, his words make me feel a twist in my chest, a bitter taste in my mouth. After so long, I thought... he would not think of me as so little anymore.

Stop it, I tell myself fiercely, Luke is an a**hole. You know you're beautiful, smart, kind and maybe you're a bit of a lunatic sometimes, you're still amazing. Don't let him get to your head.

I wonder a little away from our campsite. Maybe it was for the best that I heard Luke say all that. Maybe I was getting a bit carried away, thinking an Alpha could ever respect an Omega.

Pain finds beauty a reliable disguise.

Well, at least he was right about something.

A hand closes around my mouth, an arm wraps around me, holding me prisoner.

I trash around wildly, wriggling my fingers to reach my gun but the lack of breath makes my chest cave in, black spots appear in front of my eyes.

"Sorry, love," a voice reaches me from far away "But as you said, we are opponents."

And everything fades away.

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 22

Chapter 22 All paid

My heavy eyes open in the dark, my head dizzy.

"What the..." I try to lift my hands but feel them bound together in front of me.

"Ah, you're awake," a newly familiar voice says

My head snaps towards the source and I see a tall figure with sandy blond hair and dark brown eyes.

"Adrian?" my eyes widen, the words from before rush to my head "What the hell are you doing?"

With a small chuckle, he crouches down so we're on eye level. My eyes adjust to the dark and I can just make out his smirk.

“Nothing personal, Elise,” he says, bemused “But your partner is a pain in the a**. Taking him down is necessary.”

I narrow my eyes at him “And how do you plan on doing that?”

“By kidnapping you, of course,” he says waving a hand at me “He’ll come for you— hell, any man would, and when he does, he won’t be going back.”

I school my features in perfect calm, holding my breath so it wouldn’t come out as shallow intakes. No, no, don’t panic. Do not panic! Panic makes you stupid, stupid gets you killed!

“What about me?” I ask

“We’d leave you alone,” a new voice says, my eyes snap up to see Ryan against a tree “You can wait in one place until the Hunt is over, then you can go back.”

I stare at him for a moment, indignity sparks a fire in me, fueled by two days of pent-up words.

“Excuse me?” I glare at them “You think I’m not a threat? That you can leave me here?”

“What?” Adrian raises his brows

“Don’t ‘what?’ me!” I snap “I’m perfectly capable of coming back for revenge! I might not look much, but I’m pretty damn dangerous!”

“I don’t follow,” Adrian looks at Ryan for help

“Do you want us to kill you?” Ryan asks me, his brows knotted

Those words snap me out of my angry haze. Right...

“Well,” I clear my throat “you don’t have to think about that. Luke won’t come for me.”

Adrian shakes his head with a smile “That’s the oldest trick in the book, love.”

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“Fine, don’t believe me,” I lean back against the tree I’m sitting by “But he hates my guts, he can’t stand the sight of me. He’ll probably thank the stars that I’m gone and be on his merry way.”

For a moment, they both go quiet and I realize, it’s not just my amazing acting skills that they consider my words, it’s the conviction, the truth in them.

Adrian and Ryan exchange a look, then Ryan says “Werther he likes you or not, it’s on his pride now. He will come.”

“Hmm,” I put on a thinking expression, ignoring the bitter taste in my mouth “Now that you put it like that... maybe he will come after all.”

“That’s what we thought,” Adrian says before he stands up “Now you sit tight while we plan on how to take the moron down.”

“Moron... that’s one thing I agree with you on,” I nod “Luke is an a**.”

“Always was,” Adrian says “When he came to our pack to train for two months, he wouldn’t even talk to be like I’m his age. He was always talking to my father and can you imagine, my father never told me what the hell they talked about!”

“I can understand,” I nod solemnly “If you need any help planning this trip for him, feel free to ask me.”

“Why would you help us?” Ryan asks suspiciously

“Well, you two said that I can go free,” I say calmly “And besides, Luke is insufferable. You two will do me a favor by taking him down.”

Adrian grins “I knew there was a reason I like you so much.”

I smile back “Don’t mention it. So, what are you guys planning?”

Adrian takes out his map but before he could come towards me, Ryan stops him and they start talking in quick, quiet words. Damn you, you moderately smart person! Just let your stupid, impulsive Alpha do all the deciding!

“But she’s t*****,” Adrian’s voice reaches me in a bare whisper “She can’t possibly be harmful. Look at her, so small and helpless.”

For probably the first time in my life, being short, female and omega is helping me out. Nevertheless, I feel my jaw clench when he says that.

Just wait, I’ll show you how helpless I am.

After a few more minutes, Adrian walks towards me, map in hand. He sits down and lays it open, for a moment I have to blink at the spotless paper. Luke’s map is full of lines and crosses and little notes.

“We are here,” Adrian says, pointing at a spot about two miles from where Luke and I had camped, “we told your partner to meet us here,” he moves his finger towards the waterfall about a kilometer away.

"We are planning on shooting just as he arrives, he won't be expecting it," Ryan adds in grudgingly

I purse my lips "That's a great plan but... I don't think it'll work."

Adrian raises an eyebrow "So much faith in that a**hole?"

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"No," I shake my head "It's too obvious. Luke probably won't even come from a place open to the eye. If he got anywhere close to you two..."

I shudder. Adrian and Ryan exchange a glance.

"But you know what will take him by surprise?" I say "An underground trap."

"A what?" Ryan says

I roll my eyes "Dig a hole, cover it with leaves and stuff."

"And what about the fact that he can come out?" Adrian crosses his arms

"He won't." I click my tongue "He's claustrophobic."

This secures their interest, Ryan comes and sits by my side as well. I suppress a grin. Perfect.

With my bound hands, I slid the map towards me and point to a spot near the waterfall "You can dig the trap here, if you guys put me just in his line of sight, I'll tell him I ran away. When he comes for me, bam! He'll be done for! Too afraid to do anything."

"You, love," Adrian puts his arm around me and presses a kiss to my cheek "Are amazing. I can't believe Luke can't appreciate such a treasure."

"Well," I bat my lashes at him "You're getting rid of him for me, aren't you?"

"Promise." He smiles at me, then leans forward so his lips brush against my ear "Maybe you should come with us, love, you might find me more agreeable than your current partner."

I move away from him and give him a little smile. I'd have to wash my ear with acid now.

"We should get going," Ryan says "The sooner we start, the better."

So we start forward, me walking between Adrian and Ryan. I test my binds a bit, I can't possibly break them. They took my gun as well, so I have nothing but a brain to work with.

Once we reach the decided spot, Adrian and Ryan start digging. For hunting purposes, Adrian and Ryan had a net with them, made of barb-covered wires. They're planning on putting that on Luke when he falls in the pit.

Since they don't have proper digging gear, the poor souls were working with daggers. I wondered if I should tell them

they should break a thick branch, sharpen its edge like a spear and use that.

I decide against it.

Alright time to get rid of these binds.

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"You think a girl can be the Alpha Supreme? If I decide to finish the Hunt and win, can I be the Alpha Supreme? It would be so much fun! Hurry up guys, the sun might be rising any moment now! Don't you want to catch Luke? If you guys win, what's the first thing you'd do? If it were me, I'd make it a rule to respect omegas. But since I have no intention of continuing this Hunt, maybe you could do that for me?"

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Ryan grips his head in his hands, Adrian drags a hand down his face.

"I have three-year-old triplets," Ryan grumbles "and the three of them aren't half as annoying as you."

"Aww," I say "That's so cute. What are their names? Are they boys or girls? What's their mummy's name? Seriously

Ryan, I never knew you would be such a family guy—

"Is there any way to shut her up?" Adrian looks at the sky

"I'm hungry," I pout "and I'm talking to distract myself."

"Fine!" Adrian says as he reaches for one of their bags "You can eat! Just for the love of all that is holy, shut up!"

"But how will I eat?" I ask innocently, holding up my hands

He slashes through the ropes with the knife he was digging with. I flex my wrists, both red but it'll be gone in a while.

"Thank you," I shove a cracker in my mouth "Go on, help your beta. Luke might be up by now."

Adrian and Ryan continue to labor away, disappearing inside the hole. I slowly stand to my feet and peak around,

gauging the best route when I see the net.

A smile curves at my lips as I walk towards it and carefully pick it up, the noise of the waterfall giving me cover as I reach the hole.

"Hey, guys?" I look down

They look up and Ryan says "What are you—

I drop the net, the heavy stones at the weight of the side it down and the barbs will be making sure they don't get out anytime soon.

"You b****!" Adrian glares at me, struggling with the net "You'll pay for this!"

"Here," I blow him an air kiss and wink "All paid."

Chuckling to myself, shoving my hands in the pockets of my shorts, whistling, I walk away.

Who says you need a man to save you?

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Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 23

Chapter 23 My partner

✧ Luke's POV ✧

The moment my eyes open, I feel the overwhelming pain in my head, as if it's about to explode into bits.

The effect of the wolfsbane dose I took last night before sleeping wears off and my senses return. The fire has died down, leaving a pile of embers and ash. My eyes go across our campsite, searching.

I take a sniff of the air, her scent is too faint. The next moment, I'm on my feet walking towards the tree she was standing against. I notice a piece of paper stuck to it with a knife. I tug it off and unfold it.

If you want your little w**** back, come by the waterfall. Take your sweet time. We'll be sure to take ours with her.

I stare at the note, mind, and face equally blank. The scent of it is vaguely familiar. Woodsmen.

A low growl escapes my throat as my hand curls in a fist, crumpling the note. The pain in my head recedes as white-hot rage consumes my mind. No, he wouldn't dare touch her.

His infuriating grinning face from our time in the lodge flashes in my head, making my finger elongate.

Adrian Woodsmen is going to regret ever thinking about taking her from under my nose.

...

The sound of the waterfall reaches me way before I see it, deafeningly loud to my hyperactive senses. I catch a whiff of her scent— like gardenia flowers and rain and I start towards it.

When I see the waterfall, my eyes quickly scan the place. Her scent is strong but she's not here. My lips curl in a snarl and growl claws at my throat as barely suppressed anger tries to surface.

Then I catch two other scents along with the coppery tang of blood.

In a moment of hot rage and instinct, I almost think of going straight out there but then stop. Damn it, Winters. Get your mind together. Do you think it'll be so easy?

I alter my course, swiftly going through the trees so I have a view of the clearing from afar. I see two men near a hope, a net nearby.

"When I get my hands on that b****," Woodsmen is seething with anger "I'm going to snap her pretty little neck."

Without thinking, without caring my hands find their way towards the guns and two loud bangs! Echo above the sound of the waterfall. Woodsmen crumple to the ground with a scream, clutching his side, his beta holding his bleeding arm.

My feet move forward, I feel my lips pull in a snarl as I see Woodsmen's face. The next moment, my hands are at his shirt front, holding him up to the ground.

“Where is she?” My voice reverberates with a growl

“Winters,” his brown eyes dart in every direction “She was just here, I swear—

I turn him around and hold him against a tree, my hands tighten at his shirt enough to make his face grown red with breathlessness. I feel something in my snapping, raw anger taking over any rationality I had left.

“I’m not a patient man, Woodsmen,” I narrow my eyes

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“We had her right here,” he croaks out, trying to take off my hand “we’d just opened her bounds. Elise—

“Don’t you dare,” My voice sounds foreign to my ears— the growl of an outraged animal
“Say her name.”

“I don’t know where she is!” he rasps, his struggles slowing down but the panic on his face grows

“Why don’t you try to remember?” I say calmly— too calmly “Take your sweet time, or I will take mine in skinning you alive.”

I’m not sure if more from blood loss or panic do his eyes roll back and his body goes limp. I let go and turn to his beta, my patience reduced to nothing at this point.

I haul him up, not caring about the fur sprouting on my arms yet again, the elongation of my canines.

“What have you done to her?” My voice sounds rough to my ears

“Nothing!” he says “We didn’t have to. She was helping us to plot this trap against you.”

“Liar!” I say harshly

“You tell me, Winters?” He says, his voice strained “What did you do to make her want to get rid of you so badly?”

“Answer my question,” I say “Or I’ll forget that you have a mate and three children.”

I see his dark eyes glint with fear before he swallows “She was right here, we’d opened her binds before we continued digging. She runs away.”

I stare at him for a moment, my breath coming short and ragged. Despite the fear alight in his eyes, he holds my gaze.

I drop him down, already looking for a hint of her scent, where she could've gone.

"Believe it or not, Winters." His raspy voice reaches me "she hates you. And I'm sure it's not her fault."

Something about his words make me feel like someone had set my insides on fire. Despite myself, I turn around and my foot hits hard against his stomach.

"Hating me or not," I growl lowly "She's my partner. Keep that in your head."

I turn back, my senses searching for a hint of her and I caught a faint whiff. The th***** of my heart and feet echoes in my head, pain overwhelming my senses and my head swimming with panic.

She could be anywhere, in any sort of danger and I wouldn't be there to protect her. I wouldn't be there because I'm the most stubborn man alive and I let her go. I didn't trust her to understand what was happening to me.

Bewildered, I reach back to our campsite, probably because I must've walked in a circle, tracking her scent back to where it began.

With bare sherds of control left in me, I punch a tree, my split knuckles heal in an instant. The stem shakes leaves fall.

"Damn it," I hold a hand to my forehead

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Where are you, Hazel?

Would she even come back to me? After all, I've put her through? Or was she happier with Woodsmen? At the lodge?

Where people didn't tell her to shut up or be quick or anything that would hurt her. Where I wasn't her only option.

I try to swallow the lump in my parched throat, once I find her, I will fix this. I'll tell her everything she needs to know.

"You shouldn't have taken me for granted." A soft voice reaches me

I close my eyes and breath through my nose. Great, now these pre-effects and panic are driving me mad. I can hear her voice in my head, feel her scent around me.

"I hope you've learned a lesson from this," the soft voice says, closer now

Something touches my shoulder, my eyes snap open and I whirl around.

Golden eyes stare back at me, as bright as ever.

“Elise,” I can’t quantize the relief that crashes over me like a heavy wave “You...”

I step forward, taking her face in my hands, not a hint of anyone else’s scent on her, not a scratch.

Almost mindlessly, I put my forehead against hers, taking a deep breath, the intoxicating scent of gardenia flowers and rain soothing my nerves. Her beautiful face contorts in confusion, pink lips slightly parted. She’s here.

“Luke,” she says, her voice soft and confused

The pain in my head dims to nonexistent, my falling mind comes back together and the overwhelming emotions step aside. I remember what I was saying.

“You idiot!” I hiss out

My arms wrap around her in a vice-tight hold, feeling her heartbeat in sync with mine. Fast, irregular.

“What the hell were you thinking?” I ask, my voice hard but my hold on her doesn’t falter “Why didn’t you wait for me? Something could’ve happened to you!”

I feel her push me away. An irritated growl fights to escape, but I hold it back and let her go.

Hazel steps back, out of my reach, her face unreadable but her eyes spewing out fire. The words that leave her mouth almost make me stumble.

“I didn’t know if you’d come.”

“Of course I would come,” I stare at her in disbelief “How could you think otherwise?”

She shrugs and walks past me, out of its own volition, my hand s*****es her wrist.

“You didn’t think I’d come for you?” I ask, feeling a twist in my chest

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“Why would you, Luke?” She gives me a glance over her shoulder “I’m a liability, aren’t I? A complaining, ungrateful brat who’s a blight to you. Why would you come for me?”

She pulls her hand away, I instantly feel the difference. She gives me a humorless smile, one that makes it hard for me to swallow.

“Hell, according to you, my mate wouldn’t come for me.”

“Hazel, I…” words wither away on my tongue, a feeling I hadn’t ever felt taking over me. It takes me a moment to realize what it is.

Shame.

She doesn’t wait for me to continue and turns to pack her things “We should get going. Oh and I snagged their food supply bag, it’ll come in handy later. At least now I don’t have to worry about you calling me a resource s***er.”

Words wrench themselves out of my mouth without permission.

“I’m sorry.”

She stops in her tracks. Slowly, unsurely, she turns to look at me again.

“What did you just say?” she asks, eyebrows furrowed

I swallow my pride and ego and take a step towards her, reaching for her hand. For support? To make sure she doesn’t run away? Both?

“I apologize that I took you for granted.” I, Alpha Luke Winters, who has never bowed to anyone, not even fate or destiny, bow my head at her “I apologize for every idiotic thing I’ve done and said. You’re not a liability, Hazel. You never were.”

My heightened senses hear the catch in her breath, I look up at her again, searching her gaze for a hint of what she’s feeling. But her eyes are unreadable as her face, behind the bubbly childish nature, this girl is made of steel.

Goddess, I’ve never felt so small before another soul, let alone a girl.

Finally, the steel armor slips aside. She smiles at me, a real smile, I feel drawn towards her.

Slap!

Blinking, my hand reaches up to touch my stinging cheek.

“Now we’re even,” Hazel says calmly “Come on, we should get going.”

With that, she starts packing her things. Despite what she just did, even though she just slapped her Alpha, I can’t believe how relieved I am when she says;

“Do you want to know what happened?” she asks, eyes alight with excitement “How I made my brilliant escape?”

My lips tug upwards “By all means, continue.”

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 24

Chapter 24 The beast

It's a full moon tonight.

I was beyond surprised when Luke stopped just as the sun started setting.

I glance warily at his face. He looks pale, the scars on his face more pronounced. Even the smallest sound seems to put him on the edge.

“Luke, are you alright?” I ask carefully

“I...” he hesitates for a moment “I need to tell you something.”

My brows pull together and I nod, waiting for him to continue. Luke goes through his clothes bag and pulls something out, my eyes widen.

A silver chain hangs from his hands with a manacle and a padlock.

Luke holds out a silver key for me, I step back. What the hell? Silver should've burned him, and it's most definitely going to burn me!

“Seriously, Hazel?” He gives me a look “Silver bullets didn't burn you, you think this would?”

“Yeah, but...” I blink in confusion “Why didn't they?”

“Our wolves are locked,” Luke says, taking my hand and giving me the key “It wouldn't hurt unless you manage to

dig it in your flesh.”

I swallow “Why do you have this?”

“I'm going to put the manacle on my wrist, and then lock the chain around a tree. You're going to keep the key.”

“Why?”

Luke takes a breath “I'm going to shift tonight.”

“What?” I stare at him blankly “But Korra locked our wolves, you just said so.”

A shadow crosses his face “That wouldn’t matter in my case.”

“Luke,” my throat feels dry “What is going on?”

“Just promise me,” he leans down and puts his hands on my shoulders “Whatever you see, whatever you hear, you

won’t come near me.”

“I—

“Promise me, Hazel.”

The urgency in his voice makes my stomach turn unpleasantly. I let out a shaky breath.

“Alright.” I nod

“Good.” Luke exhales as he pulls away and runs a hand through his hair

“But why are we doing this?” I ask yet again “Why do you need to chain yourself?”

“I will tell you,” Luke says “Just know that when I shift, I’m not myself. I will tear apart anything in my reach.

Literally.”

Confusion and questions cloud my mind but taking into consideration his look, I think it better to simply nod.

I watch Luke pace around from my place near the fire, the silver key held tightly in my palm. Soon enough darkness falls over the place.

Luke puts the manacle around his wrist and picks up the chain. I expected him to just put it around a tree but he starts walking.

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“Where are you going?” I get on my feet

“I’m not going to be near the campsite.” He says before he starts walking again

“Why?” I ask, following behind him “You told me the chain is enchanted, it won’t break no matter what.”

I see his shoulders stiffen “I don’t want to take any chances.”

Finally, he stops by a big oak tree and puts the chain around it before locking it. Luke’s eyes slide to mine. I’m taken aback by how dark they are.

“I’m going to be fine,” He says “Just go back to camp and don’t come here.”

“Luke,” I almost whine “I don’t like this.”

His lips tug upward just slightly “Why? I thought you’d like me tied to a tree.”

“Are you going to make that kind of joke right now?” I cross my arms and give him a look

He opens his mouth to say something but cuts himself off with a hiss of pain, his hands going up to hold his head. I

step forward, to do Goddess knows what, but Luke holds up a hand— or rather, claw.

“Don’t,” his voice is strained

“Luke, I’m not leaving you like this.” I give him a look

“You gave me your word—

The moonlight shines through the thick shade of trees, feral growl tears through his throat, and his hand’s fist in his hair, shaking his head as if trying to stay conscious.

“Oh moon,” my eyes widen as I step closer “Are you—

“Hazel, go,” Luke growls out

Anger flares through me “No.”

His head snaps to face me and I take a step back. Obsidian eyes stare back at me, pits of endless rage and fury. Lethal canines elongate from his mouth, lips curled in a snarl.

“Now!” His growl reverberates through the air

I hesitate, then I turn around and run towards the camp as fast as possible. Swallowing the lump in my throat, I stare at the path I just came from. After a while, I sink and hold my knees to my chest.

What is happening to Luke? Why is the shifting despite Korra’s spell? Is that why he had wolfsbane? To keep himself from shifting?

Even if he does shift, why is he dangerous?

A loud howl shatters my thoughts. I jump a little, holding myself tighter. The sound of something rattling a tree reaches my ears, followed by loud, guttural howls.

The look on his face flashes in my head, so wild and primitive. That was not Luke, so what was it?

I get to my feet, the weight of the silver key heavy in my pocket.

This is a bad idea, I take a step forward, he told you not to go. I keep walking.

Slowly, quietly, occasionally flinching at the loud howls, I near the tree Luke chained himself to.

Just a look, a tiny peak and I'll know what the hell is going on. If he's okay or not.

I shuffle closer and press my back against a nearby tree, the howling stops. I hear something sniff the still air. A tree rattles again, the sound of chains clinking against each other makes my heart jump to my throat.

Don't be such a ninny, Elise! He's just another Lycan, just take a look and you'll realize it's nothing to be afraid of!

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With a deep breath, I will myself turn.

A series of deafening growls make me stop in my place. This was a horrible idea!

Okay, there's no going back now. Just turn, take a look and run away as fast as you can. The chain won't break.

Mustering up every bit of courage in my bones, I turn around.

My eyes travel up the beast that stands a few feet away. A dark manifestation of nightmares, obsidian eyes outraged and wild.

Another loud howl. The clinking of chains. The tree moves vigorously as if about to tear off its roots. I feel like someone has s***ed the life out of my legs and fall back, a scream fights its way out of my mouth. I hold my hands up as though they would protect me.

Nothing happens.

Slowly, I open my tightly closed eyes to see an arm extended towards me, long pointed claws almost close enough to touch my foot.

I quickly scramble away, my breaths tremble. Luke— the beast, pulls his arm away with a whimper, the sound so different from the guttural howls I'd just heard.

Trying to swallow the lump in my dry throat, I shakily get to my feet. He reaches for me again, making me yelp, the chain stops short just a foot away from me. He growls lowly, shaking his manacled wrist and the tree along with it.

I turn around, only to hear another loud growl, the furious cry of a wounded animal. The tree shakes again. I whip my

head around, watch in horror as the tree sways dangerously.

“Stop!”

The word wrenches its way out of my mouth, unintentionally, instinctively.

He stops.

I watch in confusion as he flexes his arm towards me yet again, another whimper reaches my ears.

“You,” I hesitate “You just want company?”

He doesn't understand. Nevertheless, I walk towards a nearby tree, slowly, keeping my eyes on him, and sit down against it.

The beast watches me warily for a while, then finally settles down, his stormy eyes trained on me. So familiar, completely unknown. Animalistic.

When in Lycan or wolf form, Lycanthropes can understand everything that's happening, the animal part of us has retreated a lot in the past century.

But looking at the hairy creature in front of me, I feel like I'm near a brutal military dog.

Impossibly, a chuckle escapes me. Those words probably describe Luke best; Military dog.

A low growl reaches my ears, I look at the beast, expecting it to start thrashing around to get free again but he's only staring at me, almost... pleased?

Goddess, I'm going mad.

“Luke, you exaggerated,” I put my chin in my hands and smile a little “You’re not all that bad like this.”

He tries to reach for me again, gently this time, as if he doesn’t want to scare me. The chain stops him again. He gives it a hard tug, his lips curl in a snarl, displaying razor-sharp teeth. When he looks at me again, he whimpers a little.

He looks so... lonely.

My heart aches a little, even surprising me. Maybe he just wants company, someone who’s not afraid of him.

I stand to my feet, his shoulders stiffen, probably thinking I’m running away again.

Which is what you should do! The voice of reason in my head says. This is madness, Luke said he’d rip apart anything in his path!

Just a little step closer, maybe he’d be a bit comforted. I take a step forward, then another.

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The beast lunges for me and the next moment I feel myself being yanked forward and crushed against something.

Alarms start ringing in my head. This was a bad idea, a stupid idea.

My body goes rigid from shock, screams die at my tongue and my heart leaps to my throat but the beast is too busy to notice as he wraps me in his arms and loud howls rock through him to me.

I’m about to die I’m about to die I’m about to die

A wet nose pressed against my neck and the beast takes a deep, deep breath. A growl rumbles through him and I shake with it.

He hasn’t... I’m still... I’m alive!

I need to get the hell away before he changes his mind.

“L-Luke,” I say, struggling to put some distance between me his big, furry head

He presses me closer still, almost suffocating me in his arms. Is that how he plans to do it? By crushing me to mush?

Like how snakes do to their victims?

No. I'm not dying just yet, and not due to my stupid sympathetic nature.

But seriously universe! This is what I get for being nice? Imminent death?

Okay, deep breaths Elise, you can do this. With a herculean effort, I free one of my arms and cautiously, praying not to get killed, scratch him behind the ear.

A soft, almost purr-like growl reaches my ears. Slowly, his hold eases enough to let me breathe. The beast raises his head and drops his chin on my head, holding me like some favorite toy.

"Luke," I try to push his arms away only to stop a moment later when a threatening growl meets me. Perfect.

A roughly padded claw brushes against my cheek, a nose is pressed in my hair. More deep breaths. Both from me and the beast. Dear moon, what the hell have I gotten myself into?

Okay, he seems to like me. Do I just need to distract him enough to get away, maybe get him to sleep?

Swallowing my fear, I slowly pull my head away and turn it to look at him. His obsidian eyes are impossibly tender when he meets my gaze, the storm of rage now calm. He doesn't look half as scary as he did a while ago.

Cautiously, I reach up a hand and trace the scars on his muzzle. He leans into my palm and a little flower of warmth opens in my chest.

"You're not going to kill me?" I ask quietly, tracing the scars on his face, acutely aware he can rip me to pieces at any moment "Even if you are, please reconsider."

He whimpers a little and leans towards me so his muzzle presses to my hair.

"You're not very much like Luke, are you?" I can't believe the chuckle that leaves my mouth "And you're not quite a beast either."

I shift a little in his hold, this time he lets me "You're like a complete Lycan, but I'm not going to call you that so... Wolfie?"

He snorts through his nose, I feel myself smile a little. In his senses or not, he's still Luke.

"Don't sound so disappointed," I pat his furry arm "That's all the creativity I can muster right now."

My panic dims down and I feel the tension in my muscles escape. Goddess, he's so warm and furry. A yawn escapes me.

Luke— or maybe I should just call him Wolfie tucks me under his head again, for a moment I think I should try to escape somehow, he's still pretty much a wild animal.

But... somewhere in my heart, I feel sure that he won't hurt me. Slowly, steadily, despite all my cautions, I feel darkness seep into my vision and I fall asleep. The last thoughts that swirl in my head is something along the lines of;

Good moon, I really should get my head checked.

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Eclipse born

I wake up in a strange positing, I can feel my back against the rough bark of a tree but my head against something else, and something warm is wrapped around my neck, holding me gently.

My eyes flutter open as sunlight tickles my skin, I see the trees and shrubs around.

Strange, where did the fire go? Why the hell am I not in my sleeping bag?

With clouds of confusion in my head, I look at the human limb around my neck. The events of last night flood in my head. Oh...

Carefully unwrapping Luke's arm from around me, I pull back, my eyes fall on his face. Goddess, he looks exhausted.

Mindlessly, my eyes travel down to his very bare front and before they could go further down, the realization hits me hard.

I jump to my feet and sprint back towards the camp. Once back, I slap my hands on my burning cheeks. Oh my moon, oh my moon, oh my f***ing moon. Thank universe I didn't see anything! I'd have died from embarra**ment at the spot!

Why the hell didn't he have clothes on?!

Mostly when werewolves or Lycans shift, they take off their clothes or rip them apart. Since no one wants to shift back in their birth suit, packs arrange a witch to enchant some clothes on us. So when we shift back, we can save our decency.

Wait...

My hand falls on my pocket, feeling the silver key.

Do I have to go back to give him this?!

Unbidden, blood rushes to my face. I shake my head vigorously. No way am I going there.

But if I don't go, how the hell will Luke be unlocked?! The chain is unbreakable!

With a groan, I bump my forehead against a tree. Why my universe?

Okay, I can do this, the moment I see a speck of him, I'll throw the key and run away. Yeah, I can do this.

Pumping myself up with motivation, I start towards the spot where Luke is. Keeping my eyes as close as possible without tripping and quite possibly cracking my skull against a rock. I see a hint of wavy hair, a shade of brown so

dark it's almost black.

"Luke?" I call from behind a tree

A moment later, a raspy voice reaches me "The key, Hazel."

I huff. a**hole.

I toss the key in his direction and breathe a sigh of relief. Only, it's cut short by a familiar voice.

"You threw it too far."

Something between a whine and a groan leaves my mouth as I stomp my foot in annoyance.

"Well, I'm not getting it," I say

"Oh, and I can spend my life chained to a tree." Comes the snappy reply

"Don't be so pessimistic, Luke," I chide him "Maybe some lucky lady will find you."

A low growl reaches my ears, a laugh escapes me.

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"Get me that damn key, Hazel!" Luke says

"First you tell me, why the hell aren't you wearing anything?"

“Enchanted clothes don’t work on me.”

“What are you? Anti-magic?”

“No. I’m annoyed.” Luke’s voice reaches me, hard as ever “Now stop this nonsense and give me the key.”

“Ask nicely.”

“What?”

“You heard me,” I smile to myself “Ask me nicely, or we might as well rest for a day.”

“Hazel, I’m not in a mood for this.”

“Fine,” I shrug even though he can’t see me “I’m going back.”

I take a few steps forward, humming to myself.

“Wait!” he sounds almost desperate, I bite my lip not to laugh

“Yes?” I ask innocently

He takes a deep breath “Please get me the key.”

“What did you say, Luke?” I ask like the innocent soul I am “I didn’t quite catch it.”

More deep breaths, then he says a bit loudly, his voice slightly terse;

“Hazel, will you be kind enough to get me that key? Please?”

Smiling contently, I turn around and start walking with my eyes towards the sky. I see Luke’s head from my

peripheral.

“What are you doing?” he says “The key is on the ground!”

“Oh, right,” I close my eyes “Where is it again?”

“I can’t believe I’m doing this,” Luke mutters before saying “Two steps on your left.”

I take two steps to the left and crouch down on all fours, hands searching the earth.

“A little forward.” I crawl forward and hit my face against something hard, like a tree

“Ouch!” I rub my nose before saying in an accusing tone “You did that on purpose!”

“Why would I?” a hint of amusement leaks in his voice “Just at the base of this tree.”

My hands search around and touch something cool. I snatch the key and stand on my feet.

“I’m tossing it,” I say

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“No!” Luke says quickly “Just walk towards me and hold it out.”

I walk in the direction of his voice and hold out the key. Warm, callous fingers brush against mine as he takes the key, causing them to tingle slightly. The sound of a padlock opening reaches me, then the sound of a chain rattling.

“Now go and wear something,” I say, my tone more authoritative than I intended “I’m going to wait here.”

“Fine.” The sound of his footsteps gradually becomes distant and I let out a breath I wasn’t sure I was holding

Well, you can’t blame me, my mother raised me to be a demure maiden. Though I didn’t turn out the way she wanted,

I did catch some of her lessons.

A few minutes later, someone touches my shoulder. My eyes fly open and I see Luke standing near me, thankfully clothed.

“Thank Goddess,” I say as we start walking again

Luke raises his brows “Since when are you so concerned about decency?”

I narrow my eyes at him “Since always.”

We reach the campsite and I see that Luke already packed everything. He opens his food bag and tosses an apple to me, taking one himself.

“Come on, we have to get going.” He says

“Wait,” I grab his arm

Luke turns to me, an eyebrow arched. I let go of his arm and cross my own across my chest.

“You promised me an explanation.” I level him with a steely look

Luke keep staring at me for a few moments. He looks so tired as if he’s been breaking rocks. The way he was looking like when I had knocked at his room’s door so many nights ago in our pack mansion.

It had been a full moon the night before.

Finally, he sighs “You’re not going to leave it?”

I shake my head firmly.

Luke drops his bags and surprises me as he takes my hand and pulls me towards the soft patch of earth I was sitting on last night. We sit down. Luke doesn’t say anything, simply traces the lines on my palm, causing a strange sort of tingly feeling to rise my skin. I think of pulling it away but then let it be.

Luke glances at me from under his lashes. For a moment I feel like something has stolen the breath from my lungs.

The sunlight filters through the trees, catching his eyes like the deep blue ocean. He looks almost anxious.

I internally shake myself. Luke Winters? Anxious? No way in hell.

“Well?” I’m surprised at the softness of my voice

“Hazel,” Luke tightens his hold on my hand, shifting closer to me “Whatever I’m about to tell you, should never reach anyone else. Understood?”

Pulling my brows together, I nod. Luke lets out a breath.

“I was born on an eclipse.”

I s*** in a sharp breath, my eyes widen.

Lycanthropes born on an eclipse never survive. They die just a few minutes after birth.

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“But,” I stumble on my words “That’s impossible! You- You’re the strongest Lycan I’ve ever seen!”

After last night... after I’d seen him almost pull that huge oak tree from its roots just by a tug...

Luke turns his eyes to my palm again, tracing the lines almost mindlessly.

“My mother was very malnourished, it was a miracle she survived childbirth,” he says “She couldn’t have survived again, that was clear. There would’ve been no leader of our pack after my father. In their desperation to save my life, they were willing to do anything.”

His finger stops its track on my palm, Luke looks up at me.

“They called Korra.”

Realization dawns on me. She’d recognized him at the starting line.

I swallow “What did she do?”

“Over the centuries, our primal nature has receded to almost nothing.” Luke says “Lycanthropes born on an eclipse can’t survive in this age, but they could before.”

Luke lets go of my hand, silence hangs in the still air.

“She made mine strong enough to survive.”

“But last night,” I saw you “I heard the growls and the rattling. What was that?”

“That’s where it went wrong,” Luke heaves a heavy sigh “It was alright in the start, everything was... normal. But as time pa**ed, around the full moon, my primal nature heightened. It got worse when I shifted at 11.”

I stare at him blankly. Lycans usually shift at 13, werewolves at 16. It’s almost impossible to shift before that and if someone does, they usually die of the pain.

“I’d slept early due to how panicked I was feeling,” Luke says “and I woke up in the forest near the pack mansion, blood on my hands and the body of a dead animal at my feet.

“My Father called Korra again and she told us that somehow, my animal nature was still growing stronger,” Luke runs a hand through his hair, pushing it back from his forehead “When it got worse still, she gave my Father that chain to lock me up every full moon night.”

I pull my knees to my chest and wrap my arms around them.

“So this will just go on?” I ask quietly, trying not to think of how painful it must be “There’s no end to it?”

A shadow flickers across his face as he stands up “There is.”

I tighten my hold on myself “That is?”

“If this goes on, my animalistic side will overtake the human one.”

Luke turns around and starts towards where he dropped the bags “And when that happens, I’ll just be another monster to be killed.”

My heart twists horribly in my chest, my throat tightens.

“There’s no cure?”

Luke glances at me over his shoulder “That’s why I’m on the Hunt, to get a cure.”

And another time today, the realization hits me. The Alpha Supreme’s will is unbreakable. That’s what’s driving him, that’s why he’s always looking for ways to ensure his victory.

“Come on,” I stand up from my spot and dust my clothes “Let’s go win this thing.”