

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Say something

He doesn't come back the whole night.

Which is good. I didn't want him to hear me cry myself to sleep.

I wake up with puffy, red eyes, a numb mind, and a heavy conscience. My thoughts have tired themselves by running in circles, my heart is a traitorous b*****. The only solace I can offer myself is this;

It's going to be fine. Soon this Hunt will be over and you'll never see Luke again. Both of you will get busy in your new lives, forget this ever happened.

I splash water on my face, hissing when it stings my eyes but the puffiness decreases a bit due to the cool water. I

change clothes and put my hair in a messy braid.

I'm sitting on the bed, mind blank like an untouched paper when the door opens. Luke's eyes meet mine momentarily, I feel my heart jump to my throat.

He looks away and silently packs up our bag "We're leaving."

With that, he goes out of the room. I ignore the twist in my chest and follow him out. Ethan and Tyler are sitting in the lounge, they look up at us. Ethan quickly averts his gaze, his perfect nose swollen, though the bruises on his neck are now gone. Tyler only exchanges a nod with Luke before we go out of the house.

We walk on for hours, not once saying anything. The silence is so loud, I want to clamp my hands on my ears to shut it out. Several times, I had opened my mouth to say something but then mashed my lips together, not speaking.

The day bleeds into the night without a single word spoken between the two of us.

Is that how it will be from now? Did whatever we had was shattered by the reality I'm desperately holding onto?

"We'll camp the night here," Luke says, stopping at a small clearing

I nod, unable to form words. The irony is cruel. He always wanted me to be quieter, I always wanted him to treat me as an equal with respect. Both of us have exactly what we wanted, but it's not what we want anymore.

Silently, mindlessly, I start the fire and sit by it, watching the flickering flames.

Is this what it's like to be in relationships? Even if for a few minutes? Goddess, this s***s.

Luke hands me a blanket, I silently accept it. He walks away, standing by a tree, arm crossed across his chest.

I stare at him for a few moments. Say something. Say what? Tell him he should've never thought 'we could work.

Tell him I'm an idiot for being blinded by my feelings to notice that he and I were becoming us. Tell him I wish it wasn't this way but the reality is choking my hope and telling me this is how it is. Tell him I want to put my arms around him and hide my face in his chest, away from reality.

Will that change anything?

So I just stay quiet. I put the bag under my head, using it as a pillow, and wrap the blanket around me. I close my eyes and tell myself again;

It's going to be fine. You're going to get over this. Both of you will get busy in your new lives soon, you'll forget

Luke Winters.

But somewhere in the back of my head, a thought creeps up to me, chilling me to my bones.

What if you can't?

✧ Luke's POV ✧

Silence.

I'd always savored it, found it best for thinking, clearing my head. I would have gladly had most people tape their mouths for the sake of the quiet.

I never thought there would be a day when I would hate it with every fiber of my being.

I can hear her footsteps behind me, her scent like the comfort that's always reminding me it won't last for long.

She's been quiet for the better part of the past two days, both of us have. I can't decide if I'm infuriated or elated.

Maybe both. Elated because I'm not sure I can handle pretending everything is fine. Infuriated because this isn't how

I expected the last of this Hunt to be.

Now and then, she would look at me, prepared to say something but then she stops herself, thinking I'm not

noticing just how many times she has done that by now.

ADVERTISEMENT

"Let's not stop tonight," I turn to face her as she speaks, steady golden eyes look back at me

I look up at the darkening sky. With minimum defense gear and food, it's better if we try to cover the remaining distance as quickly as possible. Besides, it's not like I'll be getting any sleep any time soon.

I nod at her and pick up my pace, only a short while later, a soft voice breaks the lovely numbness in the air.

"Luke?"

I resist the urge to clench my fists and glance at her from the corner of my eyes.

She takes a deep breath "Are you mad at me?"

I stop and look at her with a stoic face, but even then, I can't help but raise an eyebrow.

"Why would I be?" I ask, genuinely confused

She wrings her hands, something she's never done before, and bites down hard on her bottom lips. For the love of

Goddess, stop doing that.

"You're not mad at me?" She asks slowly, I nod "Then why are you ignoring me?"

I c*** my head to a side "Like how?"

She looks away, shrugs look at me again, unease wrote all over her face.

"You haven't talked to me since we left the house." She says

"You haven't either."

A beat of silence pa**es, the air around us is so thick, I could cut through it. then her lips curl up in a small smile.

“Well, then we’ve both been fretting over nothing.” She says, a hint of hope in her voice

Nothing? The way you and I had started trusting each other, leaning on each other was nothing? The way electricity cackles when you touch me is nothing? The way we complement each other perfectly is nothing?

I wouldn’t use that word for what we’re fretting over.

But the hope in her eyes makes me nod. I don’t want this to be more uncomfortable than it has already become. I don’t want you to be uncomfortable around me.

We start down our path again, the air seems breathable now, less tense. Hazel seems visibly relaxed as if the problem is gone and over with as if it was so small.

Maybe for her, it was, I ignore the twist in my gut. Maybe for her, you never meant more than a partner, a companion.

It was you who made these a**umptions, and look where that has led you.

“Luke,” Hazel says, I detect the hint of tiredness in her voice “I know I said we should keep going, but I’m regretting my decision.”

“Keep on regretting, Hazel, we aren’t stopping now.”

“Why not?” She asks incredulously

“It’s nearly dawn,” I point out “there’s no point in stopping now.”

She marches up and stands in front of me, blocking my path. I give her a disappointed look. If anything, I expected

her to be used to this by now.

“You’re being difficult for now reason,” she rolls her eyes “If anything—

She stops, her eyes glued to something on the left side.

Instantly, my senses kick in sharp. My hand goes to the revolver tucked in the waistband of my jeans, but I doubt I’d need it right now, without the wolfsbane dose, I can rip apart any ambusher as long as he does come with guns.

What I see makes my brows furrow in confusion. Through the thinning trees, I see a vast field full of dandelions,

their white flurries like snow in the faint morning light.

“Don’t tell me you’re afraid of dandelions.” I give Hazel an incredulous look

ADVERTISEMENT

“Don’t be sa**y, Winters.” She says, but I see the way her eyes light up.

She looks at me again, and I’m caught in the crossfire of emotions. Her smile is so bright, eyes alight with excitement, honey hair framing her face. I want to burn this image in my memory forever.

“Let’s make a deal,” Hazel says “We take a break to see that field and I won’t ask to stop again.”

I take into consideration her request— offer, actually, and find myself agreeing. If we take a walk around that field, it can’t possibly take more than twenty minutes, while I’m sure if we stop she won’t be getting up for at least two hours.

“Deal,” I say with a nod

“Perfect!” Hazel grabs my arm and starts towards her destination, her skin lighting sparks against mine

Once we pa** through the trees and stand in the vast field, Hazel squeals, biting her bottom lip.

“This is like a dream,” she says “I always wanted to find a huge dandelion felid!”

“Why?” I raise an eyebrow, wanting to listen to her more than I would like to admit

“So I can do this,”

With that she opens her arms wide, turns around, and sprints forward, causing a cloud of white flowers to rise behind

her.

I watch with my hands in my pockets, a soft smile playing at my lips as she breaks in a fit of giggles, dandelion fuzz covering her clothes and hair. She takes another round of the field, probably only for the sake of it, before she walks over to me, a wide grin on her face.

“That was so awesome!” She says, gesturing animatedly with her hands

“Good,” I say “That means you’re done here. We can go back to important things now.”

“What?” her eyes widen in alarm “so soon?”

I c*** an eyebrow “It’s been ten minutes.”

“Come on, Luke,” she gives me a look, puffing up her cheeks “This isn’t fair, I want to stay for a bit longer!”

I keep my gaze locked on hers, Hazel doesn’t back down. Stubborn as always.

I raise my hand, her eyes follow its movement as I bring it near her face.

Then I flick her forehead.

Hazel loses her balance and falls back, a puff of dandelion fuzz rises as she falls, blinking in confusion.

My lips twitch upward “Being unfair has its benefits.”

Hazel glares at me, only adding to my amus****t. Then I feel something hit my ankle—hard.

Before I can steady myself, my feet lose their footing on the slanted earth and I fall in the flowers, another puff of white fuzz floats in the air.

A cackling laugh reaches me, I look up with narrowed eyes at the girl who’s struggling to control her laugh as she looks at me.

“That wasn’t funny,” I say sternly

“Of course not,” Hazel nods, a wide grin on her face “It was hilarious!”

She doubles over laughing, I sweep my hand through the flowers nearby, causing the fuzz to fly straight into her mouth. Hazel stops laughing abruptly, then irregular coughs and sneezes follow, eyes wide, giving her an even more

animated look.

I find my shoulders starting to shake and before I can think better of it, a laugh escapes my mouth, the sound strange to even my ears.

Hazel glares at me and stands up, marching towards me “You are such an—

She cuts herself off with a yelp of surprise as she loses her balance, falling right over me, her head hits mine hard and before I know it, we’re rolling down the small slope.

ADVERTISEMENT

When my eyes focus again, I was aware of the small body over mine, my arms wrapped around it of their own volition.

Hazel lifts her head, the tip of her nose touching mine, slightly parted lips hovering over my own. The light from the rising sun bounces off her skin, catches in her eyes to make them look like golden pools.

Her breath falls on my lips in soft pants, I can't help the desire that crashes over me like a high tide.

Without thinking, I tilt my face, my lips brush against hers, causing a shiver to race down my spine, a crackle of electricity.

She pushes me away.

My eyes snap open to see that she's turned her face away, lips pursed tightly.

Reality wedges itself like a silver blade in my windpipe. My body seems to lock itself in place, unable to move in the wake of the roil in my chest.

I force my arms to shift from around her and let her go.

She moves away, not meeting my eyes. I stand up, my throat parched like sandpaper. I want to punch myself in the face. She told you she doesn't want you, I tell myself fiercely, harshly.

"We should go," I say, my voice dead of emotion as I turn to go back

Someone holds my hand, I s*** in a sharp breath.

"Luke, I—

"Let go, Hazel."

She hesitates for a moment before withdrawing her hand. I look over my shoulder as she stands up, her face contorted in helplessness.

"It doesn't have to be this way," She says softly, quietly "We can be friends, we can—

"No." My voice is hard to even to my ears "We can't be. I cant be."

"Luke, it doesn't have to be all or nothing," she says, closing the distance between us

"That's the way it is with me."

"I don't want this to happen to us," Hazel says "Just because of some infatuation—

“Infatuation?” I ask, anger burns in my voice, composure slipping through my fingers “Is that what it looks like to you?”

Her shoulders slump, eyes confused with the battle wagging inside her head. Say something. Some hopeless part of me expects her to say she doesn't think that, that she feels for me what I feel for her, that she wants me to.

She says nothing.

I turn my face away, clenching my hands into fists, feeling my pointed fingers threatening to cut through the skin.

She would never understand what it's like for me. What it's like to think I will never see her again after this Hunt, what it's like to imagine a life without her, what it's like to know that she would fall in love with another man and I would be powerless to do anything against it.

She would never understand what it's like to love someone who doesn't want you to.

“We're wasting time,” I said, steeling myself “Let's go.”

She meets my gaze, searching. A moment later she nods, a troubled look on her face.

We start on our path again, silence descending over us.

I would not beg her to love me. I would not force her to see what I do.

With a deep breath, I straighten my back and roll back my shoulders, marching ahead on the path that would lead me to the goal I've waited to achieve for so long.

The world could survive a heartless man, but it would not survive a heartless beast.

...

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 42

Chapter 42 Lets pretend

Elise's POV

I tell myself it's nothing.

I tell myself I don't feel like I'm about to burst into tears every time Luke averts his eyes from me, I tell myself my thoughts do not drift to what he said that day every night, I tell myself I will forget this.

I watch as the sun comes up from behind the clouds. A wave of homesickness crashes over me. Mom's pretty face,

smiling warmly at me. Carlos' crooked grin, calm blue eyes. Angelina's ruckus over the tiniest things. Morgan's amazing apple pies and savvy stories.

What have they all been doing since I came here? Would they remember what day it is today?

Someone touches my shoulder.

I jump away, in an instant, my revolver is pressed against someone's forehead, my finger at the trigger.

Luke holds his hands up in mock surrender "That's a waste of ammunition."

I let out a breath I was holding and pull my hand away "You startled me."

Luke raises an eyebrow "I called you twice. You didn't respond."

"Oh," I blink "I didn't hear you."

"You seem distracted," Luke says monotonously as he s***ters away from the remains of the firewood

I refrain from sighing. Why cant he just talk to me normally? It would make it so easier to ignore this. It would make everything—

—Like an illusion. Luke is right, Elise. This cant is as simple as you wish it was.

The moon knows what it took for me to push away from him when all I wanted was him to kiss me the way he had before, in a way that made me forget fear, restrictions, the whole damn world.

I should die of shame.

How could I do this to myself? To my mate? To Luke? I should've stopped him before things went so out of hand. I should've stopped myself.

Someone snaps their fingers in front of my face. I blink a few times, Luke's impa**ive face comes into my view.

"I zoned out for a bit," I say sheepishly

He keeps staring at me for a few moments "Are you alright?"

No. "Fine. Why?"

Luke shakes his head and picks up the bag, slinging it over his shoulders. The next words seem to wrench themselves out of his mouth;

"You look like a kicked puppy."

The corner of my mouth lifts "Just feeling homesick today."

Luke starts walking, for a few moments, we walk in silence. Then;

"Why?"

Don't tell him. There's no point. This is—

"It's my birthday today."

For the briefest moment, I see him falter in his steps, his shoulders tense. Silence stretches between us and I feel like kicking myself. Why the hell did I tell him? what did I expect?

"You're twenty now?"

I snap out of my thoughts and nod "Yes."

Luke only nods at me before glancing down at the map in his hands. Is it possible to be jealous of a piece of paper?

What the hell is the matter with you, Elise? I chide myself. This is what you wanted, this is what is right. Stop being so pathetic. He's not your mate.

I'm in the middle of taking a deep breath when a horrifying thought hits me in the gut like an iron fist.

What if I never find my mate?

I swallow thickly, the lump in my throat stays just where it is.

It's a huge possibility, I'm already twenty, already legally old enough to choose a mate for myself.

I suddenly feel like something has s***ed the life out of my legs, my heart rate doubles. Before this, before Luke,

finding my mate was a secondary option over freedom. But now...

ADVERTISEMENT

If I don't find him, I'll never forgive myself for doing this to Luke. For doing this to myself.

I'll never be able to forget.

I stop in my steps, unable to breathe. Am I having a panic attack? Heart attack? Anxiety attack?

No, I clench my fists tightly. Not today whatever type of attack you are. Not now.

"Hazel?"

"I'm okay," I say too quickly

Luke raises his brow, I try and fail to swallow the persistent lump in my throat. Damn you, you weird reminder of restlessness!

"Right," he nods his head, clearly believing my amazing acting skills "Then stop standing there,"

Nodding, I quickly walk over to him. The morning bleeds into noon and then the sun starts setting. We enter a thinner part of the forest, the earth covered with plush, dark green moss. It's so beautiful in the failing evening light, a stark contrast against the orange sky.

I take another step forward, only, it doesn't fall on the plush moss. It goes right through it.

A scream rips past my mouth as the earth swallows me, the next moment I feel like someone has simultaneously pulled my shoulder out of its socket and the breath from my lungs.

Luke pulls me back up, steadying me with his arms. I try to catch my breath and stare at the gaping hole in the sheet of moss.

"It's man-made." Luke says, his eyes scan the vast area covered with moss "This whole place must be full of them."

I step away from him "You think we can cross this without dying?"

Luke rubs his jaw, eyes narrowed at the battlefield. He glances at me, just for a moment, so quickly I think I imagined it.

"I can gauge their location by focusing on my footfall. But," he shakes his head "We can't take chances right now, we'll go around it."

I open my mouth to argue but then decide against it and nod. I turn around but freeze in my place. Luke tenses beside me.

In front of us, at the border of the moss land a row of wolves appears, teeth bared, lips curled in snarls.

“Just perfect,” I hear Luke hiss out before he takes my arm in his and steers around—
Straight into the moss field. I whip my revolver out and look back, ready to shoot and—
My foot slips again, I instinctively pull the trigger, the shot goes through the trees.

“What is wrong with you?” Luke says, pulling me away from the hole “just follow—

A loud growl reaches my ears as a wolf lunges for us, others on its heels. Unthinking, I pull the trigger, a bullet goes straight through its head. The others only seem more enraged and charge forward, seemingly having memorized a safe path.

I hear Luke curse under his breath. He throws his revolver at me, I barely catch it when he lifts me over his shoulder.

“Shoot, Hazel!” Luke says, already sprinting ahead

Clenching his revolver in one hand, I use it to brace myself on his shoulder to stay straight and with my one, I aim.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

One, two, three down. A dozen more to go.

“I won’t be able to shoot all of them,” I say, switching revolvers

I take aim again and pull the trigger, it misses, but the wolf stumbles back and right into a hole, a howl echoes in the gunpowder thick air.

“I don’t think they know the exact path,” I say to Luke, shooting another wolf “Can you guess where the most traps are?”

He doesn’t answer for a moment, he takes a sharp turn to the left.

“Hold tight,” Luke says

I feel my hands jolting with each leaping step he takes, my aim not as good as it should be. But I see the wolves slipping and falling. Their pace slows down but Luke’s only increases.

Then to my immense annoyance, I see the moss bed fade away to give a glimpse of the solid earth and still four wolves hot on our heels.

Then suddenly my heart leaps to my throat. I see the earth way below, almost a speck as the chains holding the bridge click together with Luke's running.

The never-ending bridge comes to an end and Luke all but drops me on my behind. I glare at him, but it's short-lived as I catch sight of the wolves, following us.

"I don't want to die today," I say, getting to my feet

"I'll see that you get your wish," Luke says,

I see his fingers extend, his frame becoming taller and broader as he clamps his hands on one of the thick wooden posts where the chains of the bridge are connected. He pulls it off the earth and tosses it down.

ADVERTISEMENT

The bridge shakes horribly, the wolves stumble and halt but Luke wastes no time in going for the other post. He rips it off the ground.

The bridge falls like a recoiling snake, the howls of the wolves on it become distant as they fall.

I slump down on the ground, breathing hard. Luke slumps down beside me, his chest rising and falling rapidly as

his fingers go back to normal.

Finally, I open my mouth and words tumble out;

"Most unforgettable birthday ever,"

A faint smile crosses Luke's face.

"Try not to flatter me, Hazel."

Once we both gather our wits, we set camp only a few kilometers away. After a minimalistic dinner, I don't know

when I doze off.

Someone is shaking my shoulder. I grumble a curse and swat away the hand.

"Hazel, wake up." a familiar voice says

“Like hell,” I mumble, making myself comfortable against the makeshift pillow of our bag

“Hazel,” this time he shakes my shoulder harder “Get up.”

I force my eye to open and see Luke crouching in front of me. Instantly, alarms start going off in my head.

“What happened?” I ask, quickly sitting up

“Nothing of consequence,” he says, standing up “There’s something you should see.”

My brow pulls together in confusion but I nod nevertheless and get up. Luke motions me to follow, in the dim light of the moon, I follow him through the forestry until he stops.

Luke steps away from in front of me and I hold back a gasp.

A crystal blue lake invades my vision, reflecting the starry sky and the moon like a gla**y mirror.

“This is,” I say softly, walking over to the lake “Beautiful.”

I touch a finger to the water, watching as the whole portrait of the night sky wavers. I see my reflection, the awestruck look on my face.

Luke’s come to stand beside me, his face impa**ive as ever. I turn to look at him, a soft smile on my face.

“Thank you,” I say sincerely

He only offers me a nod, I turn my attention to the lake again, something in the portrait changes. I blink, I think I just saw a flash of light cross the sky.

I look up and my eyes widen as another shooting star goes through the black canvas. Then another, and another before the whole sky illuminates with them.

I faintly hear Luke stepping away. Unthinking, my hand reaches out to hold his, his profile stiffens.

“Stay here,” I find myself saying “Stay with me.”

Luke glances at me over his shoulder “Don’t act like this Hazel.”

“Like what?”

“Like you care whether or not I’m around.”

I ignore the way my heart tightens in my chest but I don't let go of his hand. It's my birthday today, I get to be happy for a while. Even if it's an illusion.

"Let's just pretend to be ignorant," I say quietly, taking a step towards him "Let's pretend your feelings are locked

away in your heart, never been let out."

I swallow thickly, knowing if I say what's in my head, I'll be letting him know just how vulnerable I am. There

would be no taking it back.

"Just as mine is."

I notice the movement in his throat, his face is impa**ive as ever but his eyes give him away. The longing in them is making me want to break every rule I've set up for myself.

It's terrifying.

Luke doesn't let go of my hand when he turns to sit near the bank of the lake. Once we've both sat down, he lets go and I wrap my arms around my legs, putting my chin on my knees. The silence that befalls us is comfortable after so long.

I look at the sky showering light, smile tugs at my lips.

ADVERTISEMENT

"Let's make a wish," I say to him

"You believe that?" Luke asks, not bothering to hide his amus****t

"Yes, I do," I say, not caring if it looks childish

I close my eyes and think of what to wish for. I am getting what I wanted, I'm getting my freedom. What else could I

want?

I want—

I cut off my thoughts, feeling emotions overwhelming me.

"I don't think the stars can grant my wish, Hazel."

My eyes open and gravitate to his, swallowing the turmoil of emotions they induce. There are inches between in, entire oceans. This is how it's supposed to be, but it feels so, so wrong.

I turn my face away, ignoring the dull sting behind my eyes.

"Mine neither." I regret the words just as I say them

I shouldn't be doing this, I'm only pushing both of us on a path that ends in pain and disappointment.

"Let's pretend that's not what we wish for," I whisper

I feel something warm brush against the side of my face, slowly turning it sideways. Luke's stormy blue eyes meet mine, he leans forward, his palm rough against my cheek, causing my heart to beat a tempo against my ribcage.

"I can't," Luke says

I look away from his stormy eyes. It's too much for me. His emotions, his sincerity, his care, it's too much for me to handle—too intense.

"I'm sorry," I whisper, afraid my voice would betray me if I speak louder

Luke holds up my chin with his thumb and finger so I meet his steady gaze "I'm not sorry, Hazel. Not for this."

He holds my face in his hands, looking at me like I'm his victory, the sun, the moon, a priceless treasure. An illusion about to fade.

"Elise," He says my name as an endearment, so softly it steals my breath "I—

I put a finger on his lips, my heart cracks into a million pieces "Those words don't belong to me."

Luke takes my hand in his hand puts it on his chest, above his heart— beating fast, hard, irregular under my palm— trying to tell me something words would never be enough to explain.

"Tell me again they don't belong to you."

I swallow thickly, feeling my resolute cracking under the intensity of his gaze.

"Why do you make this harder for me?" I ask, my voice fragile "Why do you make me want things I have no right of desiring?"

“Just this once, Hazel,” he says softly

He leans forward and despite myself, I find myself closing the distance as well.

“Just for a moment,” Luke whispers “Please be mine.”

His lips fall against mine, so softly, as if the slightest force would shatter this mirage. So slowly and carefully, as if wanting to stretch this moment over a million years.

Against the perfect texture of his lips, I taste something salty. Hesitantly, I pull away, blinking only to realize my eyes are sweating.

“This,” I try and fail to form words, a watery chuckle catches in my throat “This is so stupid. Like soap opera.”

Luke wipes away the tear streaks on my face, his face steeled but his eyes swirling with a storm of emotions “I don’t want to be the reason you cry, Elise.”

“You’re not.” I shake my head, a little sad smile on my face “I promise. And I don’t cry, my eyes sweat sometimes.”

He allows the ghost of a smile on his lips and pulls me to himself, wrapping an arm around my waist, stroking my hair with the other, offering the comfort that I will miss more than anything else in the world.

“Let’s pretend this is a dream, a whirl world fantasy.” He says, his hold on my tightens before saying “From tomorrow, everything will be the way it should be, I promise.”

A dream, I close my eyes and take a deep breath, taking in the intoxicating scent of coffee and pine trees.

Under the star tainted sky, surrounded by the secrecy of the forest, in the circle of his arms, my heart whispers, softly, clearly;

Then I never want to wake up.

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 43

Chapter 43 Bullet through my head

The next week is a blur.

True to his promise, Luke didn’t show a hint of his emotions after that night. For that matter, neither did I. We both acted the way we should; like partners.

And the fact that we’re close to the finish line only fuels our will to keep focused.

We hadn't slept since the past week, only dozed off occasionally. This is precisely why I wake up in the noon to the sound of a growl.

My eyes snap open, hands already fumbling to get the revolver out of the waistband of my jeans. There's only one bullet left, is my only thought as I spring to my feet.

My eyes dart in every direction, but I see nothing that could be a threat. Then it dawns to me;

Where did Luke go?

Tucking the revolver away, I start forward, a frown on my face. Where the hell is he?

Only a short distance away, I see him pacing around, his head in his hands. Another low growl reaches me.

"Luke?" a hint of worry leaks in my voice

His head snaps in my direction so quickly I almost flinch. His eyes are dark, near black.

"When did you wake up?" he asks, his voice a little rough around the edges

"Just now." I say, walking over to him "Are you alright?"

"Fine." He moves away just as I approach him, but the tension in his frame doesn't go unnoticed by me

I narrow my eyes at him back. I know the full moon is in one week, he must be having trouble controlling his wolf. Why won't he tell me? it's not like I don't know about it already!

"Are you sure?" I ask him as he walks back to where I came from

"Yes." He doesn't even look at me

Luke walks ahead and I throw my hands up in frustration. Alphas! They are impossible!

I open my mouth to bug him again but then stop myself. It's none of your business, I tell myself firmly. You're not supposed to worry about him.

But I can stop myself from glancing at him now and then. Though Luke keeps always a fast pace, I've never seen him break a sweat. So I guess it's a bit concerning to see a sheen of sweat cover his brow, his whole body taut like a spring under tension.

"How long until we reach the finish line?" I ask him after a few hours

"I'm not sure," Luke says "The recreated map isn't very accurate, but I guess we should reach it in about five days,

give or take a few."

I nod, feeling a thrill of adrenaline go through me.

"If we don't have to change course—

Luke cuts himself off with a low growl. His hand reaches up, f***** his hair.

"Luke!" Without thinking my hands reach out to do, well, I don't know what, but something!

"No, Don't!" Luke stumbles back, dark eyes wide in alarm

I stop in my tracks, confusion and worry cloud my head.

"What?" I breathe out "You're hurting, you idiot! Let me help!"

"You can't help," Luke says, "Stay away. I'm not too—

Another growl rips its way out of his chest. I watch in horror as he falls to his knees, features contorted in pain. His chest rises and falls rapidly, eyes darting in every direction like a caged animal.

The next moment, I find myself kneeling beside him, preying his hands away from his hair. They're burning against my skin as if he has a high fever.

"What are you doing?" Luke snaps, momentarily coming to his bossy senses "I told you to stay away—

"Shut up," I give him a look "I'm not going anywhere."

"Can't you see?" Luke narrows his eyes at me, s*****ing his clawed hands away "I'm not safe to be around."

If he wasn't being so panicked about my safety, I would've slapped him for being such an idiot.

"Luke, calm down," I say calmly, taking his hand in my hands

"No," he grabs my arms, ready to push me away "You need to go, you need to—

"Will you ever shut up?" I put my finger on his lips "Just look at me."

Whether willingly or unwillingly, his dark eyes meet my own, panic and concern just on the surface.

“Breathe,” I put my forehead against him “Don’t think anything, okay? Just look at me and take a deep breath.”

He does, at least the breathing part. For a few moments, we stay like that, I feel his skin cooling down against mine.

“See?” I pull away, a smile on my lips “That wasn’t so hard, was it?”

Luke pulls his hands away from my arms and lets out a rattled breath “Why don’t you ever listen to me?”

“Because you give the dumbest suggestions,” I chirp

Unthinking, I rake my hand through his hair, making it less messy. Just as I realize what I’m doing, I draw it back.

“This is worse than I thought,” Luke drags a hand down his face, rubbing his jaw “It’s not even full moon and yet...”

ADVERTISEMENT

“Are you going to be okay?” I ask him

A shadow crosses his face “It’s not myself I’m worried about.”

I swallow, catching the meaning behind his words. But Wolfie hadn’t hurt me, not in the slightest. Maybe he wouldn’t

hurt me this time either?

I open my mouth to tell Luke I’ll be okay but he beats me to it;

“If I ask something of you, will you do it for me?” he says, taking my hand in his

“I, umm,” I blink a few times

“Answer my question, Elise,” He says, tightening his grip on my hand, his eyes search my own “Will you do it?”

“Do what?” I ask him, confusion thick in my voice

Luke’s stormy eyes are steady as they look at me as if steeled against emotion.

“If I shift, put a bullet through my head.”

“What?” My eyes become the size of the moon

I try to s***** my hand away out of pure surprise but Luke holds it in a firm grip. He leans forward, his face dead serious.

“I don’t know how long until my restraint snaps,” he says “And when that happens, you need to put me out.”

“Luke, are you even listening to yourself?” I say furiously “I’m not going to kill you!”

“You won’t have a choice!” he glares at me “If you don’t kill me, I would surely kill you!”

I’m shaking my head “Luke, I can’t. I just cannot do that to anyone, let alone you.”

He grabs me by the shoulders, forcing me to look at him. I almost gasp when I look at his expression. Never in my

entire life had I thought I would see Luke Winters desperate.

“Promise me,” he says, his voice hard as stone “You won’t let me hurt you.”

“Luke, please, don’t ask this of me—

“I have to, damnit!” he shakes me, once, as if trying to knock some sense into me “I can’t live with your blood on my

hands!”

I give him a harsh glare “You think I can?”

“Think, Hazel.” He says, his stormy eyes bore into mine “Maybe this time if I shift, I won’t be turning back again. I would become a monster, a killing machine.”

He lets go of me, his eyes hold an ages-old pain, a fear that’s been with him for so long, he’s stopped being afraid of

it. A man standing at the brink of the ocean, ready to be thrown off and drown.

“I don’t want to become that,” Luke says

I stand to my feet “Come on, get up.”

I grab his arm, trying to pull him to his feet, though confused Luke complies.

“We don’t have time,” I say, starting to drag him behind me “We’re reaching that darn finish line if it’s the last thing

we do.”

“Hazel—

“No,” I’m surprised at the steel in my voice “You’re not going to become a monster. I’m not going to have to kill you, nor are you killing anyone.”

“Hazel, there’s no other way around it,” Luke sighs, though he keeps walking

I whirl on him, my eyes gla**y with burning tears— no, sweat. I do not cry.

“Then we’re going to do what we always do,” I jab a finger at his chest “We’re going to find a way out.”

I hold his gaze, my breaths short and harsh in the silence around us.

Finally, he looks away from me and walks past me.

“Then stop wasting time,” I hear the hard and commanding voice that I’ve grown so fond of “We have places to be.”

...

The next few days go by almost in a run. Though Luke didn’t show it, I know these few days have been hard on him, specifically because he couldn’t blink an eye to sleep. Not once.

As our time is coming to an end, I find myself closer to telling him about that night he shifted. I want him to know

that he’s not the monster he thinks himself to be.

“Luke,” I say, mustering up my courage

“Watch your step,” he says, pushing aside the vines in front of his face “The trees are older here, you might trip on a root.”

“I know,” I say, my eyes on my feet “but I have to tell you something.”

“Hurry it up,”

I take a deep breath and grab his hand. Luke's head snaps back towards me, his eyes permanently a shade darker since the day he told me to shoot him if necessary. As if he's constantly fighting off the beast.

And ever since then, he's been hypersensitive to any kind of stimuli.

"I don't know if I'll have the chance to say this later," I lick my dry lips "But I want you to know, you're not a monster."

ADVERTISEMENT

Luke furrows his brows "Hazel, we've been through this before."

"No," I shake my head "I mean literally."

His face is a mask of confusion "What?"

"On the full moon," I swallow thickly "I went to see you."

"You what?"

"I know you told me not to," I say quickly "But I never listen to you, do I?"

His scowl tells me exactly how much he appreciates my joke. I can't help but grin at him.

I'm going to miss this.

"But that's not the point," I say "The point is that you didn't hurt me."

"Of course, the chain—

I take a deep breath "I went in the range of the chain."

I watch as his jaw goes slack, his head c***s to a side, brows furrowed. He opens his mouth to say something but I beat him to it.

"You had me. Pretty much engulfed in your arms, but you didn't hurt me, not in the slightest." I tell him

"You're not a monster," I hold his hand up in both of mine, almost under my chin "Not to me. Never to me."

I let go of his hand when he does reply. I guess he's going to explode in a fit of anger and over protectiveness in a

while better get out of his earth's range.

I quickly walk past him, glad to have let out those words. Whatever his reaction maybe, Luke deserves to know.

Through the trees, I see something red flying in the evening breeze. Breath catches in my throat and I squint my eyes to see clearly.

Only a few meters away, I see a clearing, as if the forest stops there and a long white pole, on which a red flag is waving, a silver wolf flashing on it. The Alpha Supreme's flag.

Someone grabs me by the arms and turns me around.

"I didn't hurt you?" For some darn reason, I'm imagining Luke sounding breathless, as if such a thing could happen in reality

Maybe I'm being delusional in my happiness.

"Luke, the finish line," I grab his face and turn it to the flag

I see his eyes widen a fraction, grinning like a maniac, I hold his hand in a vice tight hold and sprint forward. In a dream, in a haze, I feel like I've just pa**ed through a cold gel and out in the open air.

"We're here," I breathe out, a wide grin on my face

"Oh my moon, we're here!" I jump up and wrap my arms around Luke's neck "We're alive and we're here!"

His arms wrap around me, almost cutting off my breath. But who gives a damn about oxygen anyways?

"Now answer my question," Luke says as I pull away a bit "You came to me and I had you, but I didn't hurt you?"

I stare at him incredulously. Seriously? We just won the bloody Alpha' Hunt and he's asking me that?

"Yes you dumba**," I say with a roll of my eyes "You acted like an overgrown mutt fond of cuddles."

He stares at me as someone would at a star, in wonder and amazement. The way you would look at a thunderstorm,

watching the light tear through the sky. Or the way you would look at someone with three heads.

Then he grins at me.

Luke Winters, grins at me, showing his perfectly pearly teeth.

He leans down to press a deep kiss on my forehead “Elise, you Goddamn idiot.”

I push him away a bit, my eyes narrowed “Excuse me?”

“Congratulations, Alpha Winters,”

I jump away from Luke and snap my head towards the source of the sound. A man in his early forties is walking towards us from an earthen path, two military-built men behind him.

A can almost feel the power in the air, my mind vaguely remembers his face. Red hair, blue eyes, and stern expressions. The Alpha Supreme.

“I’m so proud of you son,” he says with a smile, hands clasped behind his back

Luke only nods in his direction, I almost want to stomp his foot. He could at least pretend to care about his greeting!

The Alpha Supreme laughs “The att**ude of a king. Just what we need, my boy.”

He walks over to us and the two military guys instantly focus their eyes on me, a thread of unease coils around my heart.

“I’m not surprised it’s you who made it, Luke,” the Alpha puts out his hand “Whenever we’ve met, I’ve sensed your

pa**ion to win this Hunt.”

Luke shakes his hand “And I’ve sensed your unwillingness to let me, Alpha.”

The Alpha Supreme laughs and in a surprisingly strong tug pulls Luke forward to embrace him like a son.

“You were always too smart, Winters.”

“I’m surprised—

Luke cuts himself off with a gargled sound, the next moment I feel myself being pulled back by the guards.

ADVERTISEMENT

The Alpha Supreme steps away from Luke, a bloody dagger in his hand, thick drops of blood drop from its tip. My

wide, horrified eyes turn to Luke as he stumbles back, blood oozing out of his side.

“I’m sure you are,” Alpha Supreme smiles at him, wiping the dagger on his arm, revealing a silver blade

Luke lets out a rasp of laughter “Good thing I’m off my meds.”

He moves too quickly for me to see, but I see the Alpha Supreme stumble back, holding his bloody nose as the dagger flies from his hand and into the earth on the far side.

“I haven’t had an interesting fight in a long time,” He wipes the blood from his face “Let’s make it easier for you, I won’t shift.”

He charges at Luke but Luke easily dodges his first throw, grabbing his arm to pull him forward and dive his knee into the Alpha’s gut. The Alpha doesn’t even seem fazed as he swings his fist, it catches Luke in his wound, causing him to loosen his hold on the Alpha.

He stumbles back, the Alpha takes it as a chance to grab him by the throat and quite possibly choke him but Luke somehow manages to twist himself out of the Alpha’s hold. The Alpha Supreme’s fists move faster than my eyes and all I know is that Luke’s lip and nose are bleeding, his movement sluggish due to the wound in his gut.

I feel the guards starting to drag me away. I struggle against their stone arms, digging my feet in the earth and

trashing around but it has no effect.

Desperation gets the better of me “Luke!”

His eyes snap to mine and I see the murderous rage that flashes in them. Alpha Supreme uses the momentary distraction to grab him by the hair and knee him in the face, Luke stumbles back, I see his teeth stained with blood.

But instead of focusing on his survival, his eyes fly to me again, once again giving the Alpha Supreme the upper hand as he practically lifts Luke off his feet and hurls him towards a tree.

Luke’s back hits the tree with a horrible thud, he falls to his knees, breathing heavily.

More on instinct than on anything else, I bite down the arm of one of my captors—hard.

His hold on me loosens just for a moment and I whirl on the other guard, my hand pulls the gun out from the waistband of my jeans and I slam its b*** on his nose. He stumbles back, letting go of me, I turn to the other guard instantly, my hand comes down to slam the gun against his neck, he doubles over, I slam it down on his head. He crumples on the ground.

The other guard recovers from his blow, his eyes red and nose swelled but it doesn't stop him from grabbing me around the waist in a harsh hold.

"Luke!" I throw the revolver towards him the best I can

It lands in someone's hand. Not Luke's.

The Alpha Supreme gives me a chilling smile "I must admit, she's a wild one. But I suppose this Hunt would have to remember her as a martyr."

"Don't you know your highness?" Luke grabs him by the back of his neck and whirls him around "Hunters never take their eyes off their prey."

The sliver dagger goes straight in the Alpha Supreme's chest, into his heart.

He crumples to the ground, pulling at the heavy hilt of the dagger. But I can't see him anymore since the next moment,

Luke has ripped me away from the guard, his hand closes around the man's neck, and a Snap! Sounds in the air.

I fall on my behind, breathing heavily. Luke crouches down beside me.

"Elise," he's holding my arms "Hazel, we have to go."

"Where?" I ask shakily as he helps me get up

"There's supposed to be a mansion to accommodate the survivors and winners," he says "We need to get there fast,"

"Are you alright?" is a stupid question, but I'm staring at his blood-stained shirt

"Not too bad," he says "I was already pulling away when he used the knife, the wound isn't too deep—

Bang!

The air stills, both Luke and I hold our breaths. My eyes are trained on the Alpha Supreme's body on the earth, the revolver in his hand as his eyes glaze over.

With a shaking hand, I touch my stomach, my hand comes back slick with blood. I open my mouth to say something, blood comes out, pouring down my chin.

My legs give out from under me, my head swimming. Luke's holding me to himself, his eyes desperately looking over me, settling on the wound, I barely feel him lift me in his arms.

"Elise, hold on," Luke's running maybe, his voice is shaking maybe "Don't close your eyes."

But my eyes are dropping, there's so much pain through my body, it's numbing. Telling me to go to sleep the way I used to when mom told me bedtime stories. Mom, Carlos, Angelina, Morgan, everyone's faces swirl before my eyes. Ethan, Tyler, Clary, so many more.

"I'm tired,"

"I know, Hazel." Luke says "But I need you to stay strong like you always do. I need you not to close your eyes."

My hand is shaking when I reach it up to touch his face. His face snaps down to look at me, stormy blue eyes that

I've grown to adore looking at me with so much pain I think it's even greater than mine.

"Don't," I croak out, my hand drops "Don't be hurt."

"I won't be, I promise." He says I hear the hitch in his breath "I will do anything you say, just don't let go."

He's still running, so am I. Where? I'm not sure.

I dimly register him shouting at someone. Bossy Luke, why let go of any chance to show who is in charge?

"Luke," A breath leaves my mouth

He's letting me down on something, his frantic eyes meet mine "Yes, Hazel?"

I feel my lips twitch up. I like that name. I like the way it sounds on his tongue. I want to taste something on my tongue.

"I love you."

...

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight chapter 44

Chapter 44 My Luna

✧ Luke's POV ✧

My shoes make a rhythmic thud on the polished wooden floor as I turn to my newly acquired office. Everything is in perfect order, with a large L-shaped desk in the center, a high back chair behind it. Shelves line the walls, the windows on the east wall light up the place.

I take my place behind the desk and pick up the file I'd put there last night— or early morning, sleep has been miles away from me.

Twenty Alphas had participated, seven have made it back.

After reaching the mansion, I had a witch lift off the spell from the competitor's wolves and the forest, officially declaring that the Hunt was over. The last team reached here yesterday.

The packs of the deceased Alphas will have to be adjusted under other's authority if they don't have another of the

Alpha bloodline to take the role.

As I leaf through the file, the accommodations storing in my memory with singular glances, the door knocks.

"Enter,"

A man dressed in a dark uniform comes in, his face impassive. Gorge Williams was part of the few warriors with me on my journeys the past five years. He was always my first choice to call when I needed to do something covertly.

"Alpha Supreme Winters," He bows to me

"The ceremony is in four days, Williams." I say, returning my eyes to the file "I'm not the Alpha Supreme yet.

What's the news?"

"As per your orders," he begins formally "The Alpha Supreme Marcus Goldstein's body has been taken care of. All the servants in the mansion who witnessed your arrival have been warned to keep their mouths shut."

I put the file away and prop my elbows on the armrests, steeping my fingers as I hold his gaze. I doubt people would take well to a ruler who killed his predecessor.

“Acceptable,” I say “And the pack?”

“The deceased Alpha’s pack will be under the authority of his younger sister, Alpha Zoya Goldstein. She was told that her brother suffered a planned rouge attack.”

“Very well,” I give him a nod “Make sure she doesn’t look too much into it.”

“Yes, Alpha.” He says “Should I send in the files of the confessions by Alpha Goldstein’s warriors?”

“Send them up. You’re dismissed.”

He gives me another bow and leaves the office, closing the door behind.

Alpha Goldstein had always struck me as the power-hungry type, but he would violate the Hunt as such was a surprise, even to me.

Only a few minutes later, someone brings me the file. I’d have to execute all these men anyway, but I wanted to have proof of their crimes in my hand.

Making a plan for the division of the packs left unsupervised takes me a big mug of black coffee and two hours. It’s

going to get more complicated when I discuss these with the Alphas who are having these additions, but till then, I’m almost done.

For a few moments, I sit in the silence of my office, cherishing the fragments of peace.

Then I pull my phone from my pocket and press my father’s contact.

“Finally made time for your father?” he asks in his usual gruff manner

“You’re the first one I called to give the news of my victory Father,” I say dismissively

“What do you want now?” he asks “Should I send Casper there?”

“No.” My voice holds a steely edge “I told you before that until I say so, no one is to come here. The risk of

ADVERTISEMENT

a**a**ination is high.”

“Don’t try to teach me, boy.” I can hear the scowl in his voice “Why did you disturb me?”

My father was never the affectionate type, which I’m glad for. He’d have killed me with sympathy if that were the

case.

“I want to talk to Mrs. Attwood.”

“What?”

“I’m sure you’ve told her,” I say in the measured voice “But I would like to talk to her myself.”

“You want to talk to that omega? What is—

“Give her the phone, Dad.”

For a few moments there’s silence, then some shuffling as he switches the call. A moment later he’s back on the line.

“She’s on her way,” Father grumbles, disdain rolling off his voice

Then the phone is given to someone else, a voice reaches me.

“Alpha Supreme, how may I help you?” She sounds so much like Hazel

“Please, Ms. Attwood,” I find my voice becoming polite “You can call me Luke.”

“I, Alpha, that,” she hesitates, I can guess why

“I would like you to step out of my father’s office,” I tell her “You’d be able to talk to me more comfortably then.”

“But Alpha—

“Tell him I said that.”

There’s silence. Then muffled voices. Silence again.

“I’m outside,” Mrs. Attwood tells me “Where’s Elise? Is she alright? Can I talk to her?”

“Elise is alright, Mrs. Attwood, I a**ure you.” I tell her calmly “But I’m afraid she cannot talk to you right now, I will make sure she does as soon as possible.”

I hear her let out a ragged breath “As you say, Alpha.”

“Luke.”

“Pardon?”

“I want you to call me Luke,” I say politely “Your daughter is the only reason I’m going to be the Alpha Supreme for the next ten years. Keep that in mind.”

There is a beat of silence. Then;

“Alright,” She says “Tell Elise I’m waiting for her call.”

“I will,”

“Luke?” she says, hesitates for a moment “Please take care of her.”

“You don’t have to worry about that.” I nod to myself

ADVERTISEMENT

She hangs up, I put the phone back in my pocket. Picking up my suit jacket from the back of my chair, I leave the office. The wide windows in the hallways illuminate them with the orange light of the setting sun.

I pause beside the window, the sight of the sun melting behind the trees looks unfathomably bleak.

Through the winding hallways on the top floor, my feet take me to the master bedroom. I see two guards stationed

outside the door, a short woman closing it as she leaves.

“Alpha Supreme,” The healer bows as she sees me coming

I look past her at the door, before my eyes meet her slanted brown ones “How is she?”

“She’s recovering exceptionally well,” She says with a nod “Having her wolf unlocked is helping.”

I only offer her a nod, moving to grab the door handle when she speaks again;

“Alpha Supreme, I think if you can get her mate here—

“I don’t remember asking you for advice.” My voice cuts through hers like a blade

From my peripheral, I see her swallow before she bows “Y-Yes, Alpha.”

She scurries away, I turn the handle and step inside the room.

As I close the door behind, the scent of gardenia flowers and rain wraps around me like a comforting blanket, soothing every worry and exhaustion.

The room does show it was the residence of a ruler of the Lycan race. The canopy ceiling high above the walls,

the massive windows on the east wall, the white sheer curtains hanging over them, the white settle and sofa in one corner all scream royalty.

I walk towards the king-sized, chair I'd put by its side still in its place.

My eyes fall on the girl asleep under the sheet, her honey hair spiraled on the white pillows.

Silently, I sit down in the chair, my hand already reaching to hold hers. My skin sings as it touches hers and I let out a

breath I didn't even know I was holding, my shoulders sag, relaxing for the first time since I checked up on her this morning.

Its been two days since the incident, she hasn't made a single movement except for the soft rise and fall of her chest.

A newly familiar ache constricts my chest as I let out a rattled breath. I can't shake the hope that she might wake up just as I come.

I've been waiting for you for so long, Hazel. Don't make me wait longer.

Unbidden, distant memories unfurl in my head;

' "Is there a cure?" My father had asked the strange woman sitting in his office

I knew she was a witch, I'd met her once before when I was eleven. But she always seemed different from other witches. There was something strange in her scent; something powerful, something more knowledgeable than the rest.

"I can only think of one," she said, her blazing yellow eyes swam towards me

I wanted to look away, unable to hold her scorching gaze. As if she could see what I become the night of the full moon, see the poison called wolfsbane used as a medicine by me, see the blood on my hands as I did in my nightmares.

But I held her gaze, my face impassive. I was thirteen, I shouldn't be intimidated by anyone.

"Then speak woman," My father said, but I noticed that his voice wasn't as commanding as always— this woman was important and she had no reason to do as he said

"Find 'is mate," the witch said, "she should work as a leash."

ADVERTISEMENT

"A leash?" I couldn't help the note of disdain that leaked in my voice. The idea of having someone else know about my condition didn't sit well with me

Both my father and the witch ignored me. Father's gaze was trained on the witch, determination etched on his face.

"How would that help?" He asked

"Don't ya know, Jax?" The witch raised a golden brow "Even beasts can't 'urt what they love."

I was suddenly glad that they were both ignoring me since I could feel my ears burning.

"But keep in mind what 'e is," the witch said, " 'e can't find 'eras easily as ya mutts do these days."

I saw my father's jaw tighten when she said mutts, but he only nodded, understanding what she'd said.

"But he isn't in his senses then," My father told her as if she didn't know already "He'd kill anything in his reach."

I could feel my innards roil as he said that. I wished I could vanish when both of them glanced at me for a moment, as

if I wouldn't notice the way they looked at me like I was a ticking timebomb.

"Anything except 'er," The witch stood up from her seat, dusting her long black gown "How ya manage ta do it ain't ma problem."

She walked towards the door but paused for a moment, she looked at me and smiled, I almost cringed when her yellow and gold teeth came into my sight.

"Best of luck, beastie." And she went out

For the next few days, my father and Beta Drake busied themselves in devising plans to find my mate. I wasn't sure if

I wanted her to see me, I wasn't sure if I wanted my soulmate to know what I was.

But Mom always told me it wouldn't matter to her, that she would help me, understand my pain like no other.

And I was stupid enough to believe that. '

For a few years, I believed her. I wished, hoped, and prayed, and visited every pack in my country, let every trusted man see the monster preparing to unleash itself on the world.

I had one hope, they all told me, and that was finding another to fix my broken pieces.

Only a few months after I started my journey, I knew it wasn't the solution I wanted.

I didn't want my soulmate to find a broken statue she had to fix and cut herself in the process. I didn't want my

soulmate to be afraid of me.

I didn't want anyone to take care of my problems for me.

I didn't want to be that man.

Soon my mate was a secondary matter, soon I knew what the Alpha's Hunt had to offer, soon I didn't have to look for a stranger for peace. I had it in myself, an unshakable belief that I will find a way out.

For five years, I went from one country to the next, training with one pack and the next. Using any means to learn how to control the beast. In five years, I grew to the age of a hundred, survived more murder attempts than people double my age and reputation. In five years, Jax Winters' son became Alpha Luke Winters.

I didn't need my mate, I didn't need anyone.

Now as I look at the girl in front of me, her eyes closed and features calm, a strange longing fills me. More than any I have ever felt for the stranger I'd been forced to look for.

I may be damaged, ruthless, demanding, and not worthy of this girl in any way at all, but I wasn't so far gone that I couldn't love her more than anything in this world.

Wake up, Hazel. I press a kiss to her knuckles. I need my Luna with me.

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight chapter 45

Chapter 45 The stupidest plot twist

Elise's POV

When I open my eyes, I'm sure I'm dead.

And surprisingly enough, it seems as though I'm in heaven. The mattress under me is like a cloud, the sheets covering me are stain soft. The room is beautiful and white and a bit hazy.

Then pain kicks in.

I'm alive alright and the dull pain coming from where the bullet had hit me tells me it hasn't been long since I almost died.

My mind clears, the room comes into focus. Panic and confusion race through my head. How am I still alive? Where am I? Where's Luke?

With a herculean effort, I heave myself up into a sitting position. The room looks like a five-star hotel's master suite.

The canopy ceiling is high above, decorated with an illustration of star constellations. The east wall is practically covered by windows, the curtains drawn over their silhouette. There are two doors, one near the huge bed, the other at the far corner.

The said door clicks open, catching my attention.

Someone steps inside the room, my shoulders tense, bracing for action but soon enough, the rich, intoxicating scent of coffee and pine trees hovers towards me.

"Luke," anticipation leaks in my voice, as I stupidly try to get up

His head snaps in my direction, his dark stormy blue eyes focus on mine. His shoulders rise as if he's holding his breath, eyes wide a fraction. The air is so heavy, almost palpable with tension.

"Elise,"

Something in the air snaps, then tension falls on me like a heavy blanket.

The next moment his hands are on my shoulders, holding me back so I can't get up. whatever emotion was on his face moments ago was gone as if it was just my imagination.

“Rest,” he says, his voice terse “Your wound is still healing.”

In quick, precise movements, he adjusts two pillows behind my back, carefully leaning me against them. I take in his

profile, the creaseless grey suit he’s wearing, his perfectly brushed hair, freshly shaved stubble but the shadows under his red eyes tell me what I need to know.

“Luke, why— how am I still…” The question hangs heavy in the air

Even if I had my werewolf strength, a silver bullet would’ve been lethal for me, and omega. It’s impossible that I’m still alive.

Luke sits down in front of me, staring thoughtfully at my face, almost as if trying to believe I’m sitting right here.

“You were asleep for three days,” he says quietly

My eyes widen. Three days? I’ve taken a silver bullet, been unconscious for three days and I still survived?

“How do you feel?” Luke touches his hand to my cheek

I jump away from him due to sheer surprise, my cheek tingles as if someone’s just electrocuted my skin. The confusion in my head only thickens further. Luke has touched me before, and though it feels amazing, it doesn’t make me feel like stars are erupting across my skin. That’s just… not right.

ADVERTISEMENT

I see a flash of emotion across Luke’s face. Almost like… rejection. But he draws his hand back, his face unreadable as he stands up from the bed and walks to the dresser.

Luke holds out a small mirror for me. Hesitantly, I take it and look at my reflection.

My cheekbones have hollowed out, my lips are champed, and my skin pales like a sheet. Otherwise, I look like myself.

Hazel eyes wide and bright, golden-brown hair tumbling down my shoulders to the middle of my back.

Luke guides my hand, super-nebulas burst where his skin touches mine, but I focus on the reflection in the mirror as it lowers.

Breath hitches in my throat, my eyes widen. Someone has robbed the breath from my lungs and the life from my

limbs.

There, at the junction of my neck and shoulder, a puncture wound has faded, leaving behind something disturbingly well known.

A mark.

When a Lycanthrope is marked, his wolf isn't just living for himself, but also his mate. Legends and stories tell

over and over again the tales of Lycanthropes surviving what would've been fatal wounds because of the presence of their mates.

I turn my wide, terrified eyes to Luke's impa**ive face.

"Tell me I hit my head," I say, my throat suddenly feels parched "Tell me I'm hallucinating."

"You didn't hit your head," Luke says, his voice clear and hard as crystal "I caught you before you could fall."

My organs suddenly start working again. Too efficient this time.

My heart pumps madly in my chest, trying to break out of my ribcage. My breath comes out short and ragged, panic rising like chilling water in my head, numbing my senses.

I push my hair back from my forehead as sweat breaks over my brow.

"Hazel," Luke tries to pull my hand away "Calm down, I—

"Don't touch me!" I break away from him

Never had I thought I'd see the day when Alpha Luke Winters, the most dominating and strong-willed person to roam this earth, flinches. Because of me.

My wrist tingles where he'd held it, I resist the urge to rub away that feeling. Tears well up in my eyes, frustration, and guilt hold my heart in a fist. My chest rises and falls rapidly, the pain from my abdomen suddenly numb in the wake of a new agony, one that's making it too hard to breathe. Realization hits me like a brick in the face.

I'm feeling Luke's pain.

Oh my moon, oh my moon, what has he done.

"You should have just let me die," I choke out, holding my head in my hands, blocking out most of his emotions

A low growl reaches my ears “Don’t say that again.”

I snap my eyes to him, my own blurry with tears of frustration and anger.

ADVERTISEMENT

“Wasn’t this what we had fought?” I demand “What about all your promises Luke? Were they for nothing?”

Tears race down my cheeks, but I don’t move my steely eyes from his unreadable face. Luke leans forward and brushes the tears away from my cheeks. I hate myself for wanting to give in to his touch. I hate that its effect on me is only stronger now.

“You said you love me.” He says softly

I push his hand away “I was dying. People say stupid stuff when they’re dying.”

I sense the tension in his frame, the storm in his eyes ready to devour me whole.

“You didn’t mean it?”

My shoulder slump in defeat, my feral expression slips away to give way for the helplessness that welled inside.

“I did.” I whisper, afraid of saying the words aloud “I do.”

“Then what’s the problem?” Luke asks “You bear my mark now, nothing is standing between us anymore.”

I want to rip my hair off my head “What about the pack? They know we’re not mates! What if someday your real mate comes in front of us? Or my real mate? What will we do then? This is wrong. So bloody wrong, you should’ve just let me—

Something warm presses against my lips. Not a finger this time.

A million burning flames heat my face. Luke pulls away, creating an inch of space between our lips.

“Shut up,” he puts his forehead against mine, eyes closed “Do you have any idea what it was like to see the shine fading from your eyes? To carry your bloody, limp body in the mansion at the finish line? To look at you on that bed, not chattering my ears off, not complaining?”

He presses his lips to the corner of my mouth, almost sighing into the kiss.

“I would’ve set the world on fire if that’s what it took to have you back.”

I swallow the lump in my throat, try to force my heart to stop beating so fast, and hold onto the remains of my morals and logic.

“That doesn’t change anything, Luke. I’m not—

Luke opens his eyes, almost challenging. The words that come out of his mouth tell me I’ve hit my head somewhere.

“You’re my mate.”

I blink, my features contort in confusion “What?”

“I should’ve told you before,” he says “You should’ve told me before.”

“I don’t...” Words stop making sense

“The night I shifted, even when I told you to stay away, you came to me.” He says I nod blatantly “I told you I would rip apart anything in reach. But I didn’t hurt you.”

I remember it clearly. I remember knowing somewhere in my heart that he wouldn’t hurt me.

ADVERTISEMENT

“A few centuries ago, Lycanthropes lived in their animal form for the most part. They couldn’t sense their mates in human state.” Luke says, tracing his fingers along my cheek “Since I was shoved back to that primal state, I need to be in my Lycan form to find my mate, and until I mark her, neither of us would feel anything in human form.”

“But you said,” I struggle with my words “You will hurt anyone and anything.”

Luke stares at me as a teacher stares at a hopeless student.

“Anyone and anything except my mate.”

Everything clicks in place. His travels in the past five years. Training with packs. All the other pack leaders must’ve

allowed him to shift— in a dungeon maybe, tied with that chain, maybe some other way, and tried to see if he can sense his mate.

“You,” words betray me once again

My mate. My escape. The man I always thought of as a way to run from my pack, a chance of new life, and yet a man I wanted to be true to.

Korra's words from long ago echo in my head;

You will find your mate after you fall in love.

Luke Winters, the man I fell in love with despite my every effort not to. Feelings that I knew were hopeless, feelings that wouldn't go away.

A strange sound reaches my ears. It takes me a moment to realize what it is.

My sob.

"Elise," Luke says as if softly chiding me. He pulls me towards himself, his arms warm around me "Hazel, why are you crying?"

"I'm not crying," I lie, hiding my face in his chest "my eyes are sweating from exhaustion."

This was the stupidest plot twist, fate. And I know you're a b***** but thank you, thank you, and thank you a million times.

We sit in silence, my small frame cradled in his arms. Neither of us says anything as if exhausted by words.

The tears stop, the confusion and panic clear away, leaving a strange serenity in their place. I take a deep, soothing breath, relishing the scent of pine trees and coffee. Luke's scent. My mate's scent.

Luke presses a kiss to my hair, his voice is soft as three little words caresses my ears;

"I love you."

And finally, finally, those words belong to me.

A laugh bubbles past my lips, happier and lighter than it's been in ages. I look up and brush away the tear streaks on my face, a smile on my lips.

"A bad decision, really,"

...