

## Bad Love 231

Chapter 231-

Leah hurries toward me, and I can see she's pale and confused about all the carnage she's found on this mountain.

The place where I brought her for a romantic getaway when things between us were beginning to change.

The place where she almost died on me the first time, because I had no idea her fragile human body was dying from cancer,

At this point, I'm not even surprised James brought her here, though I do shoot him an angry look, which he shrugs off as if to say it's my own fault.

He's probably not wrong.

And maybe this is better.

Maybe by Leah seeing the lengths our enemies are willing to go to in order to strike against me, she'll better understand why I did what I needed to do.

"Aaron," she whispers as she stops in front of me. "What happened here?"

"Our enemies attacked," I said. "Maybe Tobin, because he knew I wouldn't be here, and wouldn't be able to stop this from happening"

"Stop what from happening?" Leah asks me in confusion.

Instead of answering, I step aside so she can walk into the cabin.

She sends me another look of confusion, before going inside.

She pauses at the sight of more dead wolves.

And Lillian

"What is the Rathborn pack nanny doing here?" she asks, shaking her head sadly. "And why would anyone want to kill her?"

I can't answer, the words are stuck in my throat

I wish I could do anything to save her from the pain she's about to experience.

Leah looks even more deeply bewildered, but then something catches her eye on the bookshelf.

She rushes over and snatches up the framed photo Lillian put up of me holding Ethan on the day he was born.

"Oh my god!" Leah gushes, and immediately, tears stream down her face. "Aaron, he was so small, and so beautiful."

"Yes, Leah, he is beautiful," I reply, and she looks up sharply. "Our son, Ethan, is everything good in this world."

"I don't understand..." Leah begins, but then she notices the door to the nursery standing open, and rushes across to see it.

I follow her at a slower pace, stopping in the doorway as she stands in the middle of the room and spins in a slow circle.

Once she's taken it all in, she reaches into the crib and reverently picks up a softly knitted blanket.

She brings it up to her face, and scents her son for the first time.

Her expression is one of love and longing and even deeper confusion

"Aaron..." she says slowly, and I can see the truth dawning on her features. "This scent is fresh. From just a few hours ago."

"Yes," I reply, because what else is there to say?

I thought I'd done everything in my power to protect our child-keeping his existence secret even from

his own mother-yet I failed  
him.

And I failed Leah

The two most important people in my life, and they've been wronged in so many ways.

And now my son is out there somewhere with my enemies, and I don't have the first clue where to start looking for him.

But my enemies have made a mistake. They've crossed a line today they can't uncross, by involving the life of my innocent son.

Whoever took Ethan, not only will I kill them.

I'll wipe out their entire families first.

See how they like it when the people they love the most are hurt.

"You're saying..." Leah continues in a halting voice, like she can't quite wrap her mind around it.

"It's exactly what it looks like, Leah," I say with resignation of the imminent explosion. "Our son is alive. I've been keeping him here in secret. But now, someone had abducted him."

## Chapter 232

LEAH

For a second I think I'm going to pass out.

I get dizzy and I can't seem to draw a full breath.

This is too much.

It's too big, too life altering, too shocking.

All these weeks since I woke up and started grieving my son, my baby-has been alive this whole time, and Aaron has been hiding him.

I think I should have an opinion about that.

I think I'm so angry about that, my fury has become this huge, incomprehensible thing, so that I can't even deal with it right now.

The one fact my brain latches onto is the last thing Aaron said.

Someone had kidnapped my son

I lift the blanket one more time and draw in the soft, new scent of my baby into my lungs and into my very essence.

My wolf recognizes him on a primal level, and it sends her into a frenzy

We have to find him.

Now.

Without saying a word to Aaron, I drop the blanket aside and then shift.

I wheel around, immediately picking up the newly familiar scent and following it out of the cabin.

James calls out to me in confusion as I streak past him, tracking the fading scent of my son.

I race down the mountain, but when I reach the gate, that's where the scent trail ends.

Obviously this was where my son was put into some kind of vehicle and driven away.

I've got no way of tracking his scent any further, but somehow, I will find him.

I've never been more determined to do anything in my entire life.

My driving determination and the fury that's now starting to coalesce into something palpable sends me back up the mountain to the cabin where I left Aaron.

He's still there, standing outside near the SUV, talking to James about taking care of the bodies.

He looks relieved when I come bounding back up and shift mid-stride.

"Did

you find anything?" he asks me, a note of hope in his voice.

But I don't answer, instead I stalk forward and shove him in the chest.

Hard

"How could you? I scream at him, shoving him again.

He looks both resigned and devastated, not even fighting back, and for some reason that makes me even angrier.

"You always think you know better. You walk around making all these decisions for everyone else that affects their entire lives and you never stop to think if you should ask them what they want, or what they think is good for them. And where has that got us, Aaron? Huh? Our son has been taken and it's all your fault!"

My chest is heaving and tears are streaming down my face.

He's unflinching in the face of my tirade, when all I want is some kind of reaction out of him.

"I hate you!" I scream even louder. "You selfish as shole! Don't you even care?"

I slash my claws at him, and finally, his temper snaps as he catches my wrist in a bruising grip.

"Of course I care!" he roars back at me, eyes glowing with his wolf. "Don't you dare accuse me of not caring, Leah. I never wanted to hide Ethan from you. But you were in a coma, and you have no idea how close we came to losing him that day when there was an attack on the hospital. I did what I had to in order to protect him. And protect you. I had to spend months thinking you were never going to wake up. And then when you did, our enemies were closing in tighter than ever. Don't you get it? I don't care about myself or having the power of three Alphas. You and Ethan are all that matter. And if you were both made safer by you believing our son was dead-so our enemies could see you grieving and believe the lie as well-then I'm sorry, but I'm not going to apologize for it."

I lied.

I don't hate him.

I love this self-sacrificing idiot.

But I'm so furious with him, I can barely see straight.

Part of me gets it.

I think maybe if I'd been in his shoes, I'd have done the same.

Anything to protect our son, even if it meant inadvertently hurting Aaron.

But I'm not ready or willing to accept that right now

Because right now, I'm terrified about what's happened to our son, and it's easier to be angry than aft I yank myself out of Aaron's grasp, and then march over to James.

"Give me the keys to the SUV," I demand in a heated voice.

James hands them over without question

"Where are you going?" Aaron wants to know, anger still brimming in his words.

"I'm going to find my son," I tell him as I open the driver's side door. "Feel free to stay here and clean up your mess."

## Chapter 233

James jumps into the SUV at the last second and then I tear down the mountain at breakneck speeds.

I'm in this huge rush to get home-back to the Rathborn mansion-but I don't even know what I'm going to do when I get there.

I don't have the first clue about finding a missing child, especially my own child whom I didn't even know was even alive until less than an hour ago.

I feel like I've been strung on a live wire.

Like my whole body is being electrified and I need to do something.  
Anything.

I've never felt this kind of panicked desperation before and the worst thing is I have absolutely no clue how to find my son.

"For the record," James finally says as we're turning into the gates of the mansion. "I didn't know either. I guessed a while back, and maybe I should have said something to you. But I wasn't sure, and it would've been worse to get your hopes up if it hadn't been true that Ethan was still alive."

"Do you agree with what he did?" I ask in a bitterly vicious voice.

"Honestly? I don't know," James replies with a shrug "Yes, keeping the truth from you was the absolute worst thing he could have done. Would I have done the same thing if I was in his place? Maybe Do I get it? Part of me kind of does."

That's the problem," I mutter angrily. "I kind of get why he did it as well. But I'm still so angry, I want to find whoever did this and run them down in this car."

James gives a quick laugh as we park in the circular driveway. "Understandable."

We climb out and James follows me inside, all the way to the office where I start pacing.

"I just need my brain to calm down long enough to work out what to do," I tell James as I start pacing.

"It's like I'm so excited that Ethan is alive and desperate to meet him, even as I'm absolutely terrified that something will happen before I can get to him."

James catches my shoulders, stopping me from pacing and grounding me a little.

"Don't think the worst, not now. It doesn't help anything. Let's go over what we know and start there."

"Aaron said he thought Tobin might have been behind it," I replied. "So that's where we should start. Work out where Tobin might hide a child."

I hurry to the desk and grab a pen and pad of paper.

I begin listing all the possible places I know Tobin has been.

His pack lands, the Council chambers, and that bar where he asked me to meet him.

James adds a few suggestions, and then I rank them from likely to least likely, even though I'm not sure what Tobin might have been thinking when he made these plans.

For all I know, something I might think is crazy could have seemed totally logical to Tobin.

I think his pack lands are too obvious a place to take Ethan, except then I realize putting a baby with a family is the easiest way to hide him

"This is impossible!" I tell James after we've been at it for an hour. "We're getting nowhere and we're wasting time."

"We're not wasting time," James says calmly. "We can search all these places if need be, but we will find him, Leah, one way or another."

I wish I had half as much confidence as James, but I can't shake the almost crippling worry about what's happening to my son right now in the hands of people who want to hurt Aaron, if not all of us.

Trotrud, I look at our notes once again, trying to find a new angle

There's a knock at the front door of the mansion, causing James and I to both look up at each other

You stay here and keep working. James says firmly I'll go and deal with whoever it is

I thank James and he disappears while I turn my attention back to the notes we've made.

However, it's only a few minutes later when James returns.

"What is it?" I ask, thinking the last thing I need right now is some kind of complaint or issue with the pack that needs my attention

right now

I just don't have the capacity to deal with it right now.

"Something you'll want to deal with yourself," he replies, which doesn't tell me anything

"Something like what?" I demand impatiently.

"Karolina is here." Chapter 234

Dealing with Karolina is honestly the last thing I want to do right now.

What if this is something to do with Tobin being dead?

What if she's come for Aaron? Right when I'm going to need him to help fight for our son-as soon as I figure out where he is.

But it could be regular Council business or even following up from the meeting when Aaron announced he wanted to divorce me

Now I think the whole 'divorce' thing was just part of his stupid plan to protect me. Make whoever was trying to kill him-Tobin for a start-think he didn't care about me, which made me less of a target.

It hadn't exactly worked in the end.

Not after everything that's happened tonight.

I hurry through the house to the formal front sitting room where we entertain important guests. One of the pack members is just providing refreshments for Karolina as I walk in.

"Luna Leah," she greets me as I enter the room and thank the pack member who served her. "I must say, your pack seems well cared for and are quite adept at dealing with unexpected visitors in a gracious manner."

"Thankyou, Councilwoman," I reply with a half-bow of respect

Karolina, however, waves a hand. "Forget the formality. I've never seen the point of it myself"

I send Karolina a polite smile. "Then you won't mind if I ask why you've come? It's just that now isn't the best time. I have a serious pack issue I'm trying to deal with."

Karolina sends me a sympathetic look "Sorry to hear that. I won't keep you then, I just thought you should know the Council was petitioned by the Roberts pack doctor today."

"Adam?" I say in surprise.

With everything that's happened, I almost forgot about how I'd begun unraveling the truth of Ethan's existence by seeing Adam's medical files stating he'd been born and spent weeks in the NICU.

Karolina nods. "He petitioned to join another pack, which is unusual Not many wolves willingly leave their family pack, and I believe Adam's family have been loyal to the Roberts pack for several generations."

I swallow the lump that rises in my throat at the reminder of how Adam betrayed me, how he was monitoring me.

"I wondered if you were aware," Karolina continues after a moment.

"I'm aware," I say, trying to keep my voice even. "He betrayed the pack, so I banished him."

"But Aaron didn't disavow him and leave him rogue?" Karolina questions curiously.

"Aaron wasn't here when it happened," I don't like admitting this, as if it's some kind of weakness, like our pack isn't the completely united front we've shown it to be.

"Which pack did Adam petition to join? I ask curiously when Karolina doesn't say anything else.

"The Havelock pack."

"Tobin's pack?" I demand in confusion.

"You're surprised?" Karolina questions, and it feels like she's measuring my responses. "Tobin and Adam have been close friends for quite a number of years now. Much of the time, when Tobin visited Roberts'

pack, he wasn't there to see Liam or your father, he was there to see Adam."

I feel like I've been struck dumb.

How did I not know this?

"And was Adam's petition granted?" I ask, feeling like I'm in some sort of daze and trying not to show it. Somehow this is all connected.

I can feel it in my mind, there's something to be made from this new information about Tobin and Adam being close friends, but I can't think-or do anything-with Karolina standing in front of me, watching me like a hawk

"Yes, the Council granted his petition to join Tobin's pack," Karolina answers. "The Council just needed to know we weren't going to have you and Aaron filing an official complaint for losing your doctor to another pack"

"I understand," I reply, even though I wonder if they were so worried about potentially upsetting the Roberts/Rathborn packs by letting their doctor join another pack, they didn't consult us before they granted Adam's request.

But I don't say anything

Because as far as I'm concerned, it was good riddance to getting rid of Adam.

"Then I'll take my leave," Karolina says, moving toward the door, however she pauses to look back at me. "But you should be careful, Luma Leah. It doesn't look good when pack members are defecting, especially valuable pack members like your doctor."

I feel my temper rising, but I keep a handle on it.

"I'll keep that in mind, thank you.

I walk Karolina to the door, trying not to rush her out, even though I'm impatient for her to leave.

Once she's gone, I rush back to the office where James is waiting

"Adam petitioned the council to join Tobin's pack, I announce as soon as I come barreling into the room. James arches his eyebrows. "Why?"

"Apparently they were friends." I go over and look at our notes, trying to figure out why this matters.

"Adam injected me with my father's blood to make sure my father's Alpha's powers transferred to me the same day Brian kidnapped me and then Tobin arrived in the clearing to kill me...so maybe Adam was working for Tobin the whole time, not just playing all sides," I say, thinking out loud.

"Okay, but Tobin is dead-not that anyone seems to know it yet," James says. "So where does that leave us?"

It hits me all at once and I look at him, my eyes widening "If Adam was working with Tobin, including up to last night when Tobin used me as bait to lure Aaron out so Tobin could kill him for the Alpha powers, then the other half of the plan-kidnapping Ethan-almost makes sense."

"How do you mean?" James asks in confusion.

"Tobin must have decided he needed a backup plan if the plan for Aaron failed. So he had Adam take care of it... Adam is the one who kidnapped Ethan."

## Chapter 235

I convince James that we need to go search for Adam-and Ethan-on Havelock pack lands. Maybe there are some other places Adam might go, but if he was really close friends with Tobin and they had some grand plan-Tobin had made that crude comment about mating me after Aaron was dead-then maybe Ethan was part of that plan.

Use my baby as leverage to make me cooperate.

We get back into the SUV and this time I let James drive as I stare at my phone and prepare myself to

call Aaron

I'm still so indescribably angry at him, but I'm not dumb enough to think I can just go after Ethan on my own without telling Aaron.

Ethan is just as much his son, and Aaron has a right to know.

A courtesy Aaron didn't think he needed to extend me when our situations were reversed.

But maybe that's not completely fair.

I wasn't in Aaron's shoes and I didn't have to make the decisions that Aaron had to make

Right now, knowing Ethan's life is in danger, I feel like I would do absolutely anything to save him, even if that meant sacrificing myself or the man I love

Finally, I make the call and Aaron answers right away

"I'm sorry, Leah, I don't have any news yet," he says in a grim voice. "But I've got every contact who owes me any favors out searching. and Ryker said he'd get some of the Old Country Wolves to shake down some people-"

"I think I figured out who took him," I put in before Aaron can even finish.

"Who?" he demands, sounding impressed and impatient.

"Adam. He petitioned the Council today to join the Havelock pack"

"Why the hell would Adam want to join Tobin's pack?" Aaron wants to know.

"Kaolina said they've been close friends for years," I reply and Aaron curses

"Why and when did you speak to Karolina? I was trying to keep this off the Council's radar."

"I didn't go to her," I reply in a short voice. "She came to me. She wanted to make sure we were aware that the Roberts pack doctor had defected to another pack."

Aaron curses. "Sounds more like she was snooping. But if Adam and Tobin were friends all this time, then yes, it's possible Adam has Ethan. But Leah "

"Whatever you're about to say, Aaron, save it. James and I are already on our way to Havelock pack lands. I'm going to search every square inch of that territory until I'm sure Ethan isn't there."

"Dam n it, Leah!" Aaron says heatedly. "That's dangerous and you know it. You need to wait for me"

"It's not dangerous when as Luna and representative of the Roberts pack, I want to check that Adam's transition to his new pack has been successful," I tell him, which is the excuse I came up with after I decided I was going "Aaron, with you there, it'll just look suspicious and inflame the situation."

"And what about the not so minor fact that everyone is going to think I killed Tobin once they realize he's dead?" Aaron demands. "This has the potential to start a whole new war. You're walking onto enemy territory"

"I've got James with me," I say, even though I know that's not going to make much difference in Aaron's book "And as soon as I know Ethan is there, one of us will text you. We're going to get him back, Aaron Nothing is going to stand in my way."

I hang up the call before Aaron can argue.

It doesn't matter what he says.

Tito, but I don't care.

I haven't even met my son yet, and already, I'm willing to do anything to save him.

Truthfully, I'm terrified of what's going to happen when I step onto Tobin's pack lands.

I don't know what his wolves know.

So many of them were slaughtered at the factory last night when Tobin tried to kill Aaron.

I have no idea if word has gotten back to the pack already about Tobin's death, or they're in the dark and they only know their Alpha and most of their senior wolves are missing.

And there's always the possibility that I'm wrong and I won't even find Adam there at all. Not to mention Aaron probably won't listen to me when I told him to stay away. Whatever happens, no matter how bad it gets, as long as I can save Ethan and finally get to hold my son in my arms, then that's the only thing that matters.

## Chapter 236

We drive through the gate and all the way up to Tobin's grand mansion without seeing another single wolf. There doesn't seem to be any guards or wolves patrolling, but looks can be deceiving. Many of the men who were at the factory with Tobin last night seemed to be rogue wolves he'd somehow managed to convince to fight for him, so it leaves me wondering where the majority of his fighting force are at the moment.

James and I get out of the car and then head up toward the huge, black double-door entrance. One of the doors swings inward to reveal a housekeeper in a uniform.

"Sorry, but we are not taking visitors right now," she says with a pinched look of disapproval on her face. However, just at that moment, the wail of a baby echoes through the house and I catch the faintest hint of scent.

I've never heard Ethan cry before, but I feel it in my bones.

That cry.

That's my son.

"Oh my god," I utter and I'm moving forward before I even know what I'm doing. "It's him! James, he's here! Call Aaron."

I don't wait for him to reply as I rush the door.

The housekeeper tries to block me, shouting something about being an intruder, but I snarl and shove her out of the way.

Nothing and no one is going to keep me from Ethan when he's so close.

I follow the sound of the cries, the scent growing stronger, until I burst into a study.

I skid to a stop at the sight of Adam holding my son.

"Leah!" Adam says, as if he's happy-and not surprised-to see me. "I was going to call you, but here you are."

"Adam, what the hell is going on?" I demand, walking forward.

I'm trying to figure out how I can snatch my baby from Adam without hurting Ethan.

However, when I get closer, Adam steps forward to meet me, and hands him over with a smile.

Shocked, I automatically take the warm weight of him and hold my son close to my chest for the first time.

All I want to do is look down and enjoy this moment that should be joyous and wondrous.

Instead I keep my eye on Adam, not knowing what to expect next.

"Leah, I know we've had our differences-some misunderstandings-but surely you can see the truth now," Adam says in a gentle voice, like we're still best friends and nothing has changed.

"What truth?" I ask in confusion and anger, not sure what to make of this whole thing.

"I saved your son, Leah," Adam says, as if this should be obvious. "Aaron was holding him captive, keeping him from you, lying to you. He doesn't love you. He just used you for his own gain, and he was going to keep hiding your son from you, probably for the rest of your life."

"No," I reply automatically, but some small, insecure part of me wonders if some of what Adam says is the truth.

Adam clearly doesn't think he did anything wrong.



He thinks he saved Ethan.

Adam steps closer and takes my hand. "Leah, I didn't mean for you to find out I'd been monitoring you the past few years the way you did. I was going to tell you eventually, when the time was right. And I know you think I betrayed you, but it was everyone else who I

double crossed I was playing all sides, its true. But there was one single reason I was doing it."

"Which is what?" I ask in confusion.

I came here so angry, thinking Adam was the bad guy and he planned to threaten my son's life to get back at me or hurt Aaron, but that's not what's happening at all.

"You," Adam answers in a low voice, and I can see the truth of it in his gaze. The way he looks at me. I've seen hints of it before, and there have been times when he's crossed my personal boundaries like the night of the party at the Roberts pack mansion to celebrate me becoming Alpha, when he kissed me on the cheek in front of everyone, and before that, when I was first diagnosed with cancer and he begged me to come home.

But I've brushed it aside, told myself he was my oldest friend, so I could cut him some slack. And maybe there's been times when I've been kind of flattered, and enjoyed the attention when Aaron was treating me so terribly.

But now I know I was never seeing the true depths of Adam's feelings for me.

And how twisted they are.

"I don't understand," I tell him, which is the total truth.

Adam smiles at me.

"I was so sad and angry when your father sent you to live with the Rathborn pack," Adam begins to explain. "Like some kind of virgin sacrifice. Even though we were so young back then, I'd already started thinking that one day you would be my mate. But then you were stolen away from me and sent to live with our enemy. When they finally started letting you come back and visit, I was so excited to see you. Despite everything that had happened, you were still good and pure. So beautiful and vibrant. I knew you were meant to be mine. That somehow, I had to rescue you from Aaron and the Rathborn pack-our worst enemies, the ones who killed your mother in the pack wars-no matter what it took So I figured out ways to monitor you from afar to make sure you weren't being unduly hurt or treated badly until I could work out how to get you out of there. In the meantime, I became friends with Tobin, while your father and Liam trusted me as a confidante because of my position as pack doctor and your father's beta. Everything that happened, I tried to work in the background to save you from it. But it all went wrong" Adam looks crestfallen, as if he's somehow failed me

"Then you almost died, and you were pregnant with his son," Adam continues bitterly. "But none of that matters any longer. We're here now. And with Aaron's son, this can all work out even better than I'd hoped."

"And what exactly were you hoping for, Adam?" I ask, backing up a little, but slowly and carefully so he doesn't notice.

Adam has been living in a fantasy all these years, pining and striving for something that was never going to happen.

I have no idea what he'll do when that fantasy shatters and reality comes rushing in

"Our destiny, of course," Adam answers. "You and I can be the ones to rule the Roberts pack, just like we were meant to be. And we can have the Rathborn pack as well. There's just one last thing standing in our way... All we have to do is kill Aaron."

## Chapter 237-

Adam is staring at me expectantly, waiting for me to agree to his outlandish plan to kill my mate.

Even if I didn't love Aaron, I still wouldn't want him dead.

And I think now that even if I'd never met Aaron, I don't think Adam and I would have suited each other.

I don't think I could have ever felt anything beyond friendship toward him.

I definitely wouldn't have ever felt as strongly about Adam as he seems to feel about me.

But I can't tell him any of that.

I have no idea how he might react if I reject him outright.

Probably not very well, if he's unhinged enough to steal a baby and see things between us in a way that's completely removed from reality.

"So Leah," he says, smiling, clearly waiting for an answer from me. "What do you say? It won't take much to set up. I've already made several different plans of how we can kill Aaron and make it look like an accident. That's one true benefit of becoming a doctor, understanding the human body in a way most people never will. It's actually amazing how simple it is to kill people."

My stomach is churning and I feel sick.

Adam has been making plans to kill my mate like it's no big deal.

I have to get myself and Ethan out of here.

Who knows what will happen if Aaron turns up?

"Adam, I can see how you've done all this to help me," I begin, even though the words make me want to throw up. "But it's all been a lot, you know? I didn't even know Ethan was still alive until a few short hours ago. I've never met him before now. I really think I'd just like to take him home, then you and I can meet up on our own tomorrow or something, to figure out the rest."

Adam's eyes narrow as he looks at me, and I can see him weighing the sincerity of my words.

"I really do appreciate you saving my son," I tack on, trying to sound convincing and not like I'm lying to his face.

It seems to work, as Adam nods.

"Yes, I knew you'd see things my way once I returned your son to you"

I can't think of a response to that, but then it doesn't seem to matter as there's some kind of commotion happening outside.

"Now what?" Adam mutters impatiently.

He takes out his cell phone as if he's going to call someone, but then one of the Havelock wolves comes running into the room.

"We're under attack!" the wolf says, panting from however far he ran

"What do you mean?" Adam demands.

"There's at least three packs of wolves out there," the other wolf answers. They stormed our pack land and advanced on the house. We tried to stop them, but we were outnumbered."

"Who the hell is attacking us so brazenly?" Adam shouts, but I can see in his fury that he already knows the answer to that question.

It is kind of obvious, after all.

"It's Alpha Rathborn," the wolf answers. "He's leading his own pack, as well as Roberts and Leithrow wolves."

"I can't believe he thinks he can get away with this!" Adam snarls "Call the Council for reinforcement. This is an act of aggression, if not outright war,"

"Of course, but the Council wolves won't get here in time," the wolf answers reluctantly. "They're

almost at the house, and Aaron declared he planned to kill you himself for taking his son.”

I automatically hold Ethan closer, scared that Adam will change his mind about handing him over to me, and want him back to use as a bargaining chip..

“We’ll see about that,” Adam says menacingly. “Tell Aaron to order his wolves to stand down. If he wants me to face him, I will ”

From the light in Adam’s eyes, I can tell he’s got something planned.

Something up his sleeve, some way in which he thinks he can easily beat Aaron, even though my mate has the power of three Alphas.

I can’t let that happen, but with Ethan in my arms, I also can’t physically intervene.

I see Adam has brought Ethan’s car carrier with him when he took my son from Aaron’s remote cabin, so

I take Ethan over and buckle him in where I know he’ll be safe, and then set the carrier in a secure corner, before turning back to where Adam and the wolf are finishing their conversation.

“Go,” Adam says “Tell him before he kills any more Havelock wolves.”

“Yes, Alpha,” the guy says with a half bow, before turning to stride out of the room.

My blood runs cold as I look at Adam with new eyes and the pieces fall into place.

“Oh my go d, you killed Tobin.”

## Chapter 238

Adam smiles triumphantly at me.

“It wasn’t my original plan, I’ll admit. But I was at that factory, hiding in the background to make sure Tobin didn’t hurt you. I was happy to go along with the plan to use you as bait to lure out Aaron so Tobin could kill him for his Alpha power, but I didn’t trust him not to kill you too. When I heard Tobin say how he planned to mate you after Aaron was dead, that was when I realized Tobin was also standing in my way and needed to die. Not to mention his plan completely failed and Aaron managed to escape.”

Adam rolls his eyes, as if it was all a minor inconvenience.

How can he not care about playing with people’s lives like that?

How did I never realize he was so unhinged?

I take a breath, steeling my determination.

“Adam, I’m sorry, but whatever you’re planning, I can’t let you kill Aaron.”

Adam stares at me in confusion, but it swiftly turns to anger.

“You’re not seriously going to choose him over me, are you?” he demands, advancing toward me, his eyes flashing with his wolf. “Leah, we’re meant to be together!”

“No, Adam, we’re not,” I reply firmly. “Aaron is my husband and my mate. He’s the father of my son and I love him. Aaron is who I’m meant to be with.”

Adam is infuriated, and stalks even closer still.

Behind me, in the corner, Ethan starts to cry in his carrier, as if sensing the tension, or the sudden Alpha aggression rolling off Adam

Outside, the vicious sounds of wolves and men fighting have gotten louder.

Aaron must be near now, but I can’t let him walk into danger. I’m sure Adam has something nefarious planned to kill Aaron in some dishonorable way.

The easiest way to protect Aaron is to stop this whole thing before he even gets here.

I’m scared, but I won’t back down.

Not if it means protecting my son and my mate.

“I refuse to let him have you!” Adam yells furiously.

He’s still several steps away when he lunges at me, and I don’t expect it, so I don’t react fast enough

He wraps his hands around my throat and shoves me against the wall I struggle against him, but he has superior Alpha strength now.

"If I can't have you, then you leave me no choice, Leah," he says, and even though he's furious, there are tears forming in his eyes.

He squeezes tighter and I can't breathe any more. I'm getting dizzy.

"This is all your fault," he continues becoming more upset. "I didn't want to hurt you, but I won't lose you to him. Not again"

I fight harder, knowing that if I don't do something, I'm going to lose this battle.

My wolf fights to surface, her instincts screaming to do anything to keep us alive.

My claws and fangs spring out, and I know my eyes must be glowing

With my last shred of strength, I blindly reach out and slash my claws through flesh.

## Chapter 239

### AARON

We've slaughtered our way through a good number of Havelock wolves when the Beta comes running out and yells at me that if I want to face Adam, I have to tell my own wolves to back down.

I send James a signal, and he takes care of it for me.

I didn't want to come here and indiscriminately kill other wolves who are only acting on the misinformed orders of their Alpha, but at the same time, they stood between me and my mate and son, so I wasn't about to show any mercy.

I follow the Beta past the line of injured and retreating wolves on both sides.

The Havelock pack have suffered more loss than my combined packs have.

Besides being outnumbered, it was clear the Havelock wolves weren't as nearly well trained as my own packs, which surprised me a bit.

I would've thought Tobin ran a tight ship.

But then again, he was more feral, less in control of his wolf, and seemed preoccupied with the workings of the Council and his own power. Obviously, that'd resulted in his own pack being somewhat neglected.

I let the Beta escort me into Tobin's mansion, even though I want to rush ahead.

Almost as soon as we're inside, I hear the sound of Ethan crying, and I give up all pretenses of being civil

I shove the Beta aside and sprint, following both the sound and scent of Ethan until I reach a study.

I find Leah standing over Adam, his neck slashed open, while Leah's claws and mouth are dripping with blood. She's rubbing her own neck, and fury burns through me as I can already see hand mark bruises appearing on her delicate skin.

"What the hell did he do?" I demand, rushing over to Leah so I can check her over more closely.

"He tried to kill me, so I had to-" she replies, her voice scratchy. She wipes her mouth with her arm, but from the way she mauled Adam and slashed at him, she tasted his blood. It's all over her hands

She's getting upset, so I pull her into my arms.

"It's okay, Leah. You were just defending yourself. You saved yourself. No one can blame you for that."

Just as I say those words, Adam gasps his last breath and then goes still.

"Oh my go d," Leah whispers, breaking out of my hold and looking at me with wide eyes. "Aaron, Adam was

Before she can say anything, she suddenly goes taut, her whole body stringing tight like a bow.

I lunge forward and catch her before she can fall

I know what this looks like, but I don't understand.

"Leah!" I say frantically, holding her gently.

"Alpha," she wrenches out, before she goes rigid with pain.

I curse as I sink to the floor, holding her in my arms as the power transfer begins in earnest, and she lets out a scream that makes my hair stand on end.

I don't understand how Adam had any Alpha powers, but now they are transferring to Leah because she killed him, and Adam obviously hadn't named an heir to take them on the event of his death

But where or how did Adam even get Alpha powers?

He certainly didn't have them the last time I saw him-

Suddenly, I realize where I am, and things start to answer themselves.

Adam had the Havelock pack Alpha powers.

Which means he killed Tobin.

But why would he even do that?

By all accounts, Adam and Tobin were friends, and Adam had been helping Tobin with all his nefarious plans, right up to abducting my son and using Leah as bait so Tobin could kill me for my own Alpha powers.

As Leah's body contorts and twists in my arms, and I see how she's overcome with pain, I realize none of the answers make sense right.

NOW.

All that matters is keeping my mate safe.

I don't know how the Havelock wolves are going to react if they find out their Alpha is dead, and Leah has taken his place.

Some will probably be accepting, but others may not.

We're vulnerable here, while Leah is midway through the process.

Any other time-like that night in the clearing-I would fear moving her for worry that it might make the process more painful or even more dangerous, but I think it's a risk I need to take tonight, especially with my even more vulnerable son nearby.

James enters the room just as I get to my feet with Leah in my arms.

"Thank God," I say. "James, grab Ethan."

"What the hell is happening?" James demands, features pinched with concern as he sees the state Leah is in.

"The Havelock Alpha powers are transferring to her. We can't stay here, it's too risky."

James nods and rushes over to pick up Ethan in his carrier, gently shushing my son who has been crying on and off this whole time.

I feel terrible that I can't comfort him, but right now, I need to see to his mother.

We rush out of the house, and luckily in all the confusion, none of the Havelock wolves really pay us any attention. We jump into the SUV that James and Leah drove here earlier, with James behind the wheel.

I sit in the back seat next to Ethan in his carrier, with Leah unconscious in my arms. She's shifted into her wolf now, so I know she's probably faring a little better.

She survived the transfer of Alpha powers once before when she was human.

But that was her own family's bloodline.

I know from experience that when it's a completely different pack, the process is sometimes much harder and more painful.

It depends on the wolf

When I took on Brian's Alpha powers, it was painful, but manageable. Besides, I'd had Leah's safety to worry about that night in the clearing

I'm sure Leah will come through this fine.  
But I still find myself praying for her, even though I've never been religious  
I can't lose her now, not when we can finally be together as a family.  
"Please Leah," I whisper against the soft ear of her wolf. "Please fight for us."

## Chapter 240

### LEAH

I wake up in Aaron's huge bed at the Rathborn mansion.  
My whole body hurts, but I can feel a new strength to my wolf  
She is Alpha now, and it's like I went from driving a tiny compact sedan to some kind of super powerful truck.  
She has powers that are nothing short of amazing and she instinctively knows how to use them.  
I'm in awe of her, and once again grateful that I even got to have her, after so many years of thinking I never would have a wolf of my very own, only to discover the travesty of my father binding her when I was young  
I can't believe I've regained Alpha powers.  
At least this time it didn't feel like it was going to kill me. It was painful and unpleasant, yes, but not absolutely agonizing.  
Except this time, I'm Alpha to a pack I don't even know, and I have no idea if they'll even accept me as pack leader.  
I sit up and see someone has placed a crib in one corner of the room  
Immediately, I get up and rush over, only to be disappointed when I find it empty.  
I hurry out of Aaron's room and head downstairs.  
When I get to the bottom of the steps, I hear the sound of Aaron's laughter.  
It's a sound I've heard rarely-Aaron has always been so serious, not that I can blame him considering how his life unfolded-but I don't think I've ever heard Aaron sound as carefree as he does with whatever he found so funny just now  
I follow the sound, until I arrive at the library  
I push open the door and walk in to find Aaron lying on his back on the soft rug in front of the hearth.  
There's a cheery fire burning, and Aaron has his shirt off.  
Ethan is lying on his stomach in the middle of Aaron's chest, waving his arms and pumping his legs excitedly as if he wants to crawl all over his father, but hasn't quite figured out the coordination to manage it yet. Ethan is cooing and drooling all over Aaron, but my mate doesn't seem to mind one bit.  
In fact, I don't think I've ever seen Aaron so happy and relaxed.  
Tears sting my eyes, and next thing I know, they're streaming down my face.  
I don't think I've ever been happier than I am in this moment, seeing how much my mate loves his son, seeing how gentle and caring he is.  
Maybe in my wildest dreams, I envisaged moments like this.  
But I never thought I'd see the come true  
Aaron looks over then and sees me, immediately becoming concerned because I'm standing there crying like an idiot  
"Leah! What's wrong?" He catches Ethan securely against his chest and rolls to his feet, before hurrying

over to me.

He manages to hold Ethan with one arm and pull me into a hug with the other arm

"Did something happen to you? I thought you were okay after the transfer of Havelock Alpha powers—"

"I'm fine," I managed to sob out. "I just saw you there with Ethan and it made me so happy... I never thought I would get this. I never

thought you would love me, or I would get to see our son born, let alone see what a good father you are."

Then I can't say anything else because I'm crying too hard.

Aaron holds me tighter, and I've never felt anything more wonderful than being held in his arms with our son securely between us.

"I love you," Aaron murmurs to me, and I swear I fall for him all over again while my wolf practically swoons.

"I love you, too," I tell him, feeling like I'm in some sort of miraculous dream.

Except it's all real, and I feel grounded in a way I never have before.

"Why don't you come and sit with us for a while?" Aaron says, leading me over to the plush rug where he'd been lying with Ethan.

I go over and sit.

Aaron hands me Ethan, and then adds some more wood to the fire, keeping the chill of another snowy Montana day out of the room.

"Ethan has been learning to roll over," Aaron tells me once he returns to the rug and reclines next to me.

I set Ethan on the ground, and immediately he rolls onto his stomach.

I laugh at the simple sight, especially with how pleased Ethan seems with himself.

He's using his chubby little fists to

sto pull at the soft tufts woven into the rug

After a while, he seems to get bored of that and then tries to get his knees underneath him, an adorable look of baby-concentration on his face, as if he's ready to go out and conquer the world.

"Most of the parenting books I've read said he won't crawl until he's older than six months, maybe not even until he's ten or twelve months," Aaron says to me "But I think it'll be earlier than that. Look at him, he's determined to get up and go."

I turn to look at Aaron incredulously. "You read parenting books?"

Aaron sends me a lightly insulted look, but he's also amused.

"Of course I read parenting books. How else can I make sure I'm the best father out there?"

I roll my eyes as I snort a laugh

Trust Aaron to make it into some kind of competition.

I think I could sit here and watch Ethan all day, but eventually he starts getting fussy and grumpy.

Aaron expertly picks him up and shushes him, while getting out his phone to call the other pack nanny, Tara.

"Ethan is due for a bottle and a nap," Aaron tells me once he's off the phone again. "I'll have Tara bring his bottle so you can feed him, but then Tara can take him for a nap. We need to talk."

Aaron's right.

I do want to be able to feed and tend to my own baby, but watching Aaron so easily and naturally be with Ethan is making me aware of how much I don't know about caring for my son.

I have a bit of catching up to do.

Part of me worries I won't be as good at being a mom as Aaron clearly is at being a dad.

But I don't say any of this, and soon Tara arrives with the bottle.

Aaron shows me how to hold both Ethan and the bottle, and soon my baby is happily slurping down his milk, relaxed in my arms.

My heart feels full to bursting

Eventually, however, he finishes the bottle and looks like he's half asleep.

Aaron gently takes Ethan and props him up on his own shoulder. Ethan lets out a burp and fusses for a second, but by the time Tara returns to take him for a nap, he's settled back down.

Once they're gone, I turn to Aaron, expecting him to want to start talking about everything that happened and where that's left us. Especially me unexpectedly ending up with the Havelock Alpha powers.

But I don't even get one word out before Aaron yanks me into him and starts hungrily kissing