

## 2 For Them

"Hey, dad?" I knocked on the clinic room door to the room where my dad was sitting with the mystery girl.

Dad looks up from the laptop in his lap, his glasses resting on the brim of his nose, and smiles warmly at me.

"Hey, Rick. Sorry I didn't come see you when I got back. It's been a bit hectic."

I smiled nervously, glancing at the sleeping girl in the bed beside him. Her skin is covered in a layer of sweat and looks chalky pale, but she is still beautiful. My fingers ex in my jacket pockets, longing to tenderly swipe the tendrils of hair from her forehead.

"It's ne. You weren't at dinner, so I thought I'd come see you. Um," I glanced at the girl again, "Is she okay?"

Dad looks at her solemnly, a sad smile on his face. "She's a ghter. She should be dead, but she's surviving, despite the suffering she endured. She was bitten, but she had wolfsbane laced with silver in her system, so they didn't drain her."

"It was a rogue vampire attack, right? With the size of her pack, we didn't think there were any survivors."

"She was the only survivor. We got the anti-venom in her in time. We are just waiting for the wolfsbane to leave her system. All we can do is treat the symptoms until she wakes up. We cleaned it out of her as best we could, but it had already gotten into her bloodstream."

"Can she not heal herself?" I asked, wondering why her wolf DNA hadn't healed her yet.

"She's still a minor. Her wolf side isn't mature enough to heal her in human form and with the wolfsbane, it inhibits her from shifting. Alpha could have forced her shift, but with the poison, her body would have just been in more pain from the command and wouldn't have been able to actually shift."

A minor. She must be about my age then. I'm 16 and if she is still a minor like me, I'm guessing she's around 16 or 17. She can't be younger than that. Her body looks far too mature and her muscles too developed.

Your body doesn't produce muscles like that without hard training for a long time. Our pack doesn't allow us to train that hard until we are at least 14 or 15 and our human side is fully developed.

"What's her name?" I asked, taking a step closer to her, my eyes trailing over the curve of her lips and the shape of her neck. Damn, she's gorgeous.

"Quinn, I think. The pack records had an older picture of her where she looked much younger, but we think she's the Beta's daughter."

A beta's child, just like me.

"She was the only survivor, Rick. She has no one. I may not be home much for the next several days. I'm going to stay here with her until she at least wakes up."

I nod, but my eyes never leave the girl's face.

"Quinn," I repeated the name, resting a hand on the foot of her bed.

It's a pretty name. Unique, just like the name my mother gave me. I wonder how Farak would sound coming out of her beautiful mouth, because I love the way her name sounds coming out of mine.

Dad is eyeing me speculatively, a small smile playing on his lips, and my cheeks heat in embarrassment, knowing what he's thinking.

Yes, I'm attracted to the beauty lying in the bed, ghting for her life in front of me. I don't know why, but I'm determined to nd out.

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Quinn POV

"Here and here," the doctor points to the picture on the screen on the computer in front of him. "See this scarring. The internal damage was not as bad as we feared, but there will be some lasting effects. Your ovaries and uterus took on most of the permanent damage, along with one of your kidneys. You can live without the function of one of your kidneys, and we may be able to harvest eggs from your damaged ovaries, but your uterus," he shakes his head solemnly.

The Beta of Blue Cliff Pack, Archie Anderson, rubs my back sympathetically.

I just stared at the screen blankly. I've lost everything else. Why not add the ability to have kids to the list? It's like the rotten cherry on this shit-lled sundae I've been handed and told to scarf down.

"What if she were to shift now that she's awake? If she was in wolf form, could her body heal itself enough to repair the damage?"

The doctor shook his head soberly. "I'm afraid that with the scar tissue already developed, it's too late. Maybe if it was still healing it would be repairable, since there are no longer any substances preventing the healing inside her, but with the silver and wolfsbane embedded in her injuries at the time she received them, her wolf couldn't heal it in time."

"And there are the sprinkles on my s\*\*t sundae," I muttered.

"What was that, my dear?" the doctor asked, but I just shook my head.

I'm useless. Completely useless in every way. What hope do I have of a future now? With my parents gone, my pack destroyed, my friends all dead, there is nothing for me anymore. I can't even hope for my fated mate, because when I nd him and he learns how useless I am, he won't want me. Who wants a mate who can't give him children?

"Quinn, I know it seems hopeless right now. I can't imagine what you are going through," Beta Archie whispers to me, still rubbing my back.

When I rst opened my eyes after the attack and being brought here, his face was the rst thing I saw. He may be a beta, but he's not like my dad. My dad was erce, abrupt, bulking and rough. Beta Archie is calm and reserved. He has the build of a beta, but his personality is more of a bookworm. Even the glasses he wears as he works on his laptop, not glasses he needs for vision, but he says to protect his eyes from the screen, are dorky.

I like him, though. He's kind. I liked waking up and not being alone.

"Doctor, could you give us a minute?" he asks, probably sensing how overwhelmed I am.

"Of course, Beta. Call the nurse if you need anything, Miss Lawson, and I'll be back to check on you later.

I don't respond, just staring off blankly as I spiral into depression.

"Quinn, I know it sucks. I know how badly it hurts to lose people you love. Though I don't know how it feels to have news like this, I have a friend who does. Our Gamma's mate had to have an emergency hysterectomy not long after she had her daughter, and I saw how it affected her afterwards. If you like, I can ask her to come in and talk to you. She will be able to relate and understand in ways I never could."

I shook my head. "I don't want other people to know. I don't want to give them more reasons than they already have to feel bad for me. I don't want anybody's pity."

"No one will pity you, Quinn. I just don't want you to think you are alone."

"I am alone, though," I whispered.

I've never felt so alone.

Beta Archie reaches out and takes both my hands in his. "You're not, Quinn. I'm here for you. A pack is a family, and you are now a part of our pack. You're my family, and I don't want you to ever think you are alone. You just have to tell me how to help you, and I will."

I can feel the sincerity in his words. I smiled softly, despite myself.

"Thanks," I told him, squeezing his hands back.

His smile is so warm and comforting, it makes my heart tighten as I long for my own parents. "So, what can I do to make you feel better? My late wife always said ice cream was the cure for everything. She said the same about cake too," he chuckled at himself, like he was laughing at a fond memory.

Fond memories....

"Donuts," I whispered. "Every morning, before my big, bad dad dropped me off at school, he stopped at this little donut shop on the way." Tears sting my eyes as the memories start to surface. "I really miss those donuts."

Beta Archie presses his mouth in a line and his eyes ll with understanding. He looks up at the ceiling, like he's trying to prevent him from crying. When he looks back down at me, the warm smile is back on his face.

"Any particular kind of donut? Chocolate? Jelly-lled?"

A half laugh, half sob escapes me. "Surprise me."

"I can do that," he smiles, then bends and kisses my forehead in a very fatherly manner.

I can't take it anymore, and the tears I've been trying to hold in break free, a terrible sob burning my throat as it escapes. His arms wrap around me, and I cling to him as I cry. Cry for my dad, my mom, for my pack and loved ones. I lost everything and everyone. The more I cry out for my dad, the fighter Beta Archie hugs me, as if he's trying to hold the pieces of me together as I fall apart.

I'm truly broken and in pieces, but in his hold, I feel the fatherly love that I miss and long for. He is nothing like my father, but a father's unconditional love must be a universal feeling, because that is exactly what I feel from him right now.

"He would be so proud of you, Quinn. So proud of how strong you are; at how you survived. He may be gone; they all might be gone, but you are going to make them all proud and live on for them. Their memory lives on in you, and that is an important role to bear. Make them proud, and know that I'm going to be here to help you every step of the way."