

Chapter 167 – 193 Beauty and The Beta

Options

The journey felt like it was lasting an eternity. But we had ditched Marc's car, he said, for an additional safety measure, so if Miles managed to get on our tails hed at least be looking for the wrong car. Something I don't think

'a ever have considered in a bid to escape. Evidently, Marc was better skilled at this sort of thing thn me. But as things were, the car ride was now calm and Marc seemed at ease, which told me things were likely good

If he seemed on edge, which he had at the beginning, then I knew we had to worry. He had taken it upon himself to be the sole protector for Morgan and me right now, and he had been frequently reassuring Asher on the phone that he would be taking care of us before we cut the call.

I thought it was sweet he was so concerned about us... or maybe me. Perhaps the other day had been nothing more than an overreaction caused by a build up of emotions and a messed up mind... there was no denying my mind was messed up from all the stuff going on over the last few years! I needed to make it up to Asher when we got home.

Wow. Home?' Akira questioned with a hint of sarcasm in her tone. 'Already set then are we? Decided Autumn Valley is our home?' she was so clearly teasing, and I chose not to respond

Yet, I found myself smiling at her words. I hadn't even considered my thoughts then. But, it was my home right now, regardless of where my pack may be. However, I have to say, I felt more content in Autumn Valley Pack than I did in Lotus Shadow Pack. Happier... and more settled. Many paragraphs are missing. Read the complete book on J o=b n-l b . c (o) m . And, I think so much of that was because of Asher. The more I think about what he said on the phone, I think I do want him to speak with the Alpha. Formally take me into the pack. Ijust wish I had asked sooner. I have no doubt Luna Eden would have accepted without a second's thought, especially if I had explained my reasoning for leaving my home pack.

I glanced down at the buzzing phone in my hand to see a message from Harley. And I released a long breath of relief as I opened the message.

Just a quick one, 'sweetcheeks' © haha. It is Dana, here, Harley is driving, but I wanted to let you know that we are on our way back to our pack. Harl delayed that psycho as best as he could, but I didn't want to put him at risk, or at least not for too long, not with the baby on the way. He did fight valiantly though. We escaped in your Dad's car, leaving it at the packhouse, to collect our own. As we left Miles, your brother and Ellis

arrived, so Harl said hopefully they had delayed him even longer or took him back to the packhouse.

It was so nice meeting you. Though I won't lie, I wish we never accepted the offer of an invite to the wedding now, but think they invited all pack members and former pack members, and Harley had wanted a chance to see you were okay, and it meant I got a chance to meet you. We will arrange something soon. Just wanted to let you know we are okay

I smiled as I read her message, so relieved they were on their way home, and they were safe. That had been weighing heavily on my mind since the moment we had left them ready to battle with Miles. I know how he fights, and it definitely is not fairly. But, the fact that Ellis and Jordan had then come along meant it was likely Miles had been taken back to the packhouse. That had to be good for us. It meant we had so much more of a chance to get back to Autumn Valley safely with no further issues. I snuggled into the seat, planning to snooze for a little while as I was more than shattered after the stress after today. I would reply to Dana and Harley when I get home...

Suddenly, I was swung into the door of the car, jerking me awake. I blinked, quickly trying to adjust my eyes, as I heard Morgan scream. "Be careful!"

"I'm trying!" Marc growled.

Through sleepy eyes I could see the fear upon Marc's face, as I saw him battling to get the car back under control. "Are you okay?" I asked, knowing it was the silliest of questions because right now the car was swerving back and forth across the road Marc appeared to have lost control of it

"Someone just appeared in front of the car. He swerved to miss them, but I think he hit something else." Morgan said, her voice trembling with nerves

My heart was pounding heavily as I looked out of the window, trying to get a glance at what Marc had hit, but could see nothing. But as I looked around, I was sure the road was familiar, this was the road to town from Autumn Valley, I was sure of it. Set deep within the forests, the road running through the middle of the trees, it felt suddenly intimidating. Imposing. We needed to get out of here.

Stopping here would not be a good idea, even with a warrior by our side. But, suddenly, the car came to a screeching halt, the engine making a strange hissing noise.

Morgan looked back at me, terror within those beautiful eyes of hers. "We will be okay, right?"

"Course you will. I am here, baby. And I can fix cars." Marc said with a shrug. "I just need to see what damage there is." And with that he stepped from the car, flipping the

bonnet to go and see if he could fix the car. I truly hoped he could. I did not want to be here too long, especially with the fact it was getting darker now...

My eyes were frequently falling into the darkness of the forest either side of us, something that normally I found great calmness in, Always loving running through the trees, or relaxing as I sat enjoying the stillness and calm of the forest. The peace and quiet. The serenity. But today the forest felt nothing but dangerous.

"Should I call Asher?" I suggested to Morgan, who was still sitting in the car with me. "He may be able to come and help?" I suggested, and she nodded eagerly.

But as I glanced down at my phone, I realized there was no service. I couldn't call him, and I think we would be too far out for Marc to use his mindlink too. Right now, we were isolated within the forest, while Marc fixed the car. My heart dropped as I looked out of the car once more, as I was certain there were eyes out in the forest watching us...

Options

I had chosen to drive with the rogues with me for a large portion of the journey, despite us all being fast in our wolf form, we didn't have the resilience to maintain that speed for longer lengths of time, and a car was always going to be quicker. Plus, being in the car would keep us on the more likely route that Bailey and the others had taken. I needed to get to her and bring her back to me. The incessant calls to my phone were becoming tiresome now, but they were easy to ignore, and no doubt my father, brother and others from my pack who were attempting to call would become far more tired of attempting to contact me than I would by rejecting their calls.

I did not need to answer their calls to know what they wanted me for. They wanted me back there to deal with this mess with Kaia. They wanted me back to prevent me gaining access to Bailey. Why they suddenly felt the need to protect her after being so blindly oblivious to the s**t we put her through for so many years, I do not know. Their attention had always been so intensely focused on Jordan and I over the years, with us being the heirs to the Alpha and Beta titles, it had so easily distracted them from all else; and sweet little Morgan had a way to garner their attention too, with her being the youngest, not to mention being so demanding. Bailey was easily forgotten about; and I guess in many ways so was my brother. So this sudden need to protect her and be there for her reeked of guilt in my view

After their many calls were rejected, many messages began to pop up too I had received so many messages, like they thought I would take notice!

Miles.

This needs dealing with. Bailey is not a priority right now, this marriage is. You are risking our pack here and I will not tolerate it

Dad

Bro, :

Not cool running off on us. We are meant to be able to trust you, and you do that? Now we have to go and deal with your mess. You need to leave Bailey alone, or I will not be responsible for the s**t you have to face from me, and my Dad – likely the rest of the pack too. You chose to reject her, nobody else. You deal with the consequences. She deserves a life now – and that is a life without you!

So get your f*****g ass back here and grow the f**k up!

Jordan.

Miles.

Do not keep ignoring me. We dealt with Kaia and her father, but that does not mean we do not need you back here to sort the situation properly. You killed a man today. That cannot be ignored!

Dad!

Listen here you little s**. You think yourself the big man now, huh? All because you managed to escape? Kill some random warrior? That means little. When you are an Alpha, Miles, you should be able to do that. But here is when you prove whether you have the ability to be a f*****g man. To be a GOOD man. A GOOD Alpha. Because neither one of them runs away from their mistakes, and right now that is exactly what you are doing. You made some huge mistakes lately. Not to mention forcing a woman against her will being the sickest thing to do.

Time to step up, little boy. So, want to be the Alpha you claim you are? Get your pathetic ass back to the pack then, and leave Bailey be. Or there will be consequences.

Uncle D

I could tell from their messages not one of them could see why I was doing what I planned, they were solely focused on their own reputations and the reputation of the pack.

They did not care about how I was feeling. They did not seem to realize that for me to be the strong Alpha our pack needed. I needed that girl. I needed Bailey, and she would be coming home with me.

But, I was not going to allow them or their calls and messages to stop me from fulfilling my goal. I was going to get to Bailey, and I would be returning her to the pack, making her my mate, the way fate had initially intended. Even if I had rejected her. I now needed

her. She was suitable as my mate now, and I needed the strength she could bring; and having heard the way in which Kaid had spoken, I think I underestimated the benefits of intelligence.

Previously, Bailey's intelligence had done nothing but irritate me. Making me feel inferior to her, despite being her upcoming Alpha. She had always had the ability to talk to me in a way that made me feel stupid because of the things that she knew, without even realizing it, and I hated her for that. Despised her. Yet, seeing Kaia, I wonder if Bailey was like that as a defense mechanism. And, when I thought about it, I had seen I could easily use Bailey's intelligence to my gain in my running of the pack... in my plans to change things... whether pack members liked it or not.

"All our contacts have been contacted now." The head rogue spoke up from my side, snapping me from my over-running thoughts. Causing me to look in his direction, as he added. "They are wanting to ensure they get paid.

They not doing nothing without funds."

"Money will be provided the moment Bailey is handed over Gives them a reason to try harder to find her." I said coldly. I had no plan of allowing any sly little fuckers to try to have me over. "If they want the money, they will do as they are asked There are plenty more rogues I can ask."

He sighed before nodding, telling me he knew I was fight.

Rogues were renowned for being underhand. Doing tasks for packs for cash, usually illegal things that the pack cannot do themselves. Anything for money. "I inform them.

They spread across areas between here 'and her new pack."

I felt a deep growl slip from my lips. "That is not her new pack. Simply one she has been working at. That f*****g place will never become her new pack! My pack is her home and will always remain that way!"

The rogues within my car all looked at one another with judgmental eyes. I could only imagine what their thoughts were right now, but I did not care. They were pathetic excuses for werewolves that had no place in our werewolf community, hence being rogues. No pack wanted them, making them the lowest of the low. Worthy of nothing and no one. So they were in no position to judge me!

"A figure of speech is all." He said nervously. "But they have been told, so they will be ready to act now. All ready to look for this girl. We know car now. Now we look for her more easy. So let us go find her."

I could only hope he was right. Their attack on the security guard and this crazy fucker's ability to hack the computer system had meant he had been able to find us the

information we needed to gain access to the security system to watch the camera footage of Bailey, Morgan and her man as they arrived at the car hire shop to collect a new car. Likely thinking they were being clever. Well, I can assume they never thought I would be arriving to investigate right behind them. Gaining the information we needed was as easy as taking candy from a baby with the help of these guys.. so I can only hope now, with their assistance, the rest of the mission went my way too.

Options

I fidgeted uncomfortably in the backseat of the car. We seemed to have been sitting here for a lifetime! Maybe that was more to do with the fear that was lingering within me that I could not shake... and the fact that Akira was heavily unsettled, telling me something was seriously amiss right now. The sky was darkening even further now, and I was becoming more and more restless, not to mention more anxious, as we continued sitting in the car while Marc continued to mess with the engine. This was taking longer than he thought, and I was seriously beginning to question if he did in fact know what he was doing, when he said he could fix the engine.

"Maybe we would be quicker walking back?" I suggested to Morgan, who looked at me in shock.

"In the dark?" she said, and I couldn't help but smile. Even with a wolf, Morgan had always been a little scaredy-cat. Scared of the dark, scared of the slightest loud noise... she was forever teased for it, and forever a source of amusement for it, but everyone found it incredibly endearing too.

"Well, otherwise we could be here all night!" I exclaimed, beginning to wonder how Marc was going to be able to see much at all with the shade of the trees making the sky feel even darker.

"Let us ask him." Morgan suggested, opening her door, so I followed suit, glad of the opportunity to stretch my legs.

Marc instantly looked up. "Why are you out? I said to stay in the car, it is safer there." He grumbled, a deep frown etched upon his face. I think he was unsettled as I was at being out here in the forest, and he was an experienced warrior; that only confirmed in my mind how dangerous of an area we were in.

"We are uncomfortable, and wondering how long you might be." Morgan asked, walking to look at the engine, though goddess knows why. I don't think she knew the first thing about cars, other than you put fuel in them to make them drive, and even then she usually found somebody else to do that for her!

Marc sighed deeply, as I came to lean against the side of the car nearer to them, and he looked up at me. "Hmm, not going to plan. I can't work out what is wrong. Not to

mention one of the tires is gone. Though that is an easy repair once the engine is sorted. But, I need to sort this engine."

"I was just saying maybe we would be better walking back... or shifting? Pack isn't all that far is it?" I suggested, and the moment my words were out, the darkest look passed over Marc's face. I think it is safe to say he didn't agree with that idea.

"No." he snapped. "You are safer here with me. Out in the forest here it is dangerous, especially at night. There have been many reports of rogues around here of late too."

I sighed, my heart pounding, trying hard not to allow my gaze to fall upon the trees, recalling what felt like many eyes looking at us earlier... had they been rogues? That would make sense. Though why would they be watching us? And would they be tempted to attack?

"Rogues?" Morgan asked, her voice stuttering, and I knew she was as scared right now as I was. We all knew the risk of rogues, and the damage they could do. They were feared by most in packs.

"Yes, beautiful." Marc reached for her, pulling her to him, softly kissing her upon the head as he did. "Which is why I need you to stay with me. I need to protect you both."

I couldn't help but smile as I looked at the two of them, as my sister looked up at her mate adoringly. It made me realize just how much I wanted to get back to Asher. I had missed him, and I wanted to put things right with him...

Suddenly there was a chorus of deep growls from either side of the road, and Marc looked up suddenly, his eyes flashed darkly as he focused upon the forest. The whole stance of his body changed as he realized the threat surrounding us, and that filled me with terror. We were in trouble. I quickly looked around, my eyes darting across the forest either side of the road, my gaze anxiously falling upon many wolves... and these wolves did not look like friendly ones...

"Shift girls, and run! Run for pack!" Marc muttered loudly, as he pulled away from Morgan and his body began to alter. "Stick together." He added just as his body made those final changes to create the form of his strong and skilled warrior wolf.

A deep growl was emitted from Morgan as she followed in her mate's path, transitioning into her wolf form, so I did as I was told. Knowing I had no option right now. Marc had told us how dangerous this area was, and that it was filled with rogues... and it seemed they had found us. We needed to get ourselves back to the pack, and the only way to do that was to shift. Shift then try to outrun and escape these wolves... I just hoped we had the skills to do that...

Akira wasted no time now in surging forward, that familiar sensation as my body twisted and contorted into her beautiful wolf form. I had never had to fight aggressively with

another wolf... we had trained, of course we had, that was a part of being a werewolf. We had to train regularly to ensure we were prepared for war, and to protect ourselves. But, never had I actually had to confront another wolf... not in this way, and despite the fact I knew Akira was skilled, I was still filled with fear. Fighting was not something I enjoyed. And rogues were different. They did not fight like we did...

But today, Akira seemed to have no plan to fight. No plans to use the fighting skills she has refined over the many years of training we have endured... oh no, she planned to run as quickly as she could to get us back to Autumn Valley. Get us back to Asher. I knew if I could get back to him, he would protect us; and I think Akira knew that too. Thankfully, running was something that Akira was skilled at, because it was something we regularly did together. Letting her out for long runs, building up her strength and her speed. And right now, I have never been more glad for our routine...

As Akira began to build up her speed, running as quickly as she could, I could see the wolves of Marc and Morgan ahead. Akira was following the instructions, knowing Marc had told us to stick together, obviously knowing staying together was our best option. That way, if the rogues attacked, we could assist one another in our defense, but now I could see other wolves appearing, and they were targeting each of us individually... closing in upon us...this could not end well.

Suddenly, a deep gray wolf, with spittle hanging from its mouth, ran toward Akira. Angry eyes focused intensely upon me, and Akira swiftly darted off. The need to get away was overpowering. But it took us away from my sister and Marc and a sinking feeling of dread settled in the pit of my stomach as a number more wolves appeared from around the trees, their amber eyes hungrily gazing upon me. This was not a good sign. I think I may be in trouble, because I wasn't even sure now how far we were from pack.

Options

I had worked tirelessly on the car. But nothing I did seemed to make a difference. Fuck knows what was wrong with it. I was increasingly aware of the rogues lingering, but I did nothing to anger them, knowing that with the number that were known to be in this area, I stood no hope of protecting the girls if they were to turn on us. It was best to continue with trying to fix the car and hope they went on their way, leaving us alone. That was what we needed...

The moment Morgan stepped from the car my wolf was going wild with apprehension. He knew it was not good. If the rogues got the scent of the girls, they were more likely to come closer... more likely to attack. That was why I had intentionally spilled some of the fuel from the can on the edge of the road to confuse their senses. The strong sense of car fuel was overwhelming for their noses, and I had hoped it would detract from the overpowering scent of the she-wolves.

Rogues do not always have many she-wolves around, putting females more at risk when around them. I did not know what they might do knowing the girls were here. I

understood the girls were restless. They wanted to get home, and so did I. I had tried persistently to mindlink, but where we were was a dead spot, for both phones and my mindlink. Just slightly too far out of the range of our pack link. I needed back up... I knew that. I needed Asher. He would never forgive me if something were to happen to Bailey. Damn, I don't think I could forgive myself. That girl had been through so much already, I did not need to be the reason she came to further harm. And I would be beyond forgiveness if anything were to happen to my mate.

The moment the wolves surrounded us, I knew we were fucked. There were more of them than I realized when I had looked up. They seemed to come from everywhere, and they were looking at us with purpose. Bailey's suggestion of shifting and running back to pack was our only hope now. We had no other option. But, it was not going to be straight forward. Not with a bunch of fucking rabid rogues on our asses, desperate to get to us... desperate to get their filthy claws into us... or what was probably more likely was get their claws into the girls.

As we shifted and began to run, I could only hope the girls did as I asked and stuck together. We needed to stick together to give ourselves the strongest chance. If we didn't, then the wolves would decimate us, of that I was certain. And the moment we began picking up speed, the wolves worked to target us individually. Them working in smaller groups to separate us. My gut was instantly to protect Morgan as a wolf flew at me, my wolf biting into the flesh of the flank of a wolf coming at me... the metallic taste of blood filling my mouth...

A loud whimper from Morgan's wolf as one of the wolves targeting her dragged her down caused my wolf to growl deeply, somehow giving me an additional surge of strength to pounce forward, getting to my mate, dragging the wolf upon her away. Teeth deep in his neck as I snapped it. Only as I looked up did I realize Bailey's wolf was nowhere to be seen. In the mayhem that had been occurring she seemed to have fled, and the other wolves were retreating. I could only hope she had managed to escape them. But a sinking feeling lingered in my gut, with a question hanging in my mind: Had they specifically been targeting Bailey?!

'Morgan? You okay? We need to get to pack. Get help.' I mindlinked her, knowing we can't mindlink Bailey as she doesn't yet share our mindlink. I only wish Eden and Caleb had considered this earlier. Considered the need to keep her safe while she was in the pack, and made her part of her pack, if only a temporary one. Asher's suggestion made so much sense. That fucker of a former fated mate of hers was poison, and the more I think of it, the more I realized this whole thing reeked of him. He had likely found a way to enlist rogues to help him. He was evil enough. Fuck, he likely controlled rogues, he was that fucked up...

'Yeah. I will be okay. Mimi is injured, I think, but she will be okay. Come on.' Morgan's wolf twists herself back to standing, and I can see a large wound down her left side. Bleeding weeping out. My wolf quickly rushed forward to lick along the wound to assist in it's healing, knowing a mate's saliva helped in that, as we made our way back to the

pack. Knowing Morgan needed treatment, and in the knowledge that within pack we had back up. We could get the help there we so desperately needed to ensure Bailey was safe too.

The run to pack felt like an eternity, all the while keeping a close eye out for Bailey. So desperate to find her, but there was no sight. Asher was going to be so angry with me!

As we got a little closer to the pack I knew my mindlink would work, but at the same time I was more than a little tentative in telling him what had happened... he would never forgive me... no, I needed to do this.

‘Ash?’

‘Are you home? I have been waiting all fucking day! Where are you, so I can meet you?’ Asher’s voice sounded so excited even through the link, I knew now I was about to break his heart.

‘Ash, I am sorry... ‘ I began.

‘No. No.’ Asher interrupted. ‘Do not tell me she is dead Marc. I cannot lose another.’ His voice is trembling.

‘No.’ I told him abruptly. ‘But we have been attacked. She is trying to evade the rogues in the forest near the pack. The car broke down and they came for us. I tried to protect the girls. Told them to stick together, but I think she bolted as they came for her. I have tried to find her. I don’t know where she is. But, the way they retreated from us tells me this was not a normal rogue attack. This was planned, Ash. I think he arranged it.’

‘Fuck no. I am on my way. I will get more warriors.’ And with that he was gone. I could only hope we could find her. I could never live with myself if Bailey were to come to any harm. The thing is, if this was arranged by Miles, I don’t think he would want her dead. He would have her returned to him, and then her life might as well be over. We needed to act fast.

Options

Having spoken to Bailey, and heard her voice, I felt on top of the world. I knew she was on her way home to me. Things seemed to be good. I had spoken to Eden, and a formal place in the pack was guaranteed. Eden did not need much convincing, as Bailey was her new best friend. They got along so well, and were forever messaging from what Caleb told me.

Marc was doing everything he needed to keep them safe, and I had no doubt within my mind that they should be back anytime. Zion was pacing heavily within my mind though. I do not think he would settle until Bailey was back here, by our side, and where we could protect her. I had been to her room, a beautiful bouquet of flowers awaited her,

along with a beautiful hamper of chocolate. I had a feeling I knew which she was likely to love the most... but either way, I just hoped they brought a smile to her face.

It was time for my girl to be treated properly. To have a smile on her face more often. I was ready to prove to her what she meant to me. I had been scared for too long to admit what my feelings truly meant.

Time seemed to be dragging... slower than slow, so I had decided to head to my office to get some paperwork done, when suddenly a mindlink came through. One I did not expect, and one I did not want to hear.

'Ash?' I knew that voice. Marc. Which had to mean they were home. My heart raced excitedly at the prospect of seeing Bailey. I could escape the paperwork, and finally see her! Spend time with her. Show her how much I had missed her...

'Are you home? I have been waiting all fucking day! Where are you, so I can meet you?' I blurted out, unable to hold back my excitement. I don't care what Marc thinks anymore, after the last few days, I think it is safe to say he already knows how I feel about Bailey.

'Ash, I am sorry...' He began, and it was at that moment my heart tightened. Contorted in pain. Zion crumbled in despair. It was happening again, wasn't it?

'No. No.' I quickly interrupted. 'Do not tell me she is dead Marc. I cannot lose another.' My voice wobbled. The very thought of Bailey being gone tore me apart. I felt like I was shattering. Not seeing her again... not hearing her laugh... or seeing that beautiful smile... I felt like my heart was shattering into a million pieces. This cannot happen to me. Not again. What had I done to deserve to go through this again?!

'No.' Marc suddenly spoke, his voice more than a little abrupt. 'But we have been attacked. She is trying to evade the rogues in the forest near the pack. The car broke down and they came for us. I tried to protect the girls. Told them to stick together, but I think she bolted as they came for her. I have tried to find her. I don't know where she is. But, the way they retreated from us tells me this was not a normal rogue attack. This was planned, Ash. I think he arranged it.'

His words registered within my mind. It all made perfect sense. Of course it did. He had wanted her back. He had tried to stop her leaving his back to no avail, so he had found another way to bring her home. Rogues were known to do anything for money... and now they had helped that evil bastard to attack my beautiful girl to drag her back to that psycho. To force her to be his mate. No. This cannot happen! My heart ached at the very thought, while anger raced through every pore... my vision blurred with fury.

'Fuck no. I am on my way. I will get more warriors.' I snapped through the link, as I charged from my office. The desperate need to get to Bailey taking over now. She needed our help, and she needs it now. And this time it wasn't just me, this was the whole pack.

'Warriors.' I sent out a general mindlink. 'Bailey West, our teacher from Lotus Shadow Pack, who lives on pack, is out in the forest alongside the northern route to the nearby town. Rogues on her tail, likely to kidnap her for her former fated mate. All help needed to bring her back here. Now! Urgent help needed.'

'Received.' Multiple mindlinks came through to me, as I flew through the main doors of the pack, Caleb and Eden walking up the steps, their children both in their arms as they did.

"Not time to talk. Bailey being attacked in the forest." I yelled, as I ran toward the forest.

"No!" I heard Eden wail, when suddenly I heard footsteps alongside me. Caleb...

Seems, I had my friend and Alpha to help me find her, and battle these fuckers. Hopefully, we would get to her in time. I don't think I could survive losing her. 'Right what is going on?' Caleb mindlinked as we headed to the treeline.

'She has been to a wedding. Her former fated mate's, who rejected her because he never saw her as good enough. Wedding not gone to plan. And he decided he wanted Bailey back. All complicated and fucked up, Cal. But she is in danger. Marc was trying to protect them, but the car broke down, and rogues came for them. But I think the ex paid them to help him. We need to help her, or he will trap her in her pack. She doesn't want that.' I explained through the link as we ran, trying to keep things as basic as I could.

'Shit. Why did I not know about any of this?' He asked, and in truth I didn't know what to say, other than the truth.

'She didn't tell anyone. Didn't want anyone thinking badly of her.'

'But why would we think badly of her when this was not her fault? She needed protection from this. Is he dangerous?' Caleb asked through the link, and in truth, I am unsure just how dangerous this upcoming Alpha is. But the more I hear, the more I fear the risk he brings to Bailey.

'He is her pack's upcoming Alpha. And he is a fucking nut-job. Let's just say that much, yeah?' I explained, as I allowed Zion to push forward, my bones cracking and dislocating, into the smooth and easy transition which I have easily mastered while on the move, which is vital when in battle or needing to get somewhere fast.

Zion was soon in control. His sleek and strong Beta wolf form running, while Caleb's strong and skilled Alpha wolf, Thor, is alongside him, both of them pounding along the forest floor now. Noses in the air, desperate to pick up a scent of Bailey or some rogues. Anything to give us a scent to let us know where she may be.

'The upcoming Alpha?' Caleb asks, as he allows Thor to take control. 'And he rejected her? Why would he do that?'

‘Not a clue. She is perfect.’ I said without thinking as Zion dodged and darted through the trees, seeming to follow a scent now, and Thor was doing the same.

There was a deep chuckle through the link before Caleb spoke. ‘Oh, she is perfect is she?’ and I realized what I had done, but it was irrelevant right now. ‘Something you want to tell me?’

‘Yeah. Bailey is perfect. And I need to bring her home, Cal. I want to make her mine.’ I said without faltering. Knowing now that I had never meant my words more. I just hope that between us and our warriors we were able to do exactly that... well, bringing her home, at least... the making her mine, that was purely down to me!

Options

Hearing everything Asher had told me had shocked me. This poor girl had been through a lot. There had been slivers of information that Eden had accidentally mentioned, and then sworn me never to mention – she had never been the best at keeping secrets. But, my mate liked to talk about this new teacher we had accepted into our pack. One that we evidently knew very little about when we agreed to hire her.

Bailey had come across so well when we interviewed her; though in truth, the things I had learned did not change my opinion of her. The things she had gone through did not change the woman she was. If anything, they made me view her even more highly. Made me see her as being even stronger. And I knew my wife thought incredibly highly of her too.

Bailey had become a firm friend of my wife. So I knew a little of Bailey’s difficult times; but never had I known the severity of the mess she found herself in. She needed assistance, of that there was no denying, and I only wish she had spoken up sooner, because we would have provided it without question. I would never allow someone to endure the things she was and not offer our help. But, I think a small part of me understood why she may have kept quiet.

This young she-wolf had been a wonderful friend to my mate, bringing a smile to her face again after the loss of her friend. Giving her the hope of a new friendship, and that alone had meant the world, both to Eden, and to me. Because seeing my mate struggling broke me. Not knowing how to help her. But this new friendship seemed to pick her up, in a way I could not. It gave her someone to gossip with again. They would regularly meet for a coffee, and message one another; and it seemed to work wonders for Eden.

And then there were the skills Bailey had brought to the school. Bailey was loved by the children, the staff and the parents alike and fitted in immediately. She had soon become an asset to the pack, despite the fact she was not a formal member. I would have offered her an official place within our pack without doubt, especially had I known she had been battling issues in her home pack. I think most in the pack would agree with me

too. Everyone treated her like she was already part of the pack, so I knew she would be welcomed.

And for Asher to then admit his feelings for her, that hit me like a fucking freight train. I had not seen that coming, yet it made so much sense! After he lost Isla, I had sat many a night with him, offering my support as he mourned her loss. Trying to be the best friend I could, while being unsure how to help him as I saw him falling apart. But hoping one day he may find another she-wolf that could have found a place within his heart. I knew nobody could ever take the place of his fated mate, but there could always be the potential space for another love; of that I was sure. And I desperately hoped one day a she-wolf would come into Asher's life that had that potential.

Seemed that exact she-wolf had come into our pack out of the blue, and into Asher's life, and I had completely missed it! And if Asher was having these feelings for Bailey, how had I missed it? I knew I had been so tired of late, having a new little one at home, and then getting back into the flow of work; it must be that causing me to have been oblivious to it. Completely unaware, and missing the signs of my friend falling for the new teacher within the pack.

Yet I had noticed differences in him. I know I had – because I had even pointed them out to my mate! Asher had seemed lighter in himself... more carefree again... even the occasional prank being pulled again... but Eden kept dismissing it, telling me I was imagining it, so I tried telling myself it had been in my mind. Wishful thinking on my part, that the old Asher was coming back. Because it hurt that I had lost my friend when he lost his mate, because he had lost himself.

His later nights within the office seemed to have been reduced, and now I cannot help but wonder if that was to give him time with the beautiful Bailey. After all, they were both residing in the packhouse together. Had they become close, and now he had allowed himself to open his heart to another, she was so close to being cruelly ripped from him? No. I cannot allow that to happen. Not after the pain losing Isla had caused him.

'Thor, we need to find that girl. For Ash. Now!!' I ordered my wolf. Determination rushed through me, which my wolf had to have sensed as his pace only seemed to have picked up.

'I know, dumbass.' He grumbled, like he did not appreciate my snappiness. But I was so desperate now to find her. And the more our wolves scooted between the many trees within the darkness of the forest, there seemed to be no trace of Bailey. Was Marc sure it was here she had headed? My mind filled with the possibilities of what the rogues could have done to the poor girl if they had singled her out to get her alone, and it was not pleasant... if Asher's theory was right, and they had been sent by her former mate to kidnap her, we may stand no chance of finding her...

'I think they may have already got her, Cal.' Asher linked, and I could already detect the defeated tone to his link. No, we could not give up. We had to continue to look. She still

had to be here. She was a strong wolf. I had seen her running a number of times, early in the morning before work. Eden said she trained twice a day too, though with a Beta for a father that did not surprise me.

‘No. Do not think like that. We will find her. Warriors are out too, right?’ I questioned, knowing he would have sent them, and already able to detect their scent in the forest ahead of us.

‘Yes. But why can we not find her?’ he grumbled. He was slowly losing hope. But I knew why. Isla had been his everything and when he lost her it had changed Asher forever. The happy, go-lucky, and carefree guy I had grown up with was gone. The joker of the pack left with his mate. He changed overnight, and it hurt me to see that change. Only through support and the inner-strength of Asher and his wolf did he survive. But, I truly do not think he could survive it again. Not when it had taken him so long to even contemplate opening his heart to another.

Suddenly, Thor skidded to a halt, his nose was in the air, and as he tilted his head to the side, I could catch a glimpse of Zion at his side doing the same. They had detected something...

And soon they were off again, at a slower pace, noses down, side by side. As close as brothers, like Asher and me... and as they turned the corner there was a bloodied Bailey laid on the forest floor. With not a rogue in sight. Which made no sense with regard to Asher’s theory, something clearly panicked them... or did they break their allegiance to the upcoming Alpha? But right now that was irrelevant, we needed to help Bailey... And Asher had already shifted, and was on his knees next to the wounded body of the woman he loved, tears in his eyes...

Options

After what felt like far too long pacing the forest floor, our wolves pushing themselves to their very edge in a bid to find Bailey, we finally caught a scent. Zion was whimpering. Whimpering so loudly, saying he smelt her scent. Far too strong, along with blood. The scent was bringing him to the point of breaking. He loved her now as much as I did, I think. And as they continued to run in the trail of that scent, we soon came across her.

The broken and damaged naked body of Bailey was laid battered, bloodied and bruised upon the forest floor. My heart felt like it shattered at the sight and Zion whimpered even more loudly the moment we laid eyes upon her. He ran toward her, before pushing me forward, allowing me to shift. My body soon cracking and twisting back to my human form, before I dropped to my knees to be by Bailey’s side, battling the tears that were filling my eyes. Our reunion was never meant to be like this!

I had hoped to run to her, envelop her in a tight hug, maybe even spin her around, before telling her how much I had missed her. Then find her lips with mine, and I was sure then my heart would have been racing so fast... but I had planned to tell her at this

point I loved her. Tell her just what she meant to me. Something I had been fighting for a while now... something I had been terrified to admit...even to myself, but I knew it; and I was so desperate to share it with Bailey.

But now... now as I looked down at her injured body, I feared I may not get the chance. Her former fated mate had been so determined to bring as much chaos to Bailey's life as he could, and today he had done exactly that. Before we were finally able to free her from their restraints.

As my eyes darted over Bailey's beautiful face, the tears were becoming harder to fight, but I was able to quickly check her breathing, and released a huge sigh as I realized she was in fact still breathing. They hadn't killed her. She was still alive. But, looking at the injuries, and the fact I was not a doctor, I didn't know for how long she might be alive, or if her wolf was even healing her.

We needed to get her back to the pack hospital. They could care for her properly there. Give her the treatment she needed, and hopefully save her life. Bring her back to me. I gently stroked her hair back from her face, but her eyes were closed, and there was no reaction... her skin felt cool to the touch, and I was terrified she was slipping away. Zion paced heavily in the pits of my mind, on edge, not sure what was happening, and in pain at seeing the she-wolf we had both been falling for hurt and damaged in front of us. We had not been able to protect her... Bailey may not be my mate, but once again I had failed in protecting the one I loved...

'Help me Cal.' I mindlink, needing his assistance, and he was soon shifting to put himself beside me, as we lifted her between us, until she was snug against my chest. Her breathing was low, and I feared for her health right now.

"Why do you think they didn't take her, if you think her former mate sent them?" Caleb asked me as we began to walk through the trees.

"No clue. Something spooked them maybe? But right now, I don't care, because she is still here. We can get her the help she needs." I said, as I felt a lone tear slide down my cheek.

"The fact she is in her human form seems odd too, Ash, if she was trying to escape from rogues." Caleb said with a deep sigh, something I had already considered, but could come up with no answer for. If she had been running from them, as Marc had said, she was in her wolf form. Something had caused her to shift back to her human form. Was it to yell for help? Did she think she was closer to pack? Were they trying to kidnap her? I honestly could not work it out... my mind was working overtime with worry and theories.

"I will mindlink the hospital, Ash, get them to meet us at the treeline with a car to get her to the hospital sooner, right? Along with a doctor." Caleb said, and I nodded, he made sense. I don't know why I hadn't thought of that. I don't think my mind was functioning

properly right now. Or the worries were taking over my mind. But Caleb was here by my side, and he was doing what I needed him to. Being the friend I needed.

"I will call the warriors back." I suggested, and Caleb nodded.

"Unless you want them looking for the rogues?" he offered, and I shrugged, as we began to walk, while I considered his words. I didn't know what was best right now. My head was battered. I don't know what would be the most effective thing to do. If they had been brought into this by that sick bastard, were they truly to blame? But then we needed answers... we could interrogate them if they were found.

"I don't know. Are they to blame? Or is it him?" I said with a sigh, my whole body a confused mess of feelings and emotions at that instant, desperately in need of getting Bailey to the hospital and getting her the help she needed.

"Let me deal with it, Ash. You focus on getting Bailey to the hospital." Caleb tells me, and I nodded, he might be better equipped right now to think straight and make sensible decisions. I knew I wasn't able to.

"Thanks Cal." I whispered, as I glanced down at Bailey, still unconscious in my arms, another tear trailing down my cheek.

Caleb looked across at me as we approached the treeline. "You love her, don't you?" he asked, and I nodded. There was no point in hiding things now. I wanted this to be out in the open. I wanted to be with her. But, I needed her to be okay for that to happen.

Caleb smiled at me. "Then we need to make sure that girl is okay, she deserves the best of treatment if she is going to be putting up with your sorry ass." He winked, as we came through the trees to find ourselves blinded by the headlights of a truck, and the pack hospital's lead doctor waiting for us. He had wasted no time in making his way here to meet us after Caleb had mindlinked. But I had never been so glad to see him!

"Right, let us get this young lady fixed, right?" Dr Lambert said with a sad smile, motioning for us to bring her to the car. "Shorts for you boys in the back, figured you might need them. Lay Miss West in the back, you can sit with her Beta. Let us go."

"I am going to go and join the warriors. Find these rogues. Ash will go with you to the hospital though." Caleb said, with a nod in my direction, as I climbed into the car with Bailey, now by my side, laid across the seats.

'I will get them found, and they will be punished. You focus on being there for her. Getting her better.' Caleb mindlinked me, as the doctor drove us away toward the hospital. I can only pray to the moon goddess right now that they are able to save my girl.

Options

The wolves had gone. Leaving Marc and I alone in the forest... well, I say alone, they were nowhere in sight, yet I still felt we were being watched. I could not shake that feeling the whole way back to the pack. I hated it. Marc was adamant that we make our way back to the safety of the pack; but I did not want to leave my sister out there alone. Not knowing rogues were out there trying to get her. But my mate guided me home, telling me my injuries were too bad to allow me to look for my sister and that he would arrange help to come; and I had to trust him. Mimi was in so much pain, I could feel it through our bond...

And as I shifted back to my human form, my bones twisting into place it hurt more than it had done in a long time. My wolf, Mimi, had been injured and while Marc's wolf had desperately tried to help the healing process, I am not sure whether she had been fully healed as she gave me control back. But somehow I was able to shift back.

I looked across at Marc with an empty feeling inside of me. There was no sign of Bailey. I had desperately hoped she may have arrived back in pack before us; I knew she was fast in her wolf form; but as my eyes darted around the area of pack we had walked into there was no sign of her.

"Have they heard anything?" I asked my mate, knowing he had asked for help. He had reached out for support, so surely they would keep him updated. But he slowly shook his head, and at that moment I wanted to go back out and look for my sister. Whether I was injured or not. She should not be out there alone. She needed us. My eyes darted back to the trees...

"You can't go back out, baby." Marc wrapped his big, strong arms around me. "I know you want to, but you are hurt, and you need to recover. Asher is out there, as are some warriors. He let me know he had got them helping too. They will be searching for her. They will let us know."

"But what if they are too late?" I felt tears filling my eyes. What if they have already captured her? If Miles had her, then we might have no hope.

"Then we will go to Lotus Shadow to bring her home." Marc said with a determination that shocked me.

"Marc, Lotus Shadow is her home." I pointed out, though he already knew that.

"Not if Asher wants to make her his mate." he told me sharply, and I felt a ripple of shock running through me. I knew Asher liked my sister, and it was fairly evident he had an effect on her too, but had it become that serious? Did Asher want to make my sister his chosen mate?!

"Really?!" I found myself questioning.

"I think that is what he is realizing he wants, yeah. He has been falling for her since she arrived. They are good for each other." Marc explained, and I could see from the look upon his face he was hoping that it could happen. "I think he fought it out of guilt. For Isla."

"Your sister?" I asked, and he nodded with a sad smile.

"Asher struggled so badly with losing her. He has never so much looked at another she-wolf, so getting close to Bailey has shocked him and scared him in equal measures, I think. He didn't see it at first, then denied there was anything there, avoided it. Until it hit him like a wrecking ball. Now, he wants nothing more than her. I think he is maybe worried about how me and Mum may feel too, but we saw it happening from the beginning, and we want nothing more than him to be happy." Marc said, emotion heavy in his voice, and I tightened my grip on him. "We know he loved Isla, and that won't change. But, she is gone, he can't be alone forever, holding onto her memory and the pain of losing her. That would destroy him."

"I wish Bai knew that." I sobbed.

"Well, hopefully soon enough she will." Marc told me. "But right now we need to do all we can to bring her home. So give your Dad a call. Tell him what has happened. They need to know what Miles has done."

"We don't know if the rogues are linked to him. You said yourself that area is always heavy with them." I suggested, and the dark look that passed over Marc's face told me I had annoyed him, and I instantly regretted my words.

"Are you defending him?" he snapped. "I am going off the fact the moment you and I were together they retreated and went after Bailey. That indicates the attack was targeting her. Does that not tell you it was him? How else would the rogues know to target her?"

I looked up at my mate, his handsome features angry, and I felt guilt flooding me. I hadn't intended to sound like I was standing up for Miles. "I am sorry." I whispered. "I wasn't defending him, I didn't know if it was him. That is all I meant. I will call my Dad."

I moved away, to walk to the house, as my phone was left in the car. I hated the thought that I had disappointed my mate. I would never defend the monster that was my former pack's upcoming Alpha, not anymore. Not after everything he had done. And the thought that Marc thought I might upset me.

Marc quickly followed alongside, reaching for my hand. "I'm sorry I snapped baby. I am just worried. Scared for you. Scared for Bailey. I feel like I let you down."

I squeezed his hand tightly to reassure him. "You were not to know that was going to happen."

As we arrived at the house, he looked at me with a sad smile. "Make sure your Dad knows what has happened to Bailey. They need to prepare for what may have happened, Morgan."

I realized the seriousness of his words and I felt dread filling my stomach as I lifted the phone to make the call, not wanting to wait a moment longer. My Dad would know what to do. "Hello?" My brother's voice surprised me.

"J?" I asked, wondering why he was answering my Dad's phone.

"Morgan. Did you all get home okay?" Jordan's voice was full of unease, which told me my Dad had told him everything. I didn't want to be the one to do this. I looked up at Marc who was watching me, his eyes full of concern.

"You want me to do this?" he offered, and I nodded, fighting tears, putting the phone onto loud-speaker.

"Hey Jordan, it is Marc. Morgan is struggling right now. There was an incident on the way home." He began.

"What sort of incident?" he interrupted. "DAD!" he suddenly yelled, before continuing. "You were meant to be looking after them!"

I felt a rush of anger, not appreciating my brother implying this was Marc's fault. None of this was his fault. What happened could not have been predicted. He had planned out our drive home to protect us as best he could. This was not his fault, and I would not have my brother say otherwise! "No. He was looking after us. This was not his fault!" I snapped, as I saw guilt spread across my mate's face. This was not fair.

"Well, what the fuck happened then?" Jordan yelled.

"Hey, what is all the shouting?" I could hear my Dad now, making me think he had come into the room. "Morgan?"

"Dad, things are a mess. Bailey is missing. We think Miles sent rogues to attack. The car broke down. We tried to run, but Bailey didn't get back." I blurted out, as tears burned my eyes.

"Miles sent rogues?!" Dad's voice was filled with fury.

"Well, that is not certain, we have warriors out searching, as it was close to the pack thankfully. If we find any, we will interrogate them. But they retreated the moment they had Morgan and I separated from Bailey. It seems too convenient. Too planned." Marc explained.

"Hmmm, you are not wrong. Especially when he could not get any warriors from his own pack." My Dad said with a coldness to his tone I rarely heard. He sounded ready to kill...

"Well, I don't mean to be harsh, but if he has got her, he will be bringing her home, won't he?" Jordan said, and I saw Marc's fists clench.

"And you are okay with that, are you? Letting that fucking monster of a psychopath have your sister? Just going to sit and wait for him to bring her home, right? Not knowing what he could do to her in the meantime? Is that what you are happy to do? Because I am not. She does not want to be his mate. She has a good man here in our pack that wants her for a mate, so why should she be forced to be mates with a man that treats her the way he does? That man needs locking up for the things he has done." Marc snarled at the phone, and I was shocked at how angry he was getting. He was standing up for Bailey so mercilessly. Or was it that he was standing up for Asher? Either way, right now, I could not be more proud of him.

Options

I paced the corridor of the hospital, hating that smell of antiseptic and disinfectant. So overpowering and so distinct of the hospital. Reminded me of illness and death. But I would remain here as long as I needed. Until I knew that Bailey would be okay. The doctor had rushed Bailey away from me the moment we had been met at the door by a handful of nurses and doctors. Taken her to be checked over and treated. I could only hope... pray that she would be okay.

She did not look good. Zion had been whimpering since the moment we had found her. Torn between wanting to be here, and being out in the forest hunting the bastards that had hurt her. This was not a good feeling. So much like the emotions we experienced when we lost Isla... it was taking all I had to keep myself together. I had to put my faith in Caleb that he and our warriors would be able to find the rogues, if they were even still around.

A part of me doubted they would be if they had in fact been enlisted by Miles. That fucking sick bastard was not fit to be an Alpha. Let alone mate to Bailey. He deserved to be locked up. And when I was done with him, I hoped he would be. But first, I needed to know that Bailey would be okay. And to know that, it meant staying in the hospital... pacing the corridors... my mind overrun with some of the worst scenarios imaginable.

Time seemed to be passing so gradually... sluggishly. And I felt like it would stop. I just wanted to hear some news. But instead, I saw doctors rushing up and down the corridor, going about their business. Who knew the pack hospital was so busy? I certainly didn't – I stayed away. Thankfully, our wolves tended to heal us from most things, so doctor visits were generally rarely needed. But the pack hospital was there to deal with general care, childbirths, and the more serious health conditions, and injuries.

“Asher!” I heard a voice from the end of the corridor. I knew instantly I would not be waiting alone. Eden had come to join me. She had mindlinked me numerous times since we had found Bailey, and told me she would be with me as soon as she could, so I was not alone.

I turned to look at my friend and smiled. “Eden.” I greeted her, not even able to bring myself to smile. But she flung her arms around me. It looked like I was getting a hug whether I wanted one or not.

“Any news?” she asked, despite the fact she had only mindlinked a short while ago. I gently shook my head.

“Nothing, I feel like I am going insane Eden.” I whispered, tears stinging at my eyes.

“Maybe that is a good thing.” Eden began, before shaking her head. “Not that you feel you are going insane. I mean that you have heard nothing. Maybe that means they are able to treat her more. Give her more of a chance to get better.” Her big blue eyes looked at me filled with hope.

I guess that was one way of looking at it. I simply shrugged. “I don’t know. I just need her to be okay.”

“I know, Ash.” She squeezed me tightly. “Sorry it took me so long, my Mum took ages to get back for me to drop the little ones with her.”

I nodded. “Ede, it is fine. I understand. A hospital is no place for kids to sit. You didn’t have to come, you know?”

She scowled at me now. “I was not leaving you here alone. And I want to know if Bai will be okay too.”

I attempted a smile. “I get that.”

“So you told Cal, finally?” she asked, and I nodded.

“I needed to. I want to make sure we can help her properly Eden. I know she asked me not to share the mess going on in her pack, but this made me see I had to. I know it means breaking that promise, but I need to protect her.” I admitted, and Eden was looking at me with understanding.

“For what it is worth, I think you did the right thing. And when Bailey comes around, I am sure she will too.”

“I hope so.” I muttered.

“Did you let her sister and Marc know you found her?” Eden asked, and I felt a rush of guilt pass over me. In my panic and urgency to bring Bailey to the hospital I had not even thought of them!

I shook my head. “I hadn’t even thought of it! How terrible am I?! I have been so focused on Bailey, and worrying about her.”

Eden’s face softened, as she looked at me, giving my hand a gentle squeeze. “Let me deal with that.”

As I watched her walk to sit down on one of the chairs lining the edge of the corridor, I saw the doctor walking from the room I knew Bailey was in. I quickly rushed over to him. “Doctor?” I called after him, wondering why he hadn’t come to find me. Did he not know I had been waiting here since the moment we had arrived?! I needed to know Bailey would be okay!

He turned to look at me, and I could see from his face he was exhausted, but as his eyes met mine, his face filled with pity, and at that moment my heart felt like it was being torn in two. “Ah Beta, I thought you may have headed home.” He said, and I found myself glaring at him, fighting hard to stop Zion responding, while biting my own tongue to stop myself saying something out of order. Why would I have gone home?

“How is Bailey?” I urged.

“It is too early to say, I think Beta. She is currently sedated to allow her the best chance to recover. To allow her body a chance to heal, but there were multiple large lacerations across her body, internal bruising and bleeding too. Her wolf is attempting to heal her, but because of the extent of her wounds and how weak the wolf is, she is struggling. Hopefully, we will be able to help.” The doctor told me, but his words did not register fully. This isn’t telling me if Bailey will be okay or not...

“But she should be okay though, right?” I asked, and the doctor looked at me with a sadness in his eyes I did not want to see right now.

“Beta, I don’t think I can say.”

Options

Hearing what was happening over at Autumn Valley Pack was tearing me apart. And to know there was so little we could do from here right now broke me even more. I hung up the phone from Morgan and Marc and looked across at Jordan, whose eyes were filled with defiance. “Dad, you know there is not a lot we can do, right?” he said, and I began to wonder if this boy was mine at all. Or if he had what it took to be a Beta. This was his sister, and he was ready to sit and wait for Miles to bring her back here?!

I shook my head at him in disgust. "You might be ready to sit and wait, Jordan, but I am not. Did you hear what your sister and her mate even said?! Everything that boy just said was right." I said coldly, referring to Marc, as I pushed back my chair, and moved toward the door.

I needed to find my friend. He needed to deal with his son before I did, and if I did, I know I would not be forgiven. I moved along the packhouse corridor, already sick of this day. A day that was meant to be one of celebration, but had turned into one that was nothing but a disaster. All at the hands of Miles – our packs apparent upcoming Alpha. But that should not be allowed to happen, and it was about time his father realized it.

Thankfully, guests were dissipating from the pack now as the celebrations seemed to be drawing to a close. Though the drama queen of a bride and her family had already made a sharp exit as suggested from the back doors and returned to their pack with an offer of another large payment to their pack to keep this whole sorry mess quiet.

Though, whether I agreed with it or not was yet to be decided, but I knew one thing, I would be ensuring that Miles did not become Alpha. That had been decided within my mind the moment I had discovered he had killed yet again for no real reason. He had no control and no discipline. He did not have what it took to be an Alpha. He was a bully. Brutal and cruel. But, I wanted the reputation of the pack to remain intact for the benefit of Ellis, for it was him that deserved the title; and I would do all I could now to ensure it was him that took that title from his father.

I knocked lightly upon the door of the Alpha office before walking in. "Marshall, we need to talk." I demanded as I walked in, to find my friend sitting at his desk, looking more than a little stressed as his eyes met mine.

"What now?" he grumbled, and I felt ready to rip his head from his shoulders now, but held back to see how he would react to my news first...

"Well, where would you like me to start? Your son, your delightful fucking son, has been hunting my daughter down, as we full well know, and it appears he hired the assistance of rogues. Morgan has now just called to say they were attacked as their car broke down. Bailey is still missing, and from what both Marc and Morgan saw, it looked like the rogues were targeting Bailey. That son of yours needs dealing with. I want him locking him up. He is not fit to be Alpha." I snapped.

And as I spoke I could see the face of my friend fall as my words seemed to register within in his mind. "Bailey is missing?" his voice faltered. "Do we know where? Do we need to send our warriors? We must try to find her!"

"No, we do not. She is somewhere near the pack she teaches at, thankfully, and they are hunting for her. But what concerns me Marshall, is if these rogues were hired by that fucked up mess of a son of yours, what if they already have her, what if he has her now, because he sure as hell isn't here. He could be forcibly marking her. She does not

want him. He does not deserve her! He never did. She has a man in her new pack that wants her, wants to make her his chosen mate." I found myself blurting out uncontrollably, and I could see Marshall's eyes widening in shock.

"Bailey has a chance at a chosen mate? Why did she never say anything?" he asked, his voice shaking.

"That is irrelevant right now Marshall, and you fucking know it is, if that shit head of a boy of yours has got his way!" I roared in fury, hating the thought of Miles harming her. I hated myself right now for the failure of a father I had been to my daughter. I had let her down massively. The whole pack had. She was so quiet, so happy to just get on with things that we missed so much of what was going on. Trying far too hard to please the jackass of the heir to our pack...

Marshall's face crumpled, and there were tears in his eyes. "I know. I know Don. I should never have given him a chance to redeem himself, but I hated the thought my own son could be so evil. I thought maybe if he found love it would redeem him. It seems even that went wrong. I knew the moment he hurt that warrior here he was never right for the Alpha role. Why do you think I sent Ellis for training?" his voice faltered, as his head fell into his hands.

I hated seeing my friend struggling, but it was time he saw that his son was far from the idol everyone had been treating him as for far too long. Even I had been guilty of that. "Marshall, we need to deal with him. Ellis needs to be made Alpha, and soon. Show Miles there is no going back. You know it is time for you to step back now. We are both ready for that. Ellis is more than a capable heir to your role."

Marshall's eyes met mine, and he nodded slowly. "I know." He chewed his lower lip anxiously. "Send our warriors out to search for him, and call our allies for support too. Miles needs to be found."

"That can be arranged, I am sure. I know this is difficult, but it is what is right for the pack." I told him, walking around the desk, to place my hand upon his shoulder. "I will go and speak with the Gamma."

"Thanks Donovan, I know you must want to kill him for what he has done to your girls. I know I would." He said as I moved back toward the door. "No, I do feel like killing him right now. But, instead, I will do what I should have done at the start. I will call the council. Allow them to deal with him. It is time he faced the consequences for all he has done."

Options

A nurse came from the room where Bailey was being treated to speak to the doctor as Eden joined me, having spoken to Marc and Morgan. I looked at the nurse, pleading with her with my eyes to let me know that everything was okay, as she spoke to the

doctor. Eden squeezed my hand in an attempt to reassure me, but right now I don't think there was any hope of that. 'Try not to think the worst.' Eden mindlinked, as the doctor suddenly came across.

"Beta, we have done all we can..." he began, Zion wailed heavily within my mind as it felt like my heart was shattering into a thousand pieces, while my heart began to race, thinking he was about to tell me my beautiful girl had gone. I could not face this again.

"No, doctor, please no!" I interrupted.

"Ash, let the doctor finish." Eden wrapped her arms around my waist as she looked toward the doctor, urging him to continue.

"As I was about to say, although maybe I should have put it slightly better, we have done all the treatment we can for the time being, so it is just a case of monitoring Miss West, and maintaining the treatment we have now removed the sedation, and hoping she regains consciousness. It is difficult to say how long this may take due to her injuries, and how weak her body is right now. She needs to rest, and most importantly recover. But, if you want to come and sit with her, you are more than welcome to."

I felt my body sag in relief as Eden nodded at the doctor. "That would be good thank you."

We followed the doctor along the corridor, my body feeling like I was in a trance right now, as we made our way into the private room they currently had Bailey being treated in. And as I saw her lying in the bed, I felt myself weakened at the sight of her... she looked so frail... damaged... and I felt like I had let her down in not being able to protect her. I wish I had done as I had wanted, and gone to that wedding with her. Show that Miles fucking Davenport that she was moving on in her life. That she had a good man there to love and care for her. To support and protect her. But instead I had stayed here like the pathetic mess that I am.

I found myself frozen at the bottom of the bed, my eyes unable to move from the sight of my beautiful Bailey so badly injured, as she was attached to drips and machines, her body covered in dried blood and dressings, as well as a sheet placed lightly up to her shoulders, where the hospital gown had also been placed neatly over her body.

"Ash, she will be okay." Eden said calmly. "They know what they are doing."

How could she be so sure? She sure as hell did not look okay right now. She looked close to death, in all honesty...

"I am scared, Eden." I whispered, as Eden led me to the chair next to the bed. I gently sat myself down, my legs were trembling under me, as I lowered myself to the chair, my eyes desperately not wanting to leave Bailey now she was back with me. Zion had

retreated to the pits of my mind, this was affecting him worse than I wanted to consider right now.

“Talking to her may help.” The nurse who was attending to one of the machines said softly. “She may be able to hear you.”

“Okay, thanks, we might give that a try, right Asher?” Eden looked across at the nurse with a smile. “Just out of curiosity, would it help her heal if he marked her?”

I quickly turned to look at my friend, while the nurse looked at Eden in shock. “Is he her fated mate?” she questioned.

I slowly shook my head, earning a swift nod from the nurse. “But you are a couple, I assume?” she said kindly. I rolled my eyes, wondering why Eden felt this conversation would even be necessary right now. And nothing like the nurse asking stupid questions...

Eden smiled in response though. “Yeah. So, would him marking her help her heal?” she asked again, urgency evident in her voice. I think she was desperate to find a way to help her friend right now, just as much as I was, but this did not seem right...

The nurse looked torn. “I think it would be hard to say for certain. It does certainly help for fated mates, but for chosen mates it does not always have the same effect. So there would be no way we could guarantee that. But, obviously, if it was something you had considered, then it could be worth a try, I guess.” she said with a small shrug.

I shook my head abruptly. “I am not marking her without her permission. Not when we don’t even know if it will help.” I know we had spoken about being together, but we had not specifically spoken about becoming one another’s chosen mates. I had thought about it, but it had not been discussed. Not properly. No, marking her without her permission was wrong. I could not bring myself to do that to her. She may not want it...

Eden released a deep sigh. “So we could try talking to her though, yeah?” she looked to the nurse, like she was swiftly trying to change the subject. The nurse simply looked back at us awkwardly after my response and nodded as Eden continued. “We could definitely give that a try then, couldn’t we, Ash? Just in case Bai can hear us.”

I nodded, unsure if I felt I’d be able to talk to Bailey when she was laid there like that. But Eden suddenly began speaking, and her chatter made me smile without even meaning to. “Hey Miss thing, you sure know how to give us a scare! But, now you have scared us all, you need to get yourself better. We have shopping to do, and I had you marked as chief babysitter now you and this grumpy old fart are making things official. So, please Bai, and that gorgeous wolf of yours, fix yourselves up real soon, so we can have you back, yeah?”

I looked across at Eden, and while her words may have been joking in nature, there were tears within her eyes. I reached for her hand. I could see she was struggling as much as me now. This was the woman she had become close to. A new friend. One that Caleb believed was filling a gaping hole left behind after her best friend had died; she was likely as terrified as me.

"I will sit here until she wakes up." I told Eden, as she wiped away an escaping tear, and she smiled.

"I have no doubt that you will, but sometimes a break might be needed, Ash. We truly don't know how long she might be here. The doctor doesn't know how long she might be this way." Eden said to me softly.

"I don't care. I don't want her to be alone again. I will be staying here until she wakes up. She has to be okay, we need her, as much as she needs us. I am not going anywhere." I said again with determination, knowing I would not settle if I were to leave her alone in the hospital like this. I needed to be by her side until she had healed and was returning home, with me, hopefully...

Options

We continued to drive. The stench from the rogues was sickening. Even with windows open the farthest they could go, the stench was sticking at the back of my throat; but I knew there was little I could do. I needed these disgusting creatures' help. "We must be getting close." I said with a snarl. "You not heard back yet?"

I was getting tired of their lack of information. Their so-called contacts were supposedly helping. Trying to assist in bringing Bailey back to me. Anything so she did not get back to her temporary home. There she would have too much help. Too much protection. At least if the rogues could attack this car, there were only the three of them, they could overpower it.

But, despite my persistent harassing for updates, there was nothing. I was beginning to lose patience and wonder if these fools were even helping at all. But, I knew I had nothing else. Without their help, I was alone. My pack turned their back on me in returning Bailey to us, so I needed this. I needed to turn to rogues for help. Pestering them for information right now was my only source of hope. And, in fact, at their last attempt to contact them they were uncontactable. I only hoped that meant they were on their tail.

"I will try again. But you have to give them the time they need." The rogue in charge snapped. I felt my anger bubbling as I looked across at him, my brows raised, he seemed to be getting a little ballsy now. Was he getting tired of my persistent demands? Because if that was the case, he could fuck right off. I am paying them for their services right now. They ought to be grateful I was willing to even spend time around their stinky selves...

I had long since turned off my phone, sick of the excessive number of attempted calls and the number of messages arriving from members of my pack. Mainly my family. All trying to make me see the error of my ways, it would seem. Well, that was their opinion, of course. In my mind, I was doing nothing wrong. Not now. The only thing I had done wrong was letting Bailey go in the first place... rejecting her... forcing her to accept the rejection... But, I was about to fix that. Put fate back to how it was intended.

But, all of that aside, I had no intention of listening to any of them back in the pack, giving me shit down the phone about me stepping up and dealing with the mess I had created. I think they would find the mess that was currently ongoing in that pack right now was down to Kaia and the fact she had no self-control over her carnal desires. She should never have agreed to marry me if she wanted another man. The thought still sickens me. But, I feel no guilt for killing him. He knew she was my wife, and soon-to-be mate, he knew he should not be touching her the way he was. He had deserved all that had come to him.

My Dad and my Uncle acting all holier-than-thou about it was a fucking joke, because I can guarantee if they were in my situation they would have done the exact same thing. Betrayal by your woman was no small thing as a werewolf. Especially one in a senior rank. It was demeaning. Humiliating. If anyone was to find out, it would have them questioning me as a man. I would not tolerate it. I had no choice but to kill him. Jet snarled, as I felt his anger building, and I knew I needed to bring this back under control before he became too much to handle.

"Well, we are getting closer to her pack now, and if we are, that has to mean she is likely already back!" I told them, growling at the thought. If she was back in the pack, I knew I stood little chance of bringing her home with me. She would have the Alpha on her side by now, no doubt. And others...

"I need to pee." A female voice from the back of the car spoke up for the third or fourth time since we had set off. This was turning into a fucking joke. I am sure she was intentionally trying to irritate me. I glared at her through the rear-view mirror.

"Are you fucking kidding?!" I snapped. "Didn't you just go?!"

She simply shrugged, a small smirk upon her lips. "Well, I need to go again. I have a small bladder, and I drank a lot when we ate. Unless you want me to pee in the car, of course." She repeated her words from earlier, and I quickly pull up at the side of the road to allow her to get out to go and pee. Her and her fucking toilet breaks were doing nothing but delaying us further, and I think she fucking knew it too.

"She needs to quit with this, or next time I fucking leave her, got it?!" I snarled to the others, knowing they would not want to leave her behind, and they all nodded, though not one of them said a word. They all know that I needed their help; and it drove me crazy that right now I was so dependant on someone else. I was an upcoming Alpha, I

was the one others usually turned to. I was the one others looked up to. Not someone that needs help from others...

"Right he got back to me. He asked what happens if she is hurt?" he asked tentatively, and my eyes turned to him fiercely. That better not mean what I think it does.

"What the fuck does that mean?" I snapped. "You know what happens. I made it clear. You get fuck all. No money. Nothing. And then I will be out to hunt each and every one of you down!"

"Uh-huh, he figured as much." He nodded with a shake of his head. "Well, you might like to know their car broke down. Not far from where our guys were. Seems some other rogues had seen them too though. Took a liking to the girls. But, your girl was running. It seems she was separated from the others. And anyway, it seemed she was running for her pack, maybe thinking she was closer to the pack than she thought, because she had shifted back. I assume to shout for help. Well, he went to get her... she fought a little... he fought back... he isn't quite as patient as we are. His wolf can be a little unpredictable. Maybe a little heavier handed at times... And...Well.. " his voice faltered, as my eyes narrowed angrily.

"He killed her?" I growled.

He shook his head. "No. But once he had gained control of his wolf again, he realized at that point there was no hope of you giving him the money, so he left her. They were not far from her pack, chances are someone will find her. Especially if the others in the car ran for help."

I felt anger racing through my body. This was simply not right. How did that fucker think he had the right to hurt her? He had been ordered to bring her to me. Not to hurt her. "Where is he?" I roared.

"Not a clue. Making his escape, I would imagine. Be glad he was honest. He could not have said a thing. Said he couldn't find her. But why waste your time on him right now? If you want your girl, hadn't you best go and find her?" he suggested; and I realized he was right. Even if she was safe within her pack now, which in truth, I think that may be for the best right now, as it sounded like she needed medical treatment, I wanted to make Bailey see that us being together was the right thing. Not just for me, but for her too. We could make this work, and we could be a successful Luna and Alpha. The pack would be happy with that, I know they would. I just needed Bailey to forgive me, and be happy with the idea too.

Options

I sat once more at the side of Bailey's bed. Eden had left to go to collect the children so she could sort them for bed. It was already getting late, and I imagined they would already be sleeping, but Eden was adamant she needed them home with her. Telling

me she would not settle if they were not there. I think, given everything that has gone on today, I can understand that.

I reached out and gently stroked back Bailey's dark curls. The curls she had tried so hard to hide for so long. I had no clue why. She looked amazing with them. "Come on beautiful." I whispered, feeling silly speaking to her, but having a desperate need to talk. "Please come back to me. You know I can't do this on my own anymore, right?"

I felt tears building in my eyes as I spoke, and I wondered if she did know. I think I had kept my emotions hidden from her... hell, I think I hid them from myself... or maybe had been in denial for so long. I gently took her hand in mine, stroking my thumb over her palm. "I mean it, Bai, this last day or so while you have been away I have felt like a part of me has been missing. And that part was you. I don't think I had realized just how big this had become this quickly. You came into my life beautiful, and turned it upside down. I think I may have fought it, like the stubborn and crazy fool I am, but you coming into my life was the blessing I needed. I wouldn't change it for the world now. Even if it means I have got to share my chocolate." I smiled slightly, as I poured my heart out to her, totally unaware if she could hear me.

"But, I just make sure I buy extra chocolate for you now. Seeing that smile of yours when you get your chocolate... or anytime that smile appears on your face... well, it makes my heart melt. And don't even get me started on that laugh of yours... my heart melts even more each time I hear that! Which is maybe a good thing as I was pretty sure my heart had turned to ice after everything I went through. I was a mess, Bai, and you with your sweetness... your kindness... just by being you, I think you were fixing me. I am begging you, beautiful, come back to me. I will spend my life doing all I can to make you happy. So I can see that smile and hear that laugh as much as possible. I don't want you feeling scared again. Or being sad again."

I looked up at her beautiful face, but still Bailey lay there, her eyes closed. There was absolutely no response to my words and I felt hollow inside despite the emotion in my words. I don't think she has heard me, in spite of the fact I have told her everything I felt for her. Everything I should have told her before she went. Or even while she was away. I wish terribly now I had called her. Spoken to her... Opened up to her... So she knew what she meant to me. I would do anything for another chance right now...

I gently lifted her hand to my lips and placed a kiss on her hand. "I love you Bailey." I whispered, a lone tear slipping from my eye.

As I placed Bailey's hand softly down onto the bed next to her, the door opened, and Morgan came rushing in, with Marc not far behind. "Oh, you are still here. Do you want me to sit with her a while?" Morgan asked, and I shook my head. I don't think I could bear to leave her. I needed to be here the moment she woke up.

Marc smiled at me. 'You aren't leaving her, are you?' he mindlinked, and I shook my head again, making Marc continue. 'When she is better you need to make this right,

Ash. It is time to let Isla rest. You being happy doesn't change anything with her. You understand that, right?'

My eyes met his, and he was looking at me full of concern. I could see no judgment in his gaze. 'I mean it, Asher. Me and Mum would never look at you any differently for choosing to move on. You have stayed so loyal to Isla's memory, but you do not have to be alone forever. I saw the connection between you and Bailey from the start. I think Mum did too. She is one hell of a girl. I think Isla would like her. Don't let this go, because you are worried about what others are thinking, or because you feel guilty. It is time to think of you, ok? Isla would want you to be happy.'

I bit my lower lip, deep in thought. His words meant a lot. There would always be guilt. Of course there would. That was the reason I had battled my feelings for as long as I had been. Why I had denied them for as long as I had. But, without ever intending to, I had fallen for Bailey. 'I love her, Marc.'

'I know you do.' He smiled with a smile.

I turned to see Morgan stroking her sister's hair back from her face, before pulling up her eyelids, making me wonder what in the hell she was doing, but Marc got there first. "Erm, Morgan, what are you doing?"

"Just seeing if she would wake up." She said, like it was the most normal thing in the world to do to someone in a hospital bed that was unconscious. "Used to work when she was a kid."

Marc held back a smile. "I think the fact she is unconscious may be slightly different to when she was pretending to be asleep as a kid, darling."

Morgan shrugged, like she believed her logic had been completely valid, and even I had to smile a little. Bailey's sister was certainly unique. "What did the doctor say?" she looked at me, and now I could see the concern upon her face.

"Just a case of waiting for her to recover, basically. Hoping for the best." I explained, and she nodded, so I looked toward Marc. "Any news from the warriors?"

"They only found a couple of rogues, but they are unsure if they were involved. So Alpha is going to interrogate them to find out. But there was definitely more than they brought in, I know that much. It was such a mess. I am just sorry I let you down, bro." and in his words, not to mention the devastation upon his face, I could see he was ridden with guilt. He was forever going to struggle with this. I was unsure if he would forgive himself over this. I didn't want that for him.

"Marc, this is not your fault. We know who is to blame for this. And we will ensure he gets the punishment he deserves." I said with determination. The words were as much for my benefit as they were Marc's...

“Oh, about that, Dad messaged.” Morgan said, as she continued to stroke her sister’s hair. “They have warriors out hunting for that sick fucker. But, even better, my Uncle, or the Alpha, if you like, has seen that things are not repairable anymore. That Miles is not a fix-it-up project he is capable of doing a botch repair on. He has seen things cannot be fixed. Not that I think they ever could, so Ellis is going to be made Alpha. And he has called the Werewolf Council to report the incidents with Miles. He will be handed over to them to deal with him. So, he will more than get the punishment he deserves.”

And I have to say, they have to be some of the best words I had to have heard in a long time. We just need Bailey to wake up to share in the good news now...

Options

I sat in my office, drinking a black coffee in a bid to keep myself awake longer. I still have so much to do. Our search through the forest which sits alongside the pack had proved to be difficult. The area was large and there were so many different areas the rogues may have branched off into. We could not risk losing them. I wanted to capture at least some to gain some answers. For Bailey. For Asher. We needed that. If it was in fact an attack linked to the upcoming Alpha of her pack, then I would not be failing in reporting him to the Werewolf Council.

I had heard all the things he had done to Bailey as we ran. Asher shared them with me as our wolves were hunting for her. Though my gut told me that was likely not all he had done to her, it may just have been the things she felt able to share with Asher. When someone has been treated that way for that long, it is not always easy for them to talk about it. But hearing it all, I knew he needed his punishment; and it infuriated me that his own pack had not dealt with him. They were seriously failing their pack if they still considered him fit to run the pack.

I understand Bailey’s need to keep quiet. She feared him, and he had likely threatened her with many things over the years if she spoke out. Not to mention the fact I could see when she came to visit our pack how much she respected her father, I think she considered their feelings and reputation too much as well. That poor girl had considered everybody but herself in her action, and in doing that had found herself getting hurt.

I was shocked she had agreed to go to the wedding of the man who had tortured her for so long, though I imagine it was her family wanting her there. It would be expected with her being part of the Beta family. She must have hoped the sick bastard choosing to take another mate was her lucky day. A way out. It seemed that something had gone hugely wrong. Though I think the bride had simply had a lucky escape, or had seen sense. Not that it had done Bailey any favors. The sick fucker simply turned his attention back to what he knew...

I just wish Asher had spoken to me sooner. I know he wanted to protect her. Respect the trust that Bailey had shown in him by not talking to anyone about the things she had confided in him; but this information showed how much in danger she truly was. She

had likely come to our pack in a bid to escape him... escape her pack. Had I known that I would have offered her an official place in our pack. She would never have had to return. We would have kept her safe. I feel I have, as an Alpha, failed her, when she was never even our pack member.

Thankfully, she was stable in the hospital, and the doctors, Eden and Asher's regular updates were keeping me informed. I could only hope that they were able to make her better. Because I did not want to see my best friend lose the woman he so evidently wanted to make a life with. This was playing so heavily on my mind. I had been so wrapped up in my own world lately with the arrival of the baby that I had completely missed this change in Asher...

There was a sudden knock at the door. "Come in!" I yelled.

The door opened and Felix, one of the older warriors, came through the door, looking tired. "The three rogues we detained are ready for you to interrogate if you want? The other younger one is getting medical treatment first."

I nodded at him. This was why I had been waiting up. I would have liked nothing more than to return home and snuggle up in bed next to my mate. No doubt she would be fast asleep by now, lightly snoring, the way she does. Both our little ones hopefully allowing her to sleep. They were both making sleep more than a little challenging of late... maybe another reason I was so oblivious to things. I felt more of a zombie than a werewolf some days – the joys of being a parent! But, this was something worth staying up for. A chance to gain answers. A chance to speak to the rogues who had injured Bailey.

I quickly followed Felix to the cells. Wondering what sort of beasts I may find. Rogues were renowned for being mindless... vicious... evil. And the damage that was done to that poor girl was done without thinking twice about her or her welfare. It was some of our other warriors that had caught them on the outer edges of the forest, telling me they had been trying to escape. Which, to me, seemed a little odd. She was injured. They could have taken her. That had to have been their plan. Something had to have spooked them. Or that was my theory. That was why it was so vital we spoke to them.

I marched into the cell, ensuring my aura was at it's fullest, knowing that way I was most likely to get the answers we needed. Instantly, the three of them were looking at me in fear. These did not look like ruthless monsters. These looked like young wolves. Scared young wolves at that. Ones that would not be capable of doing the damage done to Bailey... had we captured the wrong ones? The forest was riddled with rogues on the run after all.

No. I still need to do this. Looks can be deceiving. I know that. "I want answers." I allowed my voice to boom, and the three of them looked at me fearfully.

"We already told your men we don't know anything." One young guy with deep auburn hair spoke. All three had filthy skin, like they could do with a bloody good shower.

"Well, that will be my place to decide, won't it?" I glared at him, and his big green eyes looked back at me, full of terror. "We need to know why the girl was hurt. Who ordered you to help?"

A frown crossed the faces of all three of them. As this time a dark-haired guy spoke up. "Why someone order us? We are not in pack. We rogues. No Alpha to order us."

I looked to Felix. He shrugged. Had Marc and Asher's assumption been wrong? Had it been a chance attack when they had seen the car broken down? Nothing to do with the upcoming Alpha after all? I could understand their paranoia given the things he had done previously, but going of what these rogues were saying, I did not know now...

"Why attack them then?" I ordered.

The red-headed one deeply sighed, looking guiltily at me. "We see them on road. The car was damaged, I think. There was two she-wolves. Pretty she-wolves..." his voice faltered as his eyes looked down. They had gone after the girls. Not an unusual trait of rogues, sadly.

"You wanted the girls?" I demanded, and he nodded.

"We do not have any she-wolves near us." He muttered, and I shook my head in disgust. How they think it is acceptable to attempt to attack she-wolves; but this was common for rogues, unfortunately. This was how so many made their mates.

"But one had man with her. He fighting for her. Helping her. So we go after the other." The dark-haired one spoke up again.

I turned to look at him now, my eyes narrowed. He was talking about Bailey now. "And you hurt her? Because we found her injured, nearly dead in the forest." I found myself snarling; and the young guy's eyes widened as he emphatically shook his head.

"No! No. She was still running. But she shift again. To girl form. To scream for help. Scream so loud. I think because she was near to this pack. She wanted get someone to help her. We were scared then and run." He told me, his voice wobbling, and as I looked at him the fear in his eyes was telling me he may well be telling me the truth. But it still does not answer who hurt her.

"She was hurt. Badly. If not you, then who?" I ordered.

All three looked at me and slowly shook their heads. "There was another rogue there as we leave. Bad one. Very bad one." The third guy spoke, his eyes slowly meeting mine, just as I received a mindlink.

'Alpha, can you make your way to the gate please? Someone is here demanding to see you.' the guard on duty told me, as the link quickly cut out.

'Who? And why at this time of night?' I replied, but I got no response, making me wonder what the hell was happening at the gate, but making me know I had no choice but to go and find out, all the while wondering if this bad rogue that the others spoke of was one enlisted by our current suspected upcoming Alpha. There was still so much to learn to give us the answers we needed.

Options

I paced around the room once Morgan and Marc had left. The room was deathly silent despite the occasional buzz from the machines in here. I had tried desperately to get some sleep in the chair next to Bailey's bed, but let's be honest, hospital chairs are most definitely not designed for taking a nap in. Zion was pacing too, but within my mind. As strange as it seems for me to say it, I was missing his snarkiness right now; and usually that drove me crazy. I would do anything for things to return to normal.

The doctors had switched shifts, and another doctor had come in to do a check on Bailey, though little had changed. He said her stats were stabilizing, which he felt was a good sign; so I could only hope that may mean her wolf could be helping her now. That was what we needed. If her wolf could help her heal, she stood a better chance at recovery.

Morgan had been on my case, much like Eden at potentially marking Bailey. But, I was still adamant on the point I would not do that without her permission. As much as I would love nothing more than to make Bailey my chosen mate, I could not be sure if she was feeling the same, or even if she did have similar feelings for me if she was in the same place as me right now. Things were complicated. She had been through a lot, and I wanted to respect that. I would not take her choice away.

'Ash, just to let you know, spoke to the rogues in the cells. I am sorry to say, they were not the ones that hurt her, I don't think. And it was not involving Miles Davenport either from the information they gave me. The rogues I spoke to did attempt to chase her and Morgan, but it seems it was because they were inexperienced, lacking females, being rogues. Marc being with Morgan, protecting her meant they went after Bailey then and continued to chase her.' Caleb mindlinked me, and my heart sank.

Marc would always instinctively protect his mate. I would expect nothing else, and I don't think anyone else would either. He had done nothing wrong. But, I could only assume as he did, the rogues had used that as an opportunity to separate Bailey from them. Easy hunting tactics. But it was not what I expected to hear; and if I am being honest, a small part of me is thinking it wasn't what we wanted to hear either. I had genuinely thought Miles would have been involved. It would have made so much sense. Given a purpose and reasonable explanation as to why my beautiful girl was laid so

badly hurt in a hospital bed right now. But, instead, it seems this was nothing more than your standard rogues out on the hunt, after vulnerable she-wolves.

‘But why hurt her?’ I asked, knowing that it still didn’t give an answer for attacking her. What terrified me is, if they wanted her for that, then they could have assaulted her. And that thought sickened me...

‘Thankfully, Bailey must have thought she was closer to the pack than she was, she shifted to her human form, and was shouting for help.’ Caleb began, and while that explained while she was in her human form, the thought of her doing that breaks my heart, knowing that nobody would have heard her. That nobody came for her... ‘They panicked. Obviously not expecting her to yell. Terrified help might come. So they ran. But, they did say there was another rogue around as they left. All they could say was he is bad.’

My blood ran cold at his words. There had been another. And for rogues to consider him bad had to mean he was not good news. But, it still begs the question, why had he left Bailey? Could we have been right, and her former mate had enlisted rogues to help him, now we knew he did not have the support of his pack to assist in looking for Bailey? That could be the only way he would have help to find her before she got home. But again, why did he leave her if that was the case? He would want his payday if that was what had occurred. Maybe I was just being paranoid...

‘Why did he leave her?’ I asked, desperately in need of an answer.

‘That I can’t say, and the guys in the cells wouldn’t know either as they were already fleeing by then, likely to where our warriors caught them. Look, I have been called to the gates to speak to someone, fuck knows why at this time of night, and the guard won’t answer me now, but I’ll call in at the hospital before heading home, okay?’ Caleb linked, and I was puzzled why he’d be needed at the gates this late.

‘Thanks bro.’ I responded, moving back to the chair, and dropping myself into it. Just as I do, I look across to Bailey and I realize her eyes are no longer closed. Her big brown eyes are looking back at me. My girl is awake! My heart races within my chest as I quickly stand back up.

“Bailey!” I stuttered.

She smiled, with a slight wince of pain.

‘I have been trying to tell you for the last few minutes that Akira and I were talking!’ Zion suddenly interrupted as I sat myself on the edge of Bailey’s bed, careful not to catch her, desperately not wanting to hurt her, but desperate to be close to her as Zion continued. ‘But you and that friend of yours talk more than two teenage girls gossiping about your latest crush!’

'Piss off.' I responded, but secretly glad he was back to normal.

"You are awake!" I exclaimed, gently stroking Bailey's face, knowing I was stating the obvious, and again, she attempted a smile, as I realized I needed to get help. "I should let the doctor know!"

I jumped up from where I was sitting, and rushed from the bed to the door. "Doctor!" I called, nearly falling over my own feet in my hurry, as I opened the door, almost smacking myself in the face with it as I did from trying to move so quickly. "Doctor! Doctor, she is awake!" I yelled down the corridor, and once I could see the doctor was walking in our direction, I moved back toward Bailey in her bed. And she was smiling at me again, affection in those amazing eyes of hers.

"Could you not just have mindlinked him?" she asked, her voice a little hoarse, and I paused, feeling a little silly.

But, I grinned before shrugging. "Ah well, I fancied making a fuss." I winked, making her giggle lightly. "Admittedly, I may have forgotten at that moment to mindlink, I was just so pleased to see you awake! My first thought was you."

"Yeah?"

"Hell yeah! I have been so worried, Bailey. You have given us such a scare." I whispered.

"Hmm, I heard." She looked at me, her gaze intense, making my heart flutter as I wondered suddenly if she may have heard everything going on in here while we thought she was sleeping...

Options

My head felt like a storm was spinning through it... my whole body ached, even parts I didn't know could ache! I felt like I had been run over by a herd of elephants. What the hell had happened to me? I pried my eyes open tenderly, realizing in shock as my eyes attempted to focus that I was in a hospital room. I had been at the wedding not long ago, hadn't I? My eyes drifted to Asher... oh, Asher...

He did not look too great. He was anxiously pacing the floor of the room, his back currently to me. Had he been here long? Had I been here long? What had even happened? My mind was filled with questions that I was so desperately trying to find answers to, which was pretty difficult when it felt like I had a band of drum players currently residing in my head. We were in the car, I think...

My mind was such a blur of information. Flickers of images... rogues... fighting... screaming... blackness. Snippets of conversations I think had happened... but then, they just didn't seem to fit with the wedding... doctors... Asher... could they have been

while I was here in the hospital? Is that possible? Eden... Morgan... Asher... oh... definitely Asher. Had he told me he loved me? Were they dreams? Can you dream if you're out of it?

I tried to speak, desperate to let Asher know I was okay... well, maybe not quite okay. I felt like a doll right now that has been through a washing machine, but I am awake, that has to be good, right? I tried again, but my throat felt tight, and my mouth dry. Asher was moving toward the bed, but his gaze toward the floor, I think he could be mindlinking.

'Zion knows. I told him.' Akira told me tiredly, she sounds as shattered as me right now. If I had been hurt, she had to have been using all her energy to attempt to heal me. Yet she still felt the need to tell Zion we were okay. Aww... seems the wolves were as close as we were. My heart warmed at the thought.

'Thanks. I think he is mindlinking.' I told her.

'Yep. Zion said he is. He was trying to get his attention, but he is gossiping with the Alpha. He'd hate to interrupt their lovefest.'

I smirked at her description. She may be tired, but she was still her usual charming self, it seemed. I watched as Asher suddenly dropped into the chair next to the bed, and his eyes suddenly met mine. The shock within them was so adorable I could have hugged him if moving did not hurt like a bastard. His eyes were darting all over me, like he was checking if it was really me, though who else it would be I was unsure.

"Bailey!" he stuttered, like he was struggling to get his words out, and I couldn't help but smile. But I think it came out more as a grimace of pain too, as I moved my leg too quickly under the sheet and it hurt. It seemed Akira's healing had only done so much. I was still badly bruised right now...

"You are awake!" he said excitedly, reaching over to gently stroke my face, his touch making me sigh in contentment. I had missed him so much. I smiled up at him again, while he suddenly spoke again, causing me to jump slightly. "I should let the doctor know!"

I was not sure where that idea came from, but he obviously decided it was urgent as he rushed from the bed to the door. "Doctor!" he all but yelled, as I watched him almost tripping up over his own feet in his desperate attempt to make it to the door in a hurry. Not to mention then almost smacking himself in the face with the door as he opened the door, once again in a little too much of a rush. I had to hold back a giggle. He was the sweetest.

'I think I'd like to see him do that again.' Akira giggled, and I held back a smile at her teasing of Asher. He was just excited we were awake, right?

“Doctor! Doctor, she is awake!” Asher yelled down the corridor, I assumed to the doctor, but at the volume he was shouting I think the whole of the pack had likely been awoken by his announcement. I am sure the whole pack wanted to know I was awake; and even if they didn’t, Asher had clearly decided they were going to know anyway!

‘Wow. That was interesting. He is a weird one.’ Akira announced, before curling up within my mind to snooze, as Asher turned back towards the bed and began making his way to me. Please visit [J o b n I b . c o m](http://Jobnib.com) and search the book title to read the entire book for free. I once again couldn’t help but smile. He is so perfect, and while Akira may be right, he may be a little weird, and I had no clue what that had been all about, he was adorable.

“Could you not just have mindlinked him?” I suggested, realizing that all he had just done was probably not even necessary. My voice sounded so husky right now, and it hurt a little to speak. Asher faltered a little at my words, I assume, as he considered my words, before he grinned at me. The most heart-melting grin I think I have ever seen. Before he shrugged at me.

“Ah well, I fancied making a fuss.” He winked, and I found myself giggling, despite the fact it hurt. “Admittedly, I may have forgotten at that moment to mindlink, I was just so pleased to see you awake! My first thought was you.”

Oh my god, he was killing me...

‘Find me a sick bucket.’ Akira teased, evidently still choosing to pay attention despite the fact she was meant to be resting.

“Yeah?”

“Hell yeah! I have been so worried, Bailey. You have given us such a scare.” Asher whispered, and I could see the anxiousness upon his face. I hate the thought of him being worried about me. Though my mind flickers back to the conversation I thought I recalled. Had that been what it was? Him talking to me when he was worrying? Telling me how he felt?

I found myself looking up at him, my gaze penetrating, so unsure if what I was guessing could be right, as I tentatively said “Hmm, I heard.”

Asher’s eyes widened in shock, before they moved across my face like he was trying to read my feelings. Was he nervous? “You heard?” he mumbled, and I nodded slowly.

“I think so. I have snippets of things in my mind. Images... conversations... that don’t make sense, but you saying that makes me wonder if the conversations were from while I was unconscious.” I whispered, as it felt a little easier on my voice.

Asher nodded. "That would make sense. The nurse did say you may be able to hear us. What did you hear?" he asked, and from the expression upon his face he looked a little nervous.

"Was I not supposed to hear?" I asked, and his gaze met mine, and the way he was looking at me gave me butterflies.

"If it was the things I am thinking, then all of that has been held inside for too long... I wish I had told you before..." he began just as the door opened, and the doctor walked in, causing Asher to roll his eyes. "Wish I hadn't called him now." He said with an ironic smile. I knew exactly what he meant. There was nothing like bad timing...

"Ah, Miss West, it is so good to see you awake!" the doctor greeted me, as he made his way to my bed. "Am I okay to give you a quick check over?"

I nodded. Unsure why I would have refused him. They had so evidently been treating me so far, and I wanted to feel better, and for that I needed their help. I lay as he did what he needed to do, wincing each time he caught areas on my body which were badly bruised or had wounds still upon them that Akira had yet to heal. Making notes as he went along, he kept muttering to himself, making me worry something was wrong, and I kept glancing across at Asher, who looked so anxious right now.

The doctor did a fairly detailed examination before he smiled at me before doing the same to Asher. "Well, Miss West, I am glad to say you are looking like you will make a full recovery. The injuries do look to be healing on their own now after the treatment we gave, along with the assistance of your wolf, of course. You certainly gave us a scare, poor Beta Asher hasn't left your side. Not even slept for a moment." My heart tightened at his words. I don't know why I was surprised at that. But the thought of Asher not leaving me and not even sleeping made me feel guilty.

He narrowed his eyes at the doctor, before I saw his face turn into a frown, and he was suddenly getting up and walking out of my room. Not a word, just storming from my room, leaving me suddenly alone and wondering what was going on.

Options

I hadn't wanted to break the news to Asher. He had desperately clung to the hope we would have answers from these rogues. I knew he had, but I knew he would need to know. He wanted the blame to fall at the feet of the upcoming Alpha of Lotus Shadow Pack. Of course he did. He was the one who had made Bailey's life a living hell for too long. Far too long. He wanted to see him pay, and who can blame him?

But, that simply was not to be. Not unless the other rogue they spoke of was linked to him, but nothing so far implied that. It was merely a theory held by Asher and perhaps Marc. I needed this to remain professional for the sake of our pack's reputation. But consider the feelings of my friend. Although, I think with the information Asher had

provided me, there was still enough information to go to the Werewolf Council to report this sick individual before he harmed anyone else.

But, right now, Asher's concern was Bailey, and her getting better. I could hear in his tone, even through the link, how disappointed he was at the news I had given him. I would call in and see him when I had done what I needed at the gates. I was still clueless as to why somebody was calling at the pack gates this late. I wanted to return home and snuggle up with my mate. Instead, I was driving through the pack to meet with this mystery guest.

I pulled up a little distance from the gate, stepping from my car, to hear angry shouting, causing me to rush to the small building we have where the guards tend to sit, the shouting getting louder as I got closer.

"Just fucking let me in!" a voice roared, causing my wolf to push forward. This sounded like somebody ready to try to infiltrate my pack. But why would they attempt to speak with me? Or try to come through the main gate? None of that made sense.

I turned the corner of the building to find our guard pinned up against the wall by a young looking guy, maybe in his early twenties. Glaring at him aggressively as he had him by the neck. Now I had my answer as to why the guard didn't respond to my mindlink, if he was having to deal with this stupid fucker.

"What the fuck do you think you are doing?" I roared, pushing my Alpha aura forward slightly, and the young guy, released the guard who slowly slid down the wall gasping for breath, looked at me with a sneer. Like my aura did not bother him in the slightest.

"Took your fucking time didn't you?" he snapped, and I raised my brows at him, while Thor was pushing further forward.

'Let me at him. He is asking to be fucking eaten.' He snarled, and as tempting as that sounded, right about now I needed to find out who he was and what he wanted.

"Excuse me? You are turning up at my pack gates in the middle of the night unannounced, demanding to see me, and then assaulting one of my guards, and then have the nerve to criticize me?" I snarled. "What do you want?"

"I am here for my mate." he said bluntly, like it was the most obvious explanation in the world.

"Your mate?" I questioned, his attitude was already getting my back up. He was acting like he was something more than he was. Like he felt the world owed him a living. I hated fuckers like this.

"Yes. She is in your hospital, I believe." He said, his dark eyes glaring into mine, and at that moment I realized exactly who this was. I should have realized sooner, but I think

the lack of sleep was affecting my mind. This was him. The upcoming Alpha. Bailey's former fated. He had been brazen enough to come here for her? What a fucking fool. Did he think we would just hand her over to him?

I felt anger bubbling through me. This man was a fucking monster. He planned to take her back with him and likely forcibly mark her. No. I could not... would not allow that to happen.

'Time to take him down.' I told Thor, knowing he would be more than ready to show this young wannabe Alpha who was boss. It was about time he saw what a real Alpha was capable of; because it was obvious he had no clue what a real Alpha should be.

'I think we let him in.' Thor told me matter-of-factly, shocking me to the core.

'Say what now?' I demanded. 'He will forcibly mark her. Not to mention taking her away. Breaking Asher's heart. No T. No.'

'Let him in. Inform his pack. And the Council. He will be held here until they come for him. He will not be taking the girl. But if he is here, we know where he is.' he told me, and I see that my wolf may have a point. It is good to have that second view sometimes.

'Good thinking.'

'But, you also need to see what Bailey wants.' He added, and my anger built again. He had to be kidding me! She surely would not go back with him?!

"You even there?" the fool in front of me asked, stepping closer to me, obviously having been waiting for an answer while I communicated with my wolf.

"Yes. I am here." I scowled. "Were you not taught to respect others when you were growing up?"

"Why would I need to when I am of Alpha blood and the Alpha heir?" he laughed.

I rolled my eyes at his response. Seems everything I had heard of him was true. "Being of Alpha blood and being the heir means nothing. Respect is earned. And from what I have already seen of you, if you go around acting like that, you will have nobody respecting you. Your pack would fall easily if you were to become Alpha. Your father would be a fool to let you take his title. I hope for his sake he has another son." I said coldly, knowing that would be a hit to the stupid little shit's ego.

He growled deeply as he moved forward again, hair beginning to protrude from his arms, telling me he was close to shifting.

"Oh, do you really want to do that here?" I questioned, pushing the full force of my aura forward, making him step back slightly. I think he saw I was stronger than him now.

"Your pack would not question why you were killed when you went to attack an Alpha in his own pack, little boy."

His eyes flickered darker, likely his wolf, but he remained where he was, simply glowering at me, as I continued. "So, if you want to go and see this so-called mate of yours, I suggest you wind your neck in. Fucking behave yourself. You are in my pack now and I will not tolerate any shit. Nor will I think twice about killing you. I doubt you'd be missed. I know who you are saying is your mate. She was brought in earlier. Attacked by rogues. She also works for us. Rejected by you, was she not?" I turned to him as I motioned for him to follow me to my car. I wanted him to know I knew of the circumstances surrounding their matebond.

He was still scowling as he shook his head. "She is my fated mate."

"Not when you rejected her." I climbed into the car and he followed suit.

"I changed my mind. Besides, even if I hadn't, I need her close. Your fated mate brings you strength. To be the strongest Alpha I can be, I need her there. To give me the strength and power that will produce the most powerful Alpha my pack has ever had." He said as I drove away. Surprised he was admitting all this to me, I was wondering if he hoped it meant I would take pity on him. Yet, his words echoed around my mind, not making any sense, causing me to laugh.

"She will bring you strength?" I asked, wondering if this fool had listened to any of the lessons you were given as a young wolf. He was evidently clueless. He needed sense not strength.

"Yes. Especially as an Alpha. Even when I didn't want her as a mate, I needed her in the pack. Why do you think I didn't want her working away? She was always going to stay in our pack. I planned to bring her home the moment I became Alpha. The strength her presence gives me because of the matebond, with us being fated mates would be what made me the strongest Alpha our pack had seen. Bailey is strong. She is of Beta blood. Plus, she is intelligent. So she was always going to be giving me extra strength. Imagine the two of us together?"

Despite the fact I was driving, I looked across at the fool incredulously. He sounded like he believed every word he just said. I don't think he was joking. I shook my head in disbelief. "Erm, did you do well in school?" I asked him, and instantly his face twisted into a frown.

"What has that got to do with anything?" He shrugged. "I did okay, got others to help me."

I held back a smirk. Explained a lot. "Well, I hate to disappoint you, perhaps you should have paid more attention, because you seemed to have missed quite a lot. Bailey won't

give you any strength. When you rejected her, you broke that fated bond. You broke the mate bond, do you not realize that?!"

"What do you mean?" he snarled.

"Meaning there was nothing there anymore. Her presence would most certainly not bring you strength. And making her your mate now would be no different to being chosen mates. Plus, she would have to want it, otherwise it would be considered forcibly marking her. I think you have been seriously misunderstanding things. Bailey was never going to make you a stronger Alpha." I enjoyed every word I told him, especially as his face fell.

"That can't be right." He growled angrily.

"Well it is." I told him with glee, as we pulled up outside the hospital. But he wasted no time as he was quickly storming out of the car in a desperate bid to go and find Bailey. I quickly needed to mindlink Asher to let him know so that he didn't just storm into her room...

Options

Bailey was awake. The most wonderful feeling in the world; and I was hoping things were looking up for us. I had been about to tell her how I felt for her... well, more confirm what I think she had likely heard me declare while she was unconscious... until the bloody doctor chose that moment to walk in. Jeez, nothing like great timing. We sure didn't seem to have much luck when it came to time alone...

And then the doctor decided to announce to Bailey I had done nothing but sit by her side like a lost puppy. Unable to eat. Unable to sleep. I am sure Bailey did not need to know that, and the doctor definitely did not need to be sharing that. It truly did not paint me in the best of lights, I am sure. I was just about to defend myself when a mindlink suddenly came through. One I had not been expecting, and one I most certainly did not want to hear.

'Ash. He is here. He is on a mission to get her back.' Caleb's voice was blunt and to the point, even in the link, but my blood ran cold as his words hit me. Miles had chosen to come to our pack in a bid to claim Bailey? I felt a frown take over my face as Caleb continued. 'Got things under control right now. He might act like a big hard man, and a bully, but he is dumb as fuck. He was the one causing shit at the gate. Though he is now rushing through the hospital. Be alert.'

My face twisted in anger as I quickly stormed from the room, not even explaining where I was going. I didn't have the time right now. No. I needed to go. I needed to go and stop this sick bastard before he got anywhere near Bailey. How fucking dare he turn up here thinking he can demand her back?! After everything he had done, too...

‘Marc, get your ass to the hospital.’ I mindlinked him quickly as I rushed down the corridor. ‘That sick fucker has arrived in hope to take Bailey home with him.’

I knew their home wasn’t too far away, and also I knew we could rely on my former brother-in-law for protecting Bailey. He had done all he could so far to protect her. He would come without a doubt...

‘Hmm?’ he responded, albeit sleepily. ‘No? He turned up here? On my way.’

Fury rushed through me, while Zion was raging in my mind, which was never a good thing... What was Caleb thinking in allowing him into our pack, let alone bringing him to the hospital? He knew what that little shit was capable of. He knew that that sick fucker’s ultimate mission was to take Bailey home with him; and I doubted he would stop until he had succeeded.

‘Where is he Cal?’ I asked, not seeing a sight of either of them, but a deep-seated hope that Caleb would be on his tail if he had rushed into the hospital. We did not need some jumped-up upcoming Alpha smashing our hospital up, putting out pack members at risk. I didn’t want to believe that Caleb would have just allowed some self-entitled little bastard of an upcoming Alpha to storm our pack and crash our hospital. This little shit would be taken down, I had no doubt about that!

‘Coming through the hospital now. You coming to meet us?’ he asked.

‘Too fucking right I am. Not a chance he is getting near Bailey.’ I snapped.

‘Where the hell else did he think we was going to be? With our feet up having a coffee?!’ Zion snarled angrily in my mind, making me smirk. He was more than ready to go... ready to defend his girl. And so was I.

‘I am allowing him the chance to talk to her before I detain him. Not that he knows that part yet. She needs to hear him out. Let him see this thing with them is done. Let him see she is moving on. Or, if she chooses, she returns with him.’ Caleb said, and I felt anger becoming so out of control as Zion growled inside of my head. This was one of the few times he felt ready to turn upon his own Alpha. He was taking the man who had made her life a living hell for so long right to her door...

‘Do not even go there.’ I snarled, turning the corner, to walk straight into an angry-looking young guy. Currently, dressed quite formally, and Caleb, not far behind. I gave him a dark glare, as I shoved the little fuckwit in front of me, looking down at him angrily as I did. He looked like an arrogant little ass. Zion growled once more...

“So, thought you would turn up and claim what you think is yours, did you?” I growled. “Only she isn’t yours anymore, is she? Hasn’t been since the moment you decided she wasn’t good enough for you. Not that you ever deserved her in the first place.”

He stumbled back a little, clearly not expecting me to touch him, but soon steadying himself, as his eyes darkened before settling upon me. "And you are?" he sneered. This little shit so clearly thought he was something, I was more than ready to show him he wasn't...

"This is my Beta. And, you want to remember what I warned you outside, Miles. Or you will be detained, or killed. Remember that. This is my pack." Caleb growled, his Alpha aura pushed right out at full force, making me flinch in pain. He rarely used his full aura, and he shouldn't be doing that in the hospital either, but I assumed it was a sign of his power to this little knob. Putting him in his place. "You are here to say what you need to say to Bailey, allow her to make the decision she needs to make."

Miles turned to look at Caleb, still looking far too confident for my liking considering Caleb's aura and the fact he was on another Alpha's pack. "Well, perhaps you want to tell your little sidekick to wind his neck in. I am here for Bailey. Nothing more. And as for Bailey making the decision she needs to make, she knows what is best for her pack."

Zion pushed forward, so far forward and so fast he took me by surprise, as a deep growl emanated from my lips, as hair began to protrude from my arms. I battled with my wolf knowing that shifting in here would not be ideal... Zion could be brutal if he lost control, and while I had no issue with him losing control with this dick, losing control in the hospital was not the place for that to happen.

'Calm down.' Caleb ordered me through the mindlink. 'I know you are annoyed, and so am I. But this cannot get out of hand, and right now he is behaving. First let's put this thing with Bailey to bed. I have allowed him here so we can detain him until the council get here. So we know where he is. Logic, Ash. Logic. Do not make me use my aura on you too.'

I tried to calm my breathing. So angry at my friend and Alpha for thinking it was acceptable to let this man into our pack when he knew the threat he posed to the woman I loved. Yet he seemed to have some sort of plan. Did it make sense to me? Not right now, but Caleb's plans rarely failed...

The anger inside was harder to control when it came to the little fuckwit by Caleb's side, a small smirk upon his face, looking so smug and cocky. I was so desperate to want to rip this young upcoming alpha's head from his shoulders. He seemed to see no fault in anything he had done, recently nor in the past. He couldn't do, or else he would not have turned up here now for Bailey. But he would not be leaving here with her, of that I was sure. He would have to kill me to get to Bailey, that much I did know.

Options

I lay in my bed, the doctor still talking to me, explaining the treatment they had given, but I was barely listening. My mind was on the fact Asher had stormed so angrily from my room. My eyes found themselves frequently drifting to the door in the hopes he

would return. I couldn't help but wonder if he had been about to actually tell me he loved me before the doctor disturbed us. Not that it matters right now.

Right now it seemed he didn't want to be here. I felt numb. I don't know if that was from my injuries or from the pain I felt from what had just happened with Asher, and without the ability to mindlink him, I had no way of reaching out to him to check he was okay. "Are you okay, dear?" the doctor asked, interrupting my thoughts. "I am sure the Beta is fine. He is known for being a little tempestuous. Has been since he lost his mate. They do say losing a mate can destroy a man, and I think with Beta Asher it truly did. But, I wouldn't worry. Please visit [J o b n B . c o m](http://JohnB.com) and search the book title to read the entire book for free. He soon gets over things, and is back to his ever-charming self." The doctor was smiling at me. Yeah, that sounded like the Asher I had first met. But not the Asher I had come to know. The Asher that had been opening up to me... "I will be fine. I think I just want to rest." I lied. I just wanted him to go. Leave me alone. The doctor nodded in agreement, when suddenly we heard a commotion out in the hallways. The doctor's eyes narrowed in confusion, before his eyes met mine. He quickly stood and walked toward the door. "Let me go and see what is happening. There should not be that amount of noise in the hospital."

"You are not fit to see her!" I heard Asher's voice roar, and I had a sinking feeling I knew exactly who he was yelling at. I felt sick at the prospect...

But, the doctor, who had just reached the door of my room, turned to look at me with an awkward smile. "Well, I think we may have found the Beta." And with that he excused himself. Yes. We had found Asher. He had gone to deal with the worst possible scenario. Miles had arrived to take me home, and I could only imagine the arguments happening right now...

"I am her mate. Her upcoming Alpha. Who is more fit to see her if not me?" the voice of the one person I did not want to see again, who was loud and confident in standing up to Asher. This was definitely not going to end well.

"You are not her mate, you fucking fool. You rejected her. That means you are done. She isn't yours. You don't own her." Asher's voice was the angriest I had ever heard, and loud too, despite the fact I was listening through the walls of my room. I hated that the whole of the hospital were likely listening to their conversation right now. We'd be the pack's source of gossip for the next few weeks, no doubt...

"Well, she sure as hell is not yours, or this pack's." Miles growled.

"Enough!" I heard a third voice, one I am almost certain was Alpha Caleb. He sounded pissed off. Extremely pissed off. "This back and forth is getting you nowhere. Miles, you came here for a reason, so get it over with." He snapped.

My heart sank as I realized what his words meant. Alpha Caleb had allowed Miles into the pack. He had let him in to take me home. I had hoped he would offer me protection, but it seemed he was standing by the pack protocols here...

Suddenly, the door swung open, and Asher rushed in, his eyes darting to meet mine. "Are you okay?" he asked, and I nodded slowly, as he joined me, at the edge of the bed, taking my hand in his. "I'm sorry for rushing out. I heard he had arrived" he mumbled.

I smiled. I realized that now. He stroked his thumb over my palm softly, his eyes not leaving mine, before Miles pushed past Alpha Caleb to come storming into the room. "Oh, this looks fucking cozy." He snarled. "So this was why you were all up in my face, was it?"

I watched as Asher took a deep breath, his eye shifting between his and Zion's. I knew he was doing all he could right now to halt a full shift, as his grip tightened on my hand, as Miles continued. "You think she would lower herself to you when she had been fated to an Alpha?" he jeered, sounding so cocky.

"You are not an Alpha yet, Miles." I pointed out, and his eye rested on me. "Asher is by far more of a man than you could ever be."

Asher's eyes rested upon mine as he smiled, while a deep growl slipped from Miles, causing Caleb to fly across the room, pinning him to the wall. The fact he was able to do it so easily told me Miles was not expecting it. I had seen Miles fight, he was a more than capable fighter... "You were fucking warned to watch yourself you little shit. You are here to say what you need to say. Keep this up, and I will think nothing of letting my wolf out to play. He will quite enjoy playing with you, I am sure. Snapping you in half." Caleb took me by surprise at his aggressiveness. That was not the man I was used to. But that was the voice of an Alpha in charge.

Miles did not break eye contact with Caleb, telling me he did not feel particularly intimidated by him. But, the good thing was, he did not push any further.

The door quickly opened, disturbing the tense atmosphere that was building, and in rushed Marc with Morgan following behind. I could only assume Asher or Caleb had contacted them. But, I saw Miles smirk as his eyes rested upon Morgan. "Aww, did you hear I was here, and you rushed over to see if I had come to take you home too, Morgan?" he said spitefully, and a deep growl came from Marc, but Morgan pulled him back stepping forward as Miles continued. "Realized your fated mate can't live up to what you so desperately wanted before?"

"Take me home? I don't think so." Morgan said coldly, but confidently. "What I so desperately wanted? Get over yourself. I wanted you for all of about five minutes, Miles. It did not take me long to see sense. I would not touch you now. I might fucking catch something, because fuck knows where you have been. I know what a real man is now, and it most definitely is not you. Seems Bailey does too." And Morgan glanced toward

where Asher was sitting, with a smirk. Wow. She was definitely more confident. I had never seen her stand up to Miles that way, and going off the look of shock upon his face, neither had he. I have to say I loved this side of my sister – she kicked ass!

Marc stood behind his mate, a big smile upon his face, looking prouder than ever. But Miles looked dismissively toward Morgan, like her words meant nothing, before he turned to me. “Seems to be an awful lot of people rushing to protect you, Bailey. You been telling lies again?” he said, raising his brows accusingly. “I suppose all of you don’t know how good Bailey is at telling lies, do you? Making people believe things that didn’t really happen. Like, me rejecting her, when in truth it was her rejecting me?” he looked at me with a smirk, but what bothered me more was the eyes of Caleb, Marc and Asher all fell on me with confusion and doubt. Surely they were not believing his fucking words after everything they knew?!

Options

I had to give it to Morgan. She stood up to Miles. Not that he seemed to care in the slightest. And now, as he turned to Bailey, we just need her to do the same. . “Seems to be an awful lot of people rushing to protect you Bailey. You been telling lies again?” he said, and his voice held an accusing tone, I can’t say I cared for. “I suppose all of you don’t know how good Bailey is at telling lies, do you? Making people believe things that didn’t really happen. Like, me rejecting her, when in truth it was her rejecting me?” he looked at her with a smirk, one that made me want to knock his head clean right off his shoulders. Did he truly think we would believe that?

I turned to look at Bailey, knowing she must be feeling a pit of emotion right now. She had to want him gone. But as I turned to look at Miles I could see Caleb and Marc were watching him. I’d like to say through narrowed eyes, but they both look confused. They both knew the situation, they should not have been taken in by this dick’s words...

“Oh, so she is a liar is she?” Caleb suddenly spoke up, before I even had an opportunity to defend Bailey. Ultimately, glad my friend had seen through the lies. “Yet out there you admitted to me, you regretted rejecting Bailey. So, you may want to consider getting your stories straight.” He looked at Miles with a small smirk. “Exactly which one of you is it that is lying?”

I held back the smile that was forming. Miles had to know he had nowhere to go with this if that is what had just happened. Though we knew the information we had, we knew his words were all lies. All produced to make him look better, or to get him out of a tight situation. But what bothered me more, was the fact this sick bastard now said he regretted his decision to reject Bailey. That meant he wanted her back, not just in his pack, but as his mate. This could not happen. And it was not going to end well.

“Maybe I was trying to garner pity, so you would allow me into the pack? I needed to speak with Bailey.” Miles said, and Caleb looked at me incredulously. Was this guy for real? His stories seemed to be swirling out of control.

Caleb chuckled. "Your stories seem so far-fetched, I think even you are forgetting the tales you have told. I know I struggle to keep up with them. Perhaps it is time you gave up trying to be an Alpha and considered a career as an author, because you are damn good at making up tales. Maybe it is time you gave up, Miles. We are not your pack, we are not your family, and we won't be easily swayed by you. Nor are we going to be idol-worshiping you, meaning you easily get away with things like you have been doing in your pack. Here you are held accountable for your actions."

Miles turned to look at Caleb, like his words meant nothing. "I think you forget, Alpha." The way he said Alpha was filled with venom. He did not like being put in his place, whether it was by an Alpha more powerful than him or not. "These girls are my pack. Always mine."

The way in which his last two words were said was intentional. Possessive... causing Zion to push forward aggressively, growling, just as Marc was growling deeply behind me. Neither one liked this man staking claim on our women. "You might want to reconsider that, because Morgan is my mate, wearing my mark, and therefore became a part of my pack." Marc snarled angrily. He was ready to attack...

"Oh, dude, you are welcome to that one." Miles laughed.

I was heavily aware of Bailey's hand upon my arm. It had moved there the moment I had growled, in what I believed was an attempt to calm me. Her big brown eyes rested upon me, looking at me pleadingly. She did not want me to respond. But I could not leave it like this.

"Bailey is not yours. She is entitled to a life. To make choices of her own." I said, trying desperately to remain calm despite the fact I was battling Zion terribly within my mind. He wanted to be let out to defend Bailey. He wanted to take this man down. Destroy him...

"Awww, and you think she would pick you, do you, poor little Beta boy?" Miles jeered, an evil grin upon his face.

"Miles!" Bailey snapped, while Zion pushed further forward and hair began to appear thicker upon my arms...

Miles laughed. "Oh, did you not like that Beta boy? Realizing she would not want you when it came down to it? See, we were always brought up to be loyal to our pack. Bailey has never failed in that. See, she is one of those people who goes above and beyond to do the right thing. Trying to please everyone. Always doing what was expected of her to remain loyal to the pack, so what makes you think she would pick you now over her upcoming Alpha? Over her pack?"

I rolled my eyes. His description of Bailey was too close to being accurate, it worried me. Surely she would not be foolish enough to lose her opportunity of freedom because

of her ties to her pack? I felt sick at the thought... And this fuckwit was getting on my last nerve now, and as I went to stand to deal with him, Caleb mindlinked. 'Sit. I am dealing with this.' He ordered.

I had no option but to follow his order, and did just that, placing myself next to Bailey on the bed, who looked at me with confusion.

"Right, Miles, you came to speak with Bailey, did you not? Yet all you have done so far is insult my pack members." Caleb said angrily. He sounded like he had had enough now too, not that I can blame him, he likely wanted to get home to Eden by now.

"Well, perhaps if they would all fuck off, and let me speak to her instead of acting like a personal guard, I would have been able to talk to her." He snarled.

"We are not leaving her." I growled back. "And surely Bailey should have a choice as to whether she even wants to speak with him. Considering everything? She likely wouldn't want him anywhere near her, and could you blame her?"

Miles rested his angry gaze upon me, his eyes flashing between his own and his wolf's, telling me he was as equally desperate to fly at me, as I was at him. "She will listen to me. She is from my pack. I am her upcoming Alpha. This is pack business." Miles said bluntly.

"Fucking pack business?!" I snapped. "No, it is you here in a desperate bid to get her back because you fucked up. Why the hell would she want to listen to you?"

"It is our business. Fuck all to do with you." Miles snarled. "I have things I need to say to her. Things she needs to listen to."

"If it is to do with Bailey, it is to do with me..." I began.

"Stop!" Bailey interrupted, and at that moment my heart faltered. She wanted to listen to what this dick had to say?! "I want to hear what he has to say."

Options

This fucking Beta seemed to have a death wish. But he seemed to also want Bailey. And that was simply not going to work. I did not like the way she was looking at him. I had seen that look from her before, though maybe not quite as intense. And that was to the warrior boy. She had more than a thing for this one... she had best not have given herself to this one. She was mine. Fated to me. My mate. I felt fury rippling through me, as her new "friend" glared at me from her side on the bed.

"Fucking pack business?!" he snapped at me angrily. "No, it is you here in a desperate bid to get her back because you fucked up. Why the hell would she want to listen to you?"

He sure had a fucking nerve. I will give him that much! He knew I was an upcoming Alpha yet spoke down to me like I was a nobody. I would destroy him if given a chance. If it wasn't for his beefed-up Alpha buddy, I would have kicked his ass by now. I needed the opportunity to speak to Bailey, but that would only come if I behaved. I knew that. This Alpha Caleb had made that more than clear...

"It is our business. Fuck all to do with you." I snarled. "I have things I need to say to her. Things she needs to listen to."

"If it is to do with Bailey, it is to do with me..." The Beta began.

"Stop!" Bailey interrupted, and my eyes darted towards her. A smile formed on my face. I think my plan was working... "I want to hear what he has to say." she added, and at that moment, my heart soared. She was willing to hear me out. I knew mentioning our expected loyalty to pack would make this choice hard for her. It was something all of our pack members are taught, but something her family, especially her father, are extremely dedicated to. It was what made Bailey keep coming back to pack when so many others would have run by now, I was sure of it...

I saw the sheer disappointment upon the Beta boy's face. He looked desolate. Absolutely heartbroken. Haha. I loved it. Every fucking moment. He hoped she would not want to hear me out. He hoped she would tell me to leave and never come back. But the thing was, there would always be a connection between Bailey and me. We had grown up together. Our families were like family. Despite the animosity between us, we had been close until she started doing better than me in school. Then she was simply nothing more than an irritation.

I hated that she could so easily excel while I struggled. And when I turned to her for help she refused, saying I would never learn if I didn't do the work myself. Everyone else in the pack would bend over backward for me, do whatever I asked of them, but this girl, she never did. And I hated her for it. She never saw me as special because of my title. Maybe that was because we were fated and somewhere deep down she knew it, but her lack of respect infuriated me further.

"Well, she has said she will hear you out, Miles. Yet, you stand there not saying a word. Get on with it. It is late, and Bailey needs to rest." Alpha Caleb said icily, interrupting my thoughts, and I looked at him as coldly as he had spoken to me. I walked to the edge of her bed, where she looked up at me tentatively. She did not look quite as stunning as she had when she walked into our pack this morning. But despite the injuries, and the wildness of her hair, I could still see the natural beauty that lay beneath. Maybe it had been there all along, and I had just allowed my resentment towards her to make me miss it...

"Bailey, I hope you will give me a chance to explain myself properly." I said quietly, and she nodded.

“Well, that is what you came for, isn’t it?” she said, and I had to smile. She may be injured, but her attitude was evidently not hurt. “And I think I am due an explanation, if not an apology.”

“I believe so.” I nodded, hating all the other curious eyes being upon us, but knowing I likely had no other choice right now. “Look, I owe you an apology, I know that. Hell, I owe you many apologies. I never did treat you the way you deserved. Not since we were young, anyway. You can’t deny we had fun growing up?” I looked at her, and she was looking down toward her hands, fiddling with her fingers, which made me wonder if she did not want to think of the memories of us all growing up together. They were good memories, she had to know that.

I sighed. If I could not use good memories to my benefit, then I have to work harder... “I have never been the smartest Bai, you know that. That was why we ended up falling out. I was childish. I resented you. And, I held that against you for longer than I ever should have. I turned to you for help and you walked away. From then on, I was set on revenge, never realizing that you would be the one the moon goddess selected for me. Not that it matters, that was never the way to treat someone...” I looked at her again, and her big brown eyes were looking at me, but she shook her head. I don’t think she ever knew my reasons. Well, she did now.

“That was why you treated Bai the way you did?” Morgan asked in shock.

“I am not going into it. But yes.” I admitted, and I saw many disgusted faces. I knew I was in the wrong, I did not need telling. I just needed to convince this girl I could change. “Bai, I realize now I made a mistake. I should never have rejected you. The moon goddess decided you were the one that was meant for me, and I think she was right. I have thought back so many times to how close we used to be growing up, before all this mess...” I faltered, and I could see her face was emotionless, as she looked up at the Beta.

“Why do you look at him?” I asked. “Do you need his input? This is between you and me, is it not? Can they not leave?”

Alpha Caleb shook his head. “We stay. Ensure her safety.”

I rolled my eyes again. I would not hurt her. Not now. I wanted to make her mine. The way fate had intended all along. “Is a guy not able to make mistakes? So long as he can admit them?” I urged her, and her eyes darted to mine. I was shocked at the anger I found there. This was not the mild and weak girl I remembered. She had changed recently. She was certainly more confident. Bolder. Braver...

“Make mistakes?” she questioned. “Miles, you almost killed Harley just so he could not be with me. He left the pack to escape you. Yes, you may have had your reasons within your mind for being a dick with me, all because I refused to help you with your studies, or should I say do all your studies for school to help you pass, but you made my life hell

for far too long, and dragged others into that too. They aren't mistakes, they were choices. Mistakes are one-time things, but these things were happening time and time again."

"And I am sorry for them, so, so sorry for them. Do you not see that? I requested an annulment from Kaia today because I realized it should have been you. I should never have given up on you. I have been a fool, Bai. Please, give me a chance to prove I can change?" I lied. She did not need to know the circumstances of the situation with Kaia.

"You will never change. You went for treatment and came back worse." She said coldly. "Whatever went on with Kaia is nothing to do with me. We are not connected anymore."

My heart ached at the thought. I needed her to want me. Every other she-wolf I tried with wanted me, but the one I needed seemed to resist me so easily... "Bai, come on, darling. You know we could be good together. Luna and Alpha? You and me? Yes, I messed up, and I will spend forever making that up to you." I put on my best charm, my voice a deep purr. "Think of the pack. What do you say?" I added, hoping that would sway her.

But instead her eyes fell on the Beta, tears beginning to build. And he suddenly enveloped her in an embrace. Angry eyes were upon me from all directions as I began to realize my plan was failing miserably. I was about to speak again, try desperately to win Bailey over, when I saw her whispering to the Beta. And then I saw a smile spread upon his face as he looked at her adoringly as she offered him her neck. Before I could move, his canines had elongated and his teeth sunk into her neck... he had marked her!

My heart tightened in pain... shock... fury... he had marked her. This man had marked the she-wolf that the moon goddess had chosen for me. The one I had been fool enough to let go... And the smile upon her face as she looked up at him, told me it was everything she wanted. I had already lost her.

"Well, I think you have your answer, don't you?" Alpha Caleb said with a smile, as I felt all hope falling from me... leaving nothing but emptiness...

Options

Being ordered to sit and allow this dick to have his say had been bad enough. But what broke me was the fact that Bailey had said she wanted to hear him out. She wanted to hear what he had to say. Zion whimpered the moment those words had left her mouth. Terror had filled every part of me. He had played on her loyalty to her pack. Even I could see that. Manipulating her emotions, I just hope she could see it too.

Bailey was loyal to a fault. And I would never criticize her for that, but it worried me that it meant she would find herself in a position she did not want to be. That it could mean we find one another apart...

But, her hand remained upon my arm as Miles tried his hardest to convince her, and the expression upon her face barely changed. She looked down at her hands fiddling with her fingers. I barely took my eyes from her, and I think I saw her look at Miles a matter of a few times, and there was no fear there. She was not scared of him, and she was standing up to him.

His excuses were the most pathetic I think I have ever heard. It seemed to come across to me, that he had chosen to make her life a living hell, and turn the kids of their ages against her all because she refused to do his school work for him? All because she was more intelligent than him? Please visit J o b n I b . c o m and search the book title to read the entire book for free. He needed her help to pass his school grades and she refused him. He was so used to everyone doing things for him, trying hard to please him, that when someone suddenly didn't, he hadn't known how to handle it; and he took revenge.

Even Morgan was shocked, and she will have been one of his minions, one of the ones following him and doing as he did in a desperate attempt to fit in with him...

I heard him apologize, and I saw no reaction from Bailey. Her eyes were cold. Emotionless. I wished we could mindlink right now so I could determine if she was okay. I needed to know what she was thinking. Her emotions and her face were so hard to read at the best of times, but in this moment they were near on impossible, and it seemed Miles was struggling too, as he almost begged her to forgive his mistakes. But Bailey fought back. She gave him shit, and I sat there a hidden smile in proudness for her. She was stronger than she ever gave herself credit for.

Seeing the pain upon the upcoming Alpha's face as Bailey told him they shared no connection shocked me. He looked genuinely hurt, and I could not help but wonder if he held genuine feelings for her, or if it was the fact he knew she would be his last hope at a title that he so desperately craved. But he blurted out some shit about proving himself to her. His voice had changed, a bid to charm her, it seemed, while mentioning the pack once more to manipulate her. And at the mention of the pack I saw tears in Bailey's eyes.

He was a dick. Bailey's eyes fell on me, full of questions. Full of doubt. I knew she was scared right now, even I could sense that. I hated seeing her like that, and all I wanted was to reassure her. I wanted to be there for her. I could not care that this fuckwit was here bringing what appeared to be his pathetic attempt at charming her, I needed to hold her... be there for her...

I leaned forward, wrapping my arms around her, needing to feel her in my arms. I so desperately did not want to lose her, but I had to let her make her choice. If her loyalty to her family and her pack was what had to come first, I had to respect that. I felt tears filling my eyes, as Zion whimpered, obviously picking up on my emotions right now. I felt Bailey tilt her head slightly, so her mouth was tickling my ear.

“Ash?” she whispered, taking me by surprise as the warmth of her breath sent a shiver down my spine. I nodded gently in response. “I know this is out of the blue, and so not how we would have wanted this, but if we do this now, he can do no more. I will be yours. I will belong to you. To your pack...” her voice faltered a little and my heart raced as I realized where I thought this was going, as she continued. “Will you mark me?” she added, and I could not hold back the smile spreading across my face as I pulled back slightly to look down at her. Damn, I loved this girl... and I did not need asking twice!

Zion wasted no time in helping out, in pushing forward to allow my canines to elongate, as Bailey smiled up at me, nothing more but happiness in her eyes as she offered me her neck. No, this may not be the way we would like to do this, in a hectic room, but we could always mark one another again. This made her mine. It meant she was safe...

I leaned a little further forward as I sunk my teeth into the soft skin of Bailey's neck. In the spot where her collar bone met her neck, and I felt the shudder rush through my body as the matebond snapped into place... and a sense of contentment flooded me too. Tears filled my eyes as I realized, I felt whole again... I had been withdrawn and alone for so long. Broken and isolated after losing Isla... and Bailey had fixed me.

The metallic taste of her blood filled my mouth, before I ran my tongue along her mark to help it heal and clean up any blood. A rush of pleasure and happiness flooded through me in that moment as I pulled away to look at Bailey, who was looking up at me with wide eyes. That sense of completeness so strong. Who knew Bailey could be the one to bring that for me?

‘Hey you.’ she mindlinked, with a little wink, and I smiled.

“Well, I think you have your answer, don't you?” I heard Caleb say to Miles, and I had to hold back the threatening laugh. My friend was definitely being to the point today...

“No. Bailey, you are making a mistake. You know that, right?” Miles tried, and Bailey shook her head.

“No. You were the mistake, Miles. A mistake from the moon goddess when she fated me to you. Because that never made sense. I would never come back to you. Or that pack.” Bailey said confidently, as she held onto my hand tightly. “This is where I belong.”

And hearing her declare that to him, to the world sounded so good. I don't think I had heard better words...

Miles shook his head, somewhere between disgust and shock. “Clearly you made your choice. I do not want another man's sloppy seconds. I will be leaving now.” He began to turn away, though I swear there was a hint of pain in his voice, perhaps even a tear in his eyes.

"I am afraid that isn't happening." Caleb said icily, as the doctor walked into the room unexpectedly with a nod toward our Alpha. "You have said what you came to say, allowed Bailey to gain her closure, and had somewhat of a pathetic attempt at an apology. Now, you will come to the cells. The Council are on their way for you."

Miles's eyes suddenly darkened as he roared. "The fucking Council?!" The expression upon his face was a picture. He knew his time was up. He was no longer getting away with the same shit he had for so long... he flew forward, ready to take out his rage as hair began to protrude. I jumped up from the bed to help Caleb and Marc tackle him, bringing him to the floor with a heavy thud, as the doctor suddenly stuck a syringe into his neck.

"We shall take him to the cells, and wait for the Council. He is sedated now. Wolfsbane means he won't be hurting anyone." Caleb informed me. "Now, you two have some time alone." he smiled. "Congratulations, though." he added with a wink, and I have to say that sounded good to me...

Options

I was never going to take the words of Miles as the truth. He never did speak the truth. I knew that. I saw the hurt upon Asher's face as I said I wanted to hear what Miles had to say, but, I wanted to hear what he had to say. I wanted to see if he would apologize to me. I felt I deserved an apology after everything over the years. And, I wanted an explanation. Over the years I had tried so hard to work out what it was that made Miles turn on me, and had never been able to fathom it. Hearing him say it was because I had refused to do his school work to help him gain his grades made me see that I had been right all along.

His reasons were not valid. Not in my mind. He said he could change. I knew he couldn't. Or he would have done as he grew up. He would have seen the error of his ways, and if anything, over time, he had got worse. No. I knew what I needed to do. He just made it harder when he kept mentioning the pack. He was right, we were brought up to be loyal to our pack, and that was what kept me coming back to the pack. So many times during my time away studying I had been tempted to go AWOL. To never return. I had told myself I was sure I wouldn't be missed, my parents' focus was always on my brother, with him being the heir to the Beta title. Or my younger sister. I easily faded into the background.

But, no, the commitment to our pack that we had ingrained within us would play upon my mind and always bring me back. That and a loyalty to my family. But this time it was competing with love. Love for Asher. And, I knew now I had my Dad's permission. He had said he was happy for me to be here. But, deep down, I knew even if he hadn't, I would be leaving. I wanted Asher. I wanted to leave and be here. Autumn Valley Pack was all I wanted – the job, the community, and, of course, the mean, mysterious and moody Beta that had etched his place within my heart. I wanted all of that. I needed

Asher. He had changed my view of life. Of myself. I couldn't imagine my life without him now; and I was not ready to let him go.

So when Miles was trying his hardest with his fake-ass pimp voice, that so many of the she-wolves in the pack would swoon over, trying to convince me to imagine us as Alpha and Luna, and adding in the manipulation of thinking of the pack, I found my eyes looking at Asher. I could see the fear in his eyes. He was scared of losing me. Akira was telling me that. She and Zion had to be talking, despite her weakness. I knew then what I needed to do. It would end all questions, and hopefully it would send this dick packing too. I would not risk this anymore...

I felt tears in my eyes, and Asher wrapped his arms around me. I winced in pain as he did, but right now, I didn't care. I knew what I needed to do, whether there were people watching us or not. We could do this again when we were alone. Right now, we needed to do this. Make this official. I rested my mouth next to his ear, and felt him shiver, the way I love when I know I am doing something he likes, before I whispered to him so nobody else could hear, "Ash?" I felt him nodding. I couldn't quite believe I was about to do this. "I know this is out of the blue, and so not how we would have wanted this, but if we do this now, he can do no more. I will be yours. I will belong to you. To your pack..." my voice faltered. What if he didn't want this yet? But I knew I had to ask. "Will you mark me?"

The smile upon his face told me all I needed to know as I offered him my neck. The shock of pain as his teeth broke my skin, was soon followed by an exhilarating pleasure running through me as I felt the matebond begin to form. Oh! wow... we were really doing this! I was going to be Asher's mate! After everything...

Who would have thought when I walked into this place all those weeks ago I would be finding my mate? My mind was a blur as I smiled up at Asher. He was my mate... Akira purred happily in my mind. This was meant to be.

'Hey you.' I couldn't help but link, with a little wink to test out the mindlink, and Asher smiled, his face full of happiness.

"Well, I think you have your answer, don't you?" Alpha Caleb said to Miles, and he most certainly did. I hope our actions have shown him exactly where he stands now. I would never have gone back to the pack, and he was never meant for me.

"No. Bailey, you are making a mistake. You know that right?" Miles said coldly, trying to get my attention. I turned to look at him, shaking my head. He had a fucking nerve. I am making a mistake?

"No. You were the mistake Miles. A mistake from the moon goddess when she fated me to you. Because that never made sense. I would never come back to you. Or that pack." I told Miles, while squeezing Asher's hand. I knew where I was meant to be. "This is where I belong."

The proudness upon Asher's face told me all I needed to know, while Miles shook his head, with an expression I don't think I had seen upon his face before. Remorse? Guilt? Pity? I honestly didn't know. I think he knew he had lost everything. "Clearly you made your choice. I do not want another man's sloppy seconds. I will be leaving now." He began to turn away, and I was more than happy to allow him to go, so I was surprised to hear Alpha Caleb intervene.

"I am afraid that isn't happening." Alpha Caleb said, his voice full of authority. "You have said what you came to say, allowed Bailey to gain her closure, and had somewhat of a pathetic attempt at an apology. Now, you will come to the cells. The Council are on their way for you."

I was shocked by his words. Somebody had finally reported him to the Werewolf Council? I had been tempted so many times, but Miles had made so many threats to me. I had always backed out, knowing I would have no proof or no back up. Now there was back up, and plenty of it...

Miles's eyes flashed dark, and I knew what that meant, as he roared. "The fucking council?!" He surged forward, his wolf Jet ready to take control, and I knew then we would be in trouble as he was as crazy, if not more so than Miles. But at that instant, Asher, Caleb and Marc were moving. All toward Miles, ready to take him down, and they did. Knocking him to the floor with a sickening thud. Before the doctor, who had slipped into the room at some point, leaned over to where Miles was now layed pinned to the floor by the three strong men of my new pack, and stabbed him in the neck with a syringe, I could only guess with what was likely wolfsbane to sedate him and his wolf...

"We shall take him to the cells, and wait for the Council. He is sedated now. Wolfsbane means he won't be hurting anyone." Caleb said calmly, like he was discussing the weather, rather than having just taken down an absolute psycho. A man who had been making my life hell for far too long. This man was a hero. They all were.

"You two have some time alone. "Congratulations, though." he smiled with a wink, and I could see the big beaming smile upon Asher's face as we watched everyone leave the room, Morgan giving me a sly little wink as she did. Nothing like being indiscreet...

"So, that was unexpected..." Asher looked at me, his eyes filled with so much happiness, I could not help but smile.

"I am sorry for putting you on the spot." I looked up at him awkwardly, hoping he didn't mind what had happened.

But that smile upon his face did not falter, not even for a moment. I think this was the happiest I had seen him since I had arrived. This was most definitely a different side to Asher...

'You think he has been drinking while we were gone?' Akira asked with a giggle, making me smile again. 'Or is he just high on loooooovvvee?!' she teased. Yeah, I think my wolf would be just fine...

"You do not have to apologize for anything. I would have marked you that first night we spent together..." Asher exclaimed, then he looked down as he seemed to realize what he had admitted, and I giggled.

"Oh, is that right?" I stroked his hand with mine, loving the touch of his skin under mine. I could not wait to be better, so we could be snuggled up together again. "You kept that to yourself didn't you?!" I teased.

He smiled. "Well, all I can say is I can't tell you how good it feels to know you are mine, beautiful." He reached over and gently stroked my face. "I swear Bailey, I could not stop thinking of you since the moment you arrived here. You turned my world upside down without even intending to. I have been terrified the whole time you were away wishing I had told you how I felt for you. Seems I was a little slow on the uptake, scared to admit what I was feeling. But, you were everything I needed and I hadn't even known it. I love you, Bailey."

My heart fluttered at his words. He had told me he loved me...

'Let me at him!' Akira purred, and I felt her push forward, my canines beginning to elongate, I think she had decided it was time to mark her man...

Options

I could see Bailey's eyes watching me as I told her I loved her, they flashed darker for a moment, and I caught sight of her canine teeth, taking me by surprise... was Akira deciding she wanted to mark me too? Was she even well enough? Strong enough after everything?

'Maybe us marking her did make her stronger?' Zion suggested. I guess that could be true. The nurse said she couldn't say for sure if it would, but here she was ready to mark me despite the fact her wolf had to have been weak trying to heal her.

"I love you too, Asher." Bailey whispered, and those were now the most wonderful words I had heard. Words I hadn't even realized I had been desperate to hear.

I offered her my neck without a moment's hesitation. I wanted to have her mark upon me. I wanted this matebond complete. She was the one meant to come into my life and fix me, I am sure of that. Her arriving in our pack had not been a coincidence. Fate had intervened in a different way... No, I had not been blessed with her as a fated mate, but second-chance mates were rare; yet the connection I felt to Bailey was something else. Like a soulmate. She brought me peace. Contentment. She made me whole again. In a way I never thought could be possible after losing Isla.

And as I felt her teeth sink into my neck, that shudder of pleasure rippled through my body, bringing tears to my eyes as I felt the completed matebond snap into place. Please visit J o b n I b . c o m and search the book title to read the entire book for free. She was mine. Bailey was officially mine. And I was hers. I felt goosebumps spread across my body as she traced her tongue across the new mark I now wore, before I moved back slightly to look at my new mate. I smiled down at her, fighting the tears. "You do not know how happy you have made me." I whispered.

"I think I may have some idea, especially when I feel just as happy." She teased, reaching up to gently stroke where she had just marked me. "I can't believe I have a mate!" she exclaimed excitedly.

"I just wish we hadn't waited so long!" I told her, and she smirked.

"Oh, is that so?" she prodded me playfully, a teasing smile upon her face.

"That is most definitely so!" I reinforced. "But now you have everything you wanted, beautiful, you have the dream job, you have your new pack, and, I would kind of like to think you have your dream man..." I winked, causing her to giggle.

"Meh, he isn't too bad, I guess. Kind of the tall, dark, and handsome type. A little mean and moody. Brooding. Mysterious..." She joked, making me smile. I would settle for that description, she made me sound quite appealing, in fact.

"Ooooh, he sounds perfect." I winked again, and she smiled, her eyes gazing at me adoringly.

"But I definitely do have everything I wanted, Ash. And something I didn't expect; a mate. It shows just what you can find when you aren't even looking." she said to me with so much emotion in her voice. "And to know that Miles will be dealt with is an added bonus. Maybe we should let my Dad know I am okay? Let him know we are mates now, and let him know Miles is here?"

"I think he was notified Miles was here. But I do think he will want to know you are okay, and I would like to think he might want to know you are now settling down." I agreed, only hoping that her family agreed with her choice of chosen mate. After the whole mess with Miles, I would like to think I would not be too much of a dreadful option.

I passed her my phone, and she scrolled through my contacts to find her Dad's contact. Being a Beta, I had contacts for all the Alphas and Betas within our region, and slightly further afield too. I saw Bailey look at me with uncertainty as she dialled. Was she nervous about telling her Dad we were mates? I sure hoped not...

"Hello?" Beta Donovan's voice answered almost immediately, despite sounding sleepy, which was unsurprising given the hour. "Beta Asher, please do not tell me you are calling me to tell me something else has happened. Last update I had Bailey was

stable. Has that changed?" he demanded before Bailey was able to even get a word in. I could see nothing had changed with this guy, he always had too much to say...

"Good day to you too, Beta Donovan." I said sarcastically, earning a dark scowl from my new mate, making me smile in response. "Were you going to give us a moment to talk before jumping to a conclusion?"

As Bailey had the phone on speaker, I could hear everything her father said and did, and heard a loud grunt. "Well, it is far from day, is it, you fucking pile of sunshine? And it is a bit hard not to jump to conclusions when I am worried sick, and you call me at an ungodly hour."

"So you don't want to know the news then?" I began with a smile, and Bailey looked at me again with a shake of her head this time. Her Dad was too easy to annoy, and I was too childish to resist...

"Hi Dad." Bailey interrupted.

"Bailey!" he responded, and I could hear relief just in the way he said her name. "You are awake?!"

Zion chuckled. 'Well if not, she is doing a bloody good job at pretending to be. That is one hell of a circus trick.' And I held back a laugh at my wolf.

"Seems that way." Bailey rolled her eyes at me, evidently thinking much the same way as Zion and me.

"Oh, sweetheart, we have been so worried about you. Uncle Marshall has contacted the Werewolf Council about Miles. Ellis is going to be made Alpha too. Things are going to be changing. I don't know if Morgan told you? Though I believe your Alpha has too. The two Alphas have spoken. The Council should be on their way to you now. I am so sorry that boy has put you through so much. And that we let you down so badly." I could hear the pain and regret within his voice, so I could only assume Bailey could too, not that it would change the suffering she had gone through at the hands of Miles, but I hoped it meant she could begin to move forward.

"Yeah, I know the Council are coming. I don't really want to talk about Miles any more Dad. He is done with. He has done enough damage within my life. And besides, I have bigger and better things to look forward to." She said, and I could hear pride dripping from her words, and it made my heart melt. She was talking about us... our future...

"Oh, is that right? You planning to take over the world now?" her Dad teased, making me chuckle.

"Can a Beta's mate take over the world?" Bailey asked, and I heard a shocked gasp.

“Oh goddess, you and the Lord of grouchiness are mates?” he exclaimed, but I could hear the smile in his words.

“Dad.” Bailey warned.

He laughed. “I am happy for you both. I truly am Bailey. I just hope that boy knows how much it will cost him to keep you in books and chocolate. He may need a second job.”

I found myself laughing now. “I think I am up for that challenge.” I told him with a smile at my mate. Hell, I think I would do anything for this girl, so buying her books and chocolate was nothing...

Options

I woke up from snoozing, and found Asher crashed out in the chair next to my bed. He still had not left my side. Despite every reassuring word the doctor could give him, he had chosen not to leave me. We had marked one another last night, so were now officially mates, and I can only say it feels beyond amazing. More than I could ever have imagined. This is what I wanted in life, I had realized while lying there, watching him sleep.

A mate who loves me for who I am. With no judgment. Who doesn't try to change me. Who cares for me, protects me, and makes me feel adored. Asher does all of those things and more. It seemed I had wanted a mate, and I never knew. But I had also wanted a place I could call home. A place I felt safe, felt secure and content, and Lotus Shadow Pack had not been that in a long time. Autumn Valley Pack had given me that security almost as soon as I walked in, in a way I couldn't explain, and that only developed the closer I became to Asher, and as my friendships within the pack bloomed.

Fate and the moon goddess seemed to have messed up when fating me to Miles, but, in a bitter-sweet-twisted intervention, things were somehow realigned in me finding my way here to find Asher. To find the other half of my soul; because that is what it felt like. Yes, he drove me wild in the beginning, but now I know that was because he was feeling lost. He was feeling broken, just like I was. We fixed one another. That darkness that had lingered around him had long since faded, and now all I saw was light. Happiness. And that is what he brought into my life too.

The doctor walked into my room with a smile upon his face as he looked at Asher. “Wow, such a handsome fella when he is sat there snoring.” He chuckled. “Though I think we can let him off when he has been here since the moment you arrived, worrying sick, and I don't think he has even slept.”

I nodded, I felt guilty for that, but if anything, it just proved my point that this man cared for me like no other man could. He was dedicated to me, and I wanted to be the same for him.

“Well, I have some good news for you dear, you are good to go home. I think the marking helped you heal. We were not sure if it was, as Luna was asking, suggesting Beta try while you were unconscious, but he refused to without your permission, when we could not guarantee it would help. But, it seemed it really did help. Those last wounds seem to be healed up now. Your stats are stable. All looking good. But, I would say to not overdo it for a day or so. And if you feel unwell, you can always come back. I imagine this big doofus here will be making sure you are okay, and ensuring you get checked if there are any issues.”

I had to say I was shocked at his words. I had no clue Eden had been trying to convince Asher to mark me, but again, the fact he was considering me while wanting to do what was right only made me love him more. The doctors couldn't tell him making me would help me heal, and he hadn't wanted to do that without knowing it was what I wanted. I don't think he could be more perfect...

“Thank you doctor.” I smiled up at him, I could not wait to go home, no matter what they may try and tell you, there is no chance of gaining any rest in a hospital. All the chaos going on, and being checked on every few minutes for one thing or another.

“Not a problem.” He nodded, and as he moved toward the door, he looked back at me. “Congratulations on becoming our Beta's mate, I am truly happy for you. I won't lie, we worried about him for a while. He is a good man, and despite all he went through he still managed his role of Beta valiantly, despite feeling like he was falling apart. He deserves good things. I can see the happiness you bring to him, Miss West.”

Asher cleared his throat from next to us, and the doctor looked across to him awkwardly, evidently not realizing he had been listening. “I was just saying how happy I was for you both.”

Asher raised his brows accusingly. “Hmm, so I heard.” He muttered sleepily.

“The doctor told me I can go home.” I informed him, and his face instantly lit up.

“She is okay? No more concerns?”

“Everything is fine, Beta. She will be okay. Just keep an eye on her for a day or so.” The doctor nodded before moving out of the room, likely wanting to make a quick escape after his faux-pas.

“Well, let me get my mate home then!” Asher exclaims, almost jumping from his seat.

“Slow down, I don't need you near falling over again.” I teased.

‘Spoilsport.’ Akira joked. ‘I was looking forward to that.’

I used the en suite shower room to take a shower, and get myself dressed into the clothes that my sister had thankfully dropped off for me, before we walked from the hospital together hand in hand, being waved off by the doctors. It felt good to be back out in the fresh air, I had to admit, and was surprised to see Eden waiting for us with Alpha Caleb, and their little ones.

“Good morning!” Eden greeted me excitedly. “We just wanted to say congratulations. Do you feel better? Do you feel different now you are Asher’s mate? Aww, I can’t believe you guys are mates! That is such good news! Aww, my babies have you both now as Aunt and Uncle. You will come and visit when you feel up to it, yeah? I already told Alli you would need some time off to recover. You have been through a lot, so you need a rest.”

Asher and Caleb looked at one another before shaking their heads and laughing. “Did you breathe that time, Eden?” Asher teased, so I assumed her talking with so much information in one go was normal. I had noticed it a few times when we had chatted and thought it was quite funny.

“I have been worried about Bailey. And I have missed her. She is the Beta’s mate now!” Eden exclaimed. “Aww, Ash, you done well for yourself.” She smiled, and Asher smiled in response.

“I know I did. Not quite sure how I managed it to be honest.”

“Aww, really? You guys are a perfect match. Despite you being a grumpy fucker at times, Bailey is definitely good for you.” Alpha Caleb slapped Asher on the back.

“Cal, stop cursing when the babies are near.” Eden frowned, and Asher wagged his finger in fake mockery at his friend. I think I could get used to being around these two as friends as well as pack Alpha and Luna. They seemed to work well together, and I knew they were close with Asher.

“Well, I do want to take Bailey home, the doctor said to let her rest, but we will call over to see you guys in a day or so, yeah?” Asher told the Alpha, who nodded.

“Taking it easy is probably for the best. But we will have a BBQ or something when you are up to it. Welcome you into the pack properly, Bailey. Not to mention officially introducing you as Asher’s mate. This is definitely where you were meant to be from what Ash had said.”

I smiled up at Asher, who had his arm around my waist protectively since we left the hospital. “Will you keep us updated with any news about other stuff.” Asher said, and Alpha Caleb nodded.

“He is currently in the cells, Council are expected here today. Not sure what they plan with him to be honest. Morgan said he killed someone at the wedding. Plus attempted

murder of your friend.” He looked at me, and I nodded, knowing he was talking about Harley, though I was a little shocked, to say the least, at the fact he had killed someone at the wedding. I knew Miles had a temper, but I could only imagine what had gone down to cause him to go as far as killing someone at what was meant to be his own wedding day. I don’t think that man was ever capable of change. “He could be looking at being locked up for a long time. If not killed.” Alpha Caleb added, and I nodded. I hope he got everything he deserved.

I felt Asher’s touch tighten upon me, in what I assume was reassurance. “Come on then, let us head home. You are staying with me, so I can take care of you.” he told me, and I saw Eden and the Alpha smile, as they walked away.

We walked the rest of the way to the packhouse in a comfortable silence, my mind overrun with all the new information it had thrown at it so far. So much had changed in the last day or so, and things would be changing even further in the future, but I was ready for them. I was ready to be the Beta’s wife of Autumn Valley, and I was ready to put the past behind me, that was Miles and Lotus Shadow Pack. It was all irrelevant now. I had the man I wanted and he wanted me.

Asher opened the door to his Beta suite, letting me follow him in, before he turned to take my hand. “Welcome home, beautiful.” He whispered as he pulled me closer to him. I felt my body reacting to his the moment I fell into his embrace. “I cannot wait to see what the future holds for us.” He added, as he brought his lips to mine in a deep and passionate kiss.

4 months later

I sat on the edge of our bed, nerves rushing through every part of my body, while Asher paced the floor in front of me before he looked down at me. In the whole time since we had officially become a couple, this was the first time I had felt so worried. I did not know how he would react when I told him the news, but now he was as nervous as I was.

“Are you sure you did the test right?” he asked, his voice wobbling a little.

“Can you do them wrong? You pee on it and wait, right?” I attempted to joke, but I genuinely didn’t think I had done it wrong. I just hated the wait...

I had not felt right for a couple of weeks now, and had put it down to a virus going around school. It had not taken me long to go back to work after leaving the hospital after all the drama of the incident with Miles. And soon Asher and I had fallen into the routine of a couple, and I loved it. It was like we had always been together.

His late night working sessions were a thing of the past; he rushed out of work each day to come home to me, or would often come to meet me as I finished work, which always brightened my day. Fresh flowers would often await me, and chocolate was always

stocked up too, which made me smile. Please visit [J o b n I b . c o m](http://JobnIb.com) and search the book title to read the entire book for free. Asher was far from the dark and moody guy I had first met and was always smiling now, and showering me with love and compliments, as well as the fun banter we had going on which always had me smiling, and amused Akira greatly.

But this feeling of constantly being tired, and persistent sickness had made me begin to feel a little suspicious, especially as it never seemed to ease. It had led me to buy a pregnancy test, which, admittedly, had sat in the bag on the shelf in the bathroom for a little while until I had found the courage to do it. Terrified about what Asher might do if I was pregnant, as we had never actually planned for a baby just yet.

But, the moment he found the test, he was as nervous as me, but he had an excitement about him that had melted my heart. But he wanted to do the test immediately the moment he looked in the bag and saw it. Patience clearly not his strongest point... Which meant we were going to be running a little late today...

"Bai, is it time to check it now?" Asher looked at me, his face full of expectation, and I glanced at my phone, nodding. He offered me his hand, pulling me up from the bed as I took it, and we walked over to the dressing table where the test now sat. Together we leaned over it, and my heart raced at the sight.

"There is nothing there." Asher whispered.

'Isn't he meant to be smart?' Akira giggled.

"I have to turn it over." I told him, realizing it was faced down. And as I did, there was no denying the answer, as the word 'pregnant' sat inside of the little screen.

Asher gasped in surprise, before wrapping his arms around me. "Oh Bai!" he snuggled his face into my neck. "We are having a baby!" his voice told me all I needed to know, as I felt every bit as overjoyed as he did.

There was a sudden knock at the door, telling me we were already late. "I bet that will be Marc and Morgan." Asher grumbled. "Marc already mindlinked to say they were ready to leave."

Today was the day Ellis would officially become Alpha of the Lotus Shadow Pack, and we were all invited to join them, as were Eden and Caleb, as Alpha and Luna of a nearby pack, so, it was a day to visit family, as well as a day to celebrate.

Miles would not be there, so visiting my home pack was not so much of a chore now. Miles had long since been detained by the Werewolf Council, and was now awaiting a formal trial for his attempted murder of Harley, and for the murder of his former bride's boyfriend. They had said they would attempt to bring charges for the attempted kidnap of me too, but I held no hope of that one. But, it was expected he would be locked up for

a long time to come, and when or more like, if he was released, he would have all ranks taken from him and be forced to join the Werewolf Council defense force army.

Miles would no longer be involved in, anyway, shape or form with the Lotus Shadow Pack. His actions had well and truly severed all ties to his family and his pack. And, I have to say, I felt nothing towards him, no pity or anything. He deserved everything he got.

"You two better not be holding us up because you couldn't resist ripping each other's clothes off!" Morgan called through the door, so loud it was likely half the pack heard.

"Open the door before she says anything else!" I warned Asher, and he chuckled. He may not have been keen on my sister when she first arrived, but now he was spending time with her and Marc on a more regular basis, he was getting used to her somewhat unique and quirky ways, and he actually found her quite amusing now.

"Come on, we are going to be late!" Marc said as Asher opened the door. "Alpha and Luna are just putting the little ones in the car."

I walked to meet them at the front door, ready to make our departure to our former pack. "Are you okay, Bai, you look like you have been crying?" Morgan asked me suddenly, and my gaze fell on Asher, and Morgan's eyes followed. "Actually you both do. Is something wrong?" she asked accusingly.

'Has he done something?' she mindlinked, and I could see she was ready to argue with him for me. I needed to make sure this was right, before she said something she regretted. Ever since she got pregnant three months ago, she had got even more fiery than before, that and little more loopy too in my mind...

"Everything is fine. I just did a test." I smiled across at Asher, who looked at me in shock. Maybe he hadn't expected me to tell anyone, but he had to understand why. Morgan had a habit of saying what she thought, especially lately, and I honestly did not want her saying something she shouldn't.

Asher's face softened and smiled before he finished my sentence for me. "And we are having a baby." He came over to meet me, his hand resting upon my non-existent belly, knowing that our little pup was already growing in there.

The look of shock on Morgan's face was a picture, while Marc just smiled. "Aww!" Morgan almost squealed. "You got pregnant soon after me then! Our little ones will grow up so close they will be like family!"

I found myself frowning, wondering how her mind even worked, while Asher looked at me with a smile. "Erm, Morgan, I am pretty sure they will already be family." He pointed out, and she looked at him, confused momentarily, before she laughed.

“You know what I mean!”

Marc grinned at me, like he was used to my sister’s weirdness. “We sure do, baby.” Marc gently kissed her head. “Anyway, let us get going, before we have Luna coming up here joining us.”

I nodded. “Yeah, I do believe we have an Alpha ceremony to get to.”

Marc and Morgan walked out of the door, before Asher pulled me to him in a gentle embrace. “You okay with today?” he asked, and I nodded. I was actually looking forward to seeing Ellis being made Alpha of my former pack. He definitely deserved it, and was without a doubt the right man for the title.

“I am fine. Looking forward to seeing everyone. And, this time, I have you to come with me. As my mate too. I don’t think it could have worked out more perfectly.” I smiled up at my mate, who looked down at me with nothing but love.

7 months later

“Asher, I hate you!” Bailey screamed, as she laid on the hospital bed, writhing in pain. And Zion chuckled in glee at the insults my mate was throwing my way, not to mention the pain she was inflicting upon me as she gripped my hand through each contraction. He seemed to be seriously enjoying my suffering... “Is she meant to be this angry?” I muttered to one of the nurses, who looked at me with her eyebrows raised like I was some sort of monster. Okay, maybe I would just sit quietly. Now I seemed to have angered the nurse as well as my mate...

Zion once more was laughing. ‘Not so good at this are you?’ he teased. ‘Oh, big shot, Beta.’

‘You’re a Beta too, you freak.’ I snapped back, while my eyes met Bailey’s and, quite honestly, she looked like she was possessed.

‘Can childbirth turn a woman into a demon?’ Zion asked me. ‘Because right about now she looks pretty freaky, and I do not mean in a good way, like, we about to get freaky sort of a way...’

Wow. My wolf has officially lost it.

“Okay, Bailey, if you just try to slow your breathing a little.” the nurse calmly told my mate, and she turned the devil’s glare upon the nurse.

“What do you think I am trying to do?!” she snapped.

The nurse simply smiled. "I know, and you are doing really well, but if we can slow it a little more, and on the next contraction, I think you can push." She told her, and I looked at Bailey with anticipation.

"Aww, did you hear that Bai, you can push soon?" I told her. I knew she was more than ready for that. It felt like we had been in here for a lifetime already...

The death stare was back on me now as she hissed. "I will push you, if you're not careful."

I swear the nurse chuckled. And these are the staff I helped interview! Yet here she is laughing at my mate all but eating my heart out because she is in pain. Pain, which apparently was all my fault, according to the recent insults...

"Arrrrggghhhhh!" Bailey squealed out once more, the grip around my hand tightened, so damn hard I think my hand was about to snap right off. Though I had already learned to stay quiet about that...

"Okay, Bailey, push..." the nurse said from her position at the end of the bed. "Beta, do you want to come and see your little one arrive?"

I looked at her in shock. Did I want to? Would Bailey want me to? No, I wanted to see our little one born... I released Bailey's hand and moved toward the end of the bed, as she panted between contractions.

'I may check out now.' Zion told me, unhelpfully. 'Don't think I can cope with the...'

"Arrrgh... holy... mother of ... fucking... shitting hell!!!" Bailey cursed, interrupting Zion's words as she bore down hard. And a whole lot of stuff I was going to pretend I didn't see came out of her, but so did our baby's head... covered in beautiful dark curls, just like their mama...

'I think I agree. Holy, mother of fucking, shitting hell. What in the hell was that?' Zion asked.

'Shut up.' I snapped. 'That is our child being born.' I felt emotions rushing through my body as my eyes met Bailey's. I moved up the bed, to hold her hand again. I wanted to be there for her too. I wanted to hold her. Tell her how proud I was of her, and tell her I loved her.

"Come on, beautiful, you got this." I said softly into her ear, kissing her head. "You are doing amazing. I love you, Bai."

"One more push and I think baby should be out, Bailey." The nurse told her, just as I felt Bailey's hand tighten around mine.

She sobbed as she pushed once more, but this time there was a cry as the baby slid into the nurse's waiting hand. "Aww, congratulations. You have a little boy." She smiled up at us.

I looked at Bailey, tears in my eyes, and she looked at me like she was in shock. "I'm a Mama." She whispered as the nurse suddenly passed her a little bundle wrapped in a blanket. My eyes took in the beautiful sight of my amazing mate, with our gorgeous new baby in her arms. I have never felt so proud, as a rush of love and pride flooded my body. And, as I took him in, I could see he was indeed a gorgeous little fella. He had his mama's curly dark hair, and my big green eyes.

"You certainly are." I smiled at her, and I knew she would be a wonderful mother too. She treated every one of those children in her class like they were her own, and they thought the world of her, so I knew our own child or children, if we went on to have more, would be blessed having her as a mother. Just as I was blessed to call her my mate.

"He is perfect, isn't he?" She stroked back his curls, and I nodded. He most definitely was that. I could not believe I was finally a father. All those times over recent years, I saw friends settling down with their mates and having pups, I had long since resigned to the fact I would be alone. And then, this beauty came into my world, turning everything on its head. Making me fall for her without even trying. And here we were now, our own little one to complete my dreams... dreams I had never thought were possible. Yet Bailey had made them possible...

"I think he suits the name we picked, don't you?" I asked, and Bailey nodded, as she offered my son to me. I took him from her without hesitating, sitting myself on the edge of the bed next to my mate. He felt tiny in my embrace, as he snuggled into my chest. My heart swelled with pride, as Zion purred in contentment, while Bailey rested her head upon my shoulder. I truly think my life was complete.

"Welcome to the world Jai Asher Alcott." I whispered. "You are so perfect, little one, and you and your mama have only made my life that much better by arriving into it..." I began, as there was knocking at the door, and I instantly knew it would be one of our friends, or family desperate to meet our new arrival. I knew they had been waiting since they heard Bailey had gone into labor...

"And welcome to the mad house." Bailey added with a chuckle. "It is the best place to call home, I don't think I could imagine being anywhere else." And her words made me smile, as I looked down at our son; once upon a time I hated being in the pack, it being filled with too many bad memories, but now, I don't think I could agree more with my mate.

END

Chapter 193 - Beauty and The Beta

7 months later

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The death stare was back on me now as she hissed. “I will push you, if you’re not careful.”

I swear the nurse chuckled. And these are the staff I helped interview! Yet here she is laughing at my mate all but eating my heart out because she is in pain. Pain, which apparently was all my fault, according to the recent insults...

“Arrrrggghhhhh!” Bailey squealed out once more, the grip around my hand tightened, so damn hard I think my hand was about to snap right off. Though I had already learned to stay quiet about that...

“Okay, Bailey, push...” the nurse said from her position at the end of the bed. “Beta, do you want to come and see your little one arrive?”

I looked at her in shock. Did I want to? Would Bailey want me to? No, I wanted to see our little one born... I released Bailey’s hand and moved toward the end of the bed, as she panted between contractions.

‘I may check out now.’ Zion told me, unhelpfully. ‘Don’t think I can cope with the...’

“Arrrgh... holy... mother of ... fucking... shitting hell!!!” Bailey cursed, interrupting Zion’s words as she bore down hard. And a whole lot of stuff I was going to pretend I didn’t see came out of her, but so did our baby’s head... covered in beautiful dark curls, just like their mama...

‘I think I agree. Holy, mother of fucking, shitting hell. What in the hell was that?’ Zion asked.

‘Shut up.’ I snapped. ‘That is our child being born.’ I felt emotions rushing through my body as my eyes met Bailey’s. I moved up the bed, to hold her hand again. I wanted to be there for her too. I wanted to hold her. Tell her how proud I was of her, and tell her I loved her.

“Come on, beautiful, you got this.” I said softly into her ear, kissing her head. “You are doing amazing. I love you, Bai.”

“One more push and I think baby should be out, Bailey.” The nurse told her, just as I felt Bailey’s hand tighten around mine.

She sobbed as she pushed once more, but this time there was a cry as the baby slid into the nurse’s waiting hand. “Aww, congratulations. You have a little boy.” She smiled up at us.

I looked at Bailey, tears in my eyes, and she looked at me like she was in shock. “I’m a Mama.” She whispered as the nurse suddenly passed her a little bundle wrapped in a blanket. My eyes took in the beautiful sight of my amazing mate, with our gorgeous new baby in her arms. I have never felt so proud, as a rush of love and pride flooded my body. And, as I took him in, I could see he was indeed a gorgeous little fella. He had his mama’s curly dark hair, and my big green eyes.

“You certainly are.” I smiled at her, and I knew she would be a wonderful mother too. She treated every one of those children in her class like they were her own, and they thought the world of her, so I knew our own child or children, if we went on to have

more, would be blessed having her as a mother. Just as I was blessed to call her my mate.

“He is perfect, isn’t he?” She stroked back his curls, and I nodded. He most definitely was that. I could not believe I was finally a father. All those times over recent years, I saw friends settling down with their mates and having pups, I had long since resigned to the fact I would be alone. And then, this beauty came into my world, turning everything on its head. Making me fall for her without even trying. And here we were now, our own little one to complete my dreams... dreams I had never thought were possible. Yet Bailey had made them possible...

“I think he suits the name we picked, don’t you?” I asked, and Bailey nodded, as she offered my son to me. I took him from her without hesitating, sitting myself on the edge of the bed next to my mate. He felt tiny in my embrace, as he snuggled into my chest. My heart swelled with pride, as Zion purred in contentment, while Bailey rested her head upon my shoulder. I truly think my life was complete.

“Welcome to the world Jai Asher Alcott.” I whispered. “You are so perfect, little one, and you and your mama have only made my life that much better by arriving into it...” I began, as there was knocking at the door, and I instantly knew it would be one of our friends, or family desperate to meet our new arrival. I knew they had been waiting since they heard Bailey had gone into labor...

“And welcome to the mad house.” Bailey added with a chuckle. “It is the best place to call home, I don’t think I could imagine being anywhere else.” And her words made me smile, as I looked down at our son; once upon a time I hated being in the pack, it being filled with too many bad memories, but now, I don’t think I could agree more with my mate.

END