

## Chapter 171 – Beauty and The Beta

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.’

‘Receieved.’ Multiple mindlnks 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 fufked 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.

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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...

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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.

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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.

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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.”