

## Broken 291

### Chapter 291

But you will never hear me complain. I asked Liam to fill the packhouse with our children and he's doing his best to oblige me. I

love that three and a half years later, I still can't get enough of my mate, and he can't get enough of me. No matter how tired we

are, he still shows me in little ways every day how much he loves and appreciates me. And at night, he always shows me in the

best way, although we've learned that I have to be quiet or we'll wake the kids. That's become his new favorite game, how far

can he push me before I'm too loud. It's a fun game to play with the love of my life.

Because our children were so close together for the first two years, I never went into heat. But after our fourth, and at the

doctor's insistence, we took a break from getting pregnant. Maybe because I was nursing, or maybe because I'd been pregnant

so many times, but it took months for me to go into heat.

I'm not sure Liam believed Rik when he warned him that my heat would nearly kill him or that he'd hope his penis would fall off,

but that's exactly what happened. Thank goodness for Sarah and Dustin. They looked after our children, made sure we had

food, lots of water and that no one came into the packhouse for a week.

When it finally ended, Liam and I were in the shower, washing away the sweat and the smell of sex when he looked down at

himself. "Baby girl, I think you broke my dick."

I just laughed at him, leaning against him and kissing him until I felt it working. Doesn't feel like it."

"You will never hear me say this again, but please, tell me you don't want to go another round."

I laughed even harder. "No, I'm pretty sure even my advanced healing is fried. right now. I can barely walk I'm so sore."

After we showered, we changed the sheets and slept for a full day and night, making up for the lack of sleep over the previous

week.

And now, two weeks later, I get to tell my mate the good news. I can't wait to see his face when I tell him that waiting nearly a

year before trying for another pup has not only worked, but it worked a little too well.

When he walks into our room, I have it set up with candles lit, the lights turned off. I haven't always known I was pregnant before

he smelled the change in my hormones. It was only with our daughter that I knew before he did. So, I want to

make this special. I know he'll be as excited as I am. We both want a house full of our pups. Sarah and Dustin are watching our

little ones so I can have the evening to celebrate with the most amazing man in the world.

"What's all this, little angel?" He says, walking over to me and running his nose up and down my neck, grazing his canines over

my mating mark, sending shivers throughout my body.

I wrap my arms around his neck, loving the feel of the tingles that have not lessened over time.

"I have a surprise for you."

"Mmmmm, I love surprises from my little mate." He grabs me by my thighs, lifting me up until I wrap my legs around him. He

begins kissing me as he walks

me to our bed.

"I see that you have someone watching the kids for us, so is my surprise a night alone with my delicious mate?"

"Yes and no." He lays me on the bed, sliding over top of me, kissing his way down my neck.

"Hmmm, what's the yes part first?"

"Yes, I do have Sarah and Dustin watching the kids for us so we can have tonight. together." I gasp, trying to keep my wits about

me as he unbuttons my top, kissing my chest.

"And the no part?" He asks, his voice deep and husky causing my core to clench while he unhooks my bra and pulls my shirt and

bra off, tossing them on the floor.

"It's not just because I wanted alone time with you, I have something to tell you, Liam." I say as he latches onto a breast, bringing

my nipple to a hard peak as I moan softly. He pulls off with a soft pop.

"And what's that baby girl?" He asks, moving to the other breast. My hand goes into his hair, tugging on it and holding him in

place as I arch into his mouth.

"I pregnant." I wait until he lifts his head to look me in the eye, a huge smile on his face.

"Must be another girl, since I haven't smelled her yet." He says, and I watch Cyran push forward, before he makes his way to my

stomach to start sniffing for

her.

"Well, actually, we're having twins."

The end.

This story will continue in the third book, The Banished Beta's Saving Grace.

## Chapter 292

\*\*This is Book Three of the Guardians Trilogy. This book contains references to events that occurred in the first two books and

spoilers for those books. It is recommended that you read The Broken Warrior's Daughter and Alpha's Guardian Angel before

reading this, the final book in the trilogy.

Eli

I never expected to find my mate, much less in a small town in the middle of the Appalachian Mountains where I was just

passing through. Even more surprising than her being under eighteen and nearly half my age, was the fact that she was human.

I had been on a bus, with a ticket paid for by an old foe, turned...not exactly friend, but no longer a foe. I had stuffed the

envelope of money he'd given me deep into my backpack underneath the new clothes he'd also bought for me. All of them still

had the price tags on.

When the bus had stopped for a two-hour layover, I had gotten off to find a place to eat. There was only one little mom and pop

diner in the small town and when I walked into the rundown restaurant, I immediately smelled her scent. Cherry blossoms. Sweet

and floral and a little exotic.

When she walked up to take my order, I realized something was off about her. While she smelled vaguely of the forest, she didn't

have the strong scent that all werewolves carry.

'Louis, does she have a wolf?' I ask my wolf.

I can see him in my head tilting his head from side to side, his ears up like he's trying figure her out. 'No. I don't sense a wolf.

But...'

'But?' I ask.

'I don't know, there's something, like maybe she's a wolfless werewolf. She has power, but, well, I'm not sure. There's something

there.'

"Good afternoon. Welcome to the diner. Can I get you something to drink?" The minimal effort she gives me in smiling her fake

smile is obvious.

"Just water. Thank you."

Before I can say more, she's turning on her heel and walking back to the kitchen. She's the most beautiful woman I've ever seen.

I know all werewolves say that about their mate, but this woman is definitely the most gorgeous woman in the

world with her caramel-colored skin, eyes the color of milk chocolate and her straight dark hair cut short.

I watch her look up as the bell over the front door rings. When she brings my water, she also has additional menus for the

newcomers.

"Hey Benny." She says as she walks up to the newcomer. This time, her smile is warm and generous and Louis snarls in my

head, unhappy with his mate giving attention to another man.

‘Easy Louis. She doesn’t recognize us as her mate. If we’re going to take her as our mate, we’ll have to plan to stay for awhile

and get to know her. She won’t recognize what we are to her without a wolf.’ I try to calm him.

However, it’s the conversation that I hear after she walks away that concerns me. The humans don’t understand that the rash of

“animal attacks” that they are seeing in this area are actually vampire attacks. There are tell-tale signs and based on what they

are saying, the vampires are heading south. South, to the packs that just let me go, to the son of the woman I couldn’t protect so

many years ago. I owe her, even if I don’t owe them.

I left the diner, without ordering anything, jogging to the nearest forest and shifting. Louis ran straight through without stopping. I

had to be there in time. I had to warn Liam. I owed Luna Estella that. After everything she did for me, I couldn’t save her, but I

could save him and repay that debt.

After warning Liam that the vampire attack was imminent, I headed straight back to the little town to find my mate. It was hard

enough to leave her the first time, but now the pull to her was so strong it was almost painful.

When I return, I find the only motel in town and get a room for a couple of nights. I need to learn all I can about my little mate,

find out when she’ll be eighteen, see if her parents are actually werewolves and if so, why they are living here, on the outskirts of

a pack.

After putting my things in the motel room and finding a hiding spot for my money, I return to the diner. Through the window, I can

see that my mate is working the nightshift tonight, so I head in and sit down, Louis and I relaxing as we take in her sweet, exotic

scent.

As she comes around the corner of the kitchen, I watch as her body stiffens, her nose going up into the air, nostrils flaring.

When she looks into my eyes, hers are not only showing that she now has her wolf, but they are brimming with the bright gold of

the Guardian, turning her chocolate-colored eyes to amber.

“Mate.” She whispers.

Chapter 293

Ten years old

“How’s my beautiful girl?” My dad asks me as I walk down the stairs of our packhouse on my 10th birthday.

“Good morning Daddy. I’m good. I can’t wait to get my wolf today!”

I’ve been the apple of my father’s eye for ten years. He is always proudly taking me around, introducing me to our pack members

and other pack members through the years. I walk over and hug him as he kisses the top of my head.

“Happy birthday sweetheart.” My mother says, coming up and kissing my cheek. “How do you feel? Any different yet?”

“Not yet. Should I feel different?”

“It can happen at any time today, Gracie. Don’t fret.” My father tells me, chucking me gently under the chin.

My parents have a big party planned for me tonight. I’m hoping that I can shift before my party and maybe I’ll be lucky enough to

run into my party as my wolf. As an Alpha female and my father’s only heir, it would be fitting. The pack would love it.

Everyone in the pack adores me, or at least respects my position as their future Alpha. As I go through my day, I’m continually

wished a happy birthday and everyone asks if I’ve heard from my wolf yet.

As my party draws closer, I express my concern to my mother. “Mom, what if she doesn’t come before the party. What will I do?”

“Grace, honey, it’s okay. Your wolf will come when she’s ready. Just be patient. If she’s not here tonight, maybe she’ll come

tomorrow.”

I get ready for my party. My mom helps me with my hair, adding a little makeup and then the dress that we bought last weekend

specifically for tonight.

She walks downstairs with me, looking regal in her own matching gown. My mother is an amazing Luna. She looks after

everyone in the pack, making sure that their needs are addressed and that they know how important they are to her and my

father.

My father is a good Alpha, strong and patient, at least with me. I've seen him. during warrior training and he can be fierce and

intimidating, but that's what a good Alpha is. He leads by example and I plan to do the same.

My mother guides me to the stage and I can tell my father is a little disappointed that I haven't gotten my wolf yet. But he wishes

me a happy birthday, giving me my favorite drink, a Shirley Temple, and makes a toast to me, the pack's future Alpha.

As the days go by after my birthday, I become more and more concerned that my Wolf hasn't made an appearance. Every day

my father asks if she has awakened, and every day I have to tell him that she hasn't.

As the weeks go by, my relationship with my father changes. It's as if he blames me for not having a wolf, as if I am purposefully

keeping her from him. I begin to dread the mornings, when he asks me if I have my wolf.

Eventually, it becomes the only question he asks me. "Did your wolf awaken?" When I tell him no, it's the last thing he says to me

until the next morning when he asks again.

I find mom? Why don't I have my wolf? Did I do something wrong? Is the Moon d I do something wrong? Is the Moon Goddess

angry with me?" Every night, my mother holds me as I cry, rocking me and trying to soothe my anxiety and frustration. But there

is nothing that can calm me, especially when my father continues ignoring me.

mom self crying to my mother every night. "Why? Why hasn't she shown up

As the weeks turn to months, my father's anger only gets worse. I notice him snapping at my mother now too. "This is your fault."

He snarls at her one day. "I should never have taken such a weak wolf as a mate. I should have rejected you and taken an Alpha

female as my mate."

I dread my 11th birthday. My father starts the day as he always does. "Did your wolf awaken?"

I swallow my tears, they only make him more angry. "No father." His lip curls in disgust.

"Well, we won't be having a party to celebrate tonight since there is nothing to celebrate." He tells me before walking out.

One night, not long after my 11th birthday, I wake to sounds of violence. I rush out of my room to hear things slamming around in

my parents' room. I rush into their room, thinking we are under attack but what I see nearly stops my heart. My father has my

mother against the wall, holding her by her neck. She has a bruise darkening on her cheek.

My father turns and sees me standing there. "Get out!" He yells at me. As much as I want to move, my feet work.

Can't make

He turns to my mother. "Tell her to get out unless you want her to watch as I force you to give me another heir, one worthy of

being Alpha."

My mother looks at me, her eyes showing the pain that she's feeling at my father's abuse. "Go on sweetheart. Go back to bed.

Everything is fine."

"It's not fucking fine." He snarls at her and begins ripping at her clothes with his free hand, still holding her against the wall.

"Go." My mother mouths to me and I turn and run from the room, closing the door as I do. I don't want anyone else to see what

my father is doing to my mother.

The next morning, only my father emerges from their room. He asks me the usual question and when I say no, he mutters

something about me being useless like my mother before heading downstairs.

I go to my parents' room, knocking before opening the door. My mother is limping toward the bathroom, her naked body riddled



with bruises and dried. blood on her thighs. She turns, her eyes haunted. "Grace, honey, you shouldn't be here."

I close the door and walk to her. "He's gone, let me help you mother."

She nods and I help her walk to the bathroom. I start a warm bath for her and help her to get in, letting her body soak. While she

does, I go back out to the bedroom, seeing the blood-stained sheets. I rip them off and replace them before the house omegas

can see. I don't know if this is the first time, but no one should know what has happened in this room.

I go back into the bathroom, leaning against the tub.

"Mom, I'm so sorry, this is all my fault." Her eyes were closed, but when I speak, she opens them and cups my face in her hand.

"Don't ever take the blame for what happened to me. You have no control over when your wolf emerges. I love you and I do not

now, nor will I ever regret having you, my beautiful daughter."

Over the next year, I find my mother is this state nearly every morning. My father begins asking two questions every day, one of

me and one of my mother. "Has your wolf emerged?" and "Are you pregnant?"

This becomes our life, until my 12th birthday.

## Chapter 294

I dread the morning of my 12th birthday. I know my father is getting more and more angry and if I don't have my wolf on my

birthday, it will set him off. Over the last two years, his anger and aggression have increased and the pack is suffering for it.

Everyone walks on eggshells with my father now. No one comes to the packhouse any longer and I'm thankful because I don't

want anyone to see what he does to my mother. His abuse of her has gotten worse over I'm terrified that one day he will kill her.

the pas

past year.

The door to my room slams open, and I jerk up out of bed. "Well?" My father says without any preamble.

I just shake my head, no. He stalks toward me. "You worthless excuse for a daughter. You are nothing to me."

He raises his hand to hit me and my mother comes flying in, out of nowhere, putting herself between me and him. His backhands

her, his hand slamming into her cheek. Her head whips around, spit and blood flying from her mouth. He sneers down at my

mother as she turns, steadying herself in front of me.

"Move." He says. She doesn't respond, but she doesn't move.

He stares at her a moment before turning to me. "Get out."

I look at him, not understanding what he means.

"Get. Out. Of. My. Packhouse! If I ever see you on my pack lands again, I will kill you myself." He says before stalking out of my

room, slamming the door.

"Mom? What did he mean?"

My mom is quiet for a couple of minutes. "Pack a bag. Pack light enough to be able to carry it, but enough to get you through for

a weekend. Pack anything you can't live without. I'll be back in five minutes."

Five minutes later, my mother comes in with her own bag. I had thrown my favorite clothes and a couple of pictures into my

overnight bag.

"Let's go. Quickly and quietly." My mother says, taking my hand and leading me down the stairs. She stops every few steps to

listen before pulling me behind her and continuing our way down the stairs. When we get to the bottom, rather than going out the

front door, she takes me down a hallway and out the omega's

entrance.

Once we're outside, we begin jogging toward the forest line. My mother sees

some of our border patrols and pulls me behind a tree. When they pass, she moves on until my father's Gamma steps in our

way.

“Where are you going Paige?” He says as my mother stops in front of him and pulls me behind her.

“He banished her, Jack. I can’t let her leave on her own. I won’t. Are you going to stand in my way?”

He looks at my mother then at me before shaking his head. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out some money. “Get as far

away as possible. Get on a bus or rent a car but get far away from here as quickly as you can. He may have banished her, but

he won’t let you go easily. I’ll you as long as possible.

Cor for

“Thank you, Jack.” My mother says before hugging him quickly. He says something in her ear, but I can’t hear what it is. Then,

my mother grabs my hand and we are running again. We’re only a mile or so from the pack borders when the howl goes up.

then Immediately, my mother hands me her bag. “Get on my back.” She says, shifts into her wolf. I climb on her back and she

takes off. My mother may not have been born an Alpha female, but she has been mated to an Alpha wolf and been a Luna for

over a decade. Not only that, but she is determined to keep me safe. She runs as fast as she can.

It’s 10 miles to the nearest human town. My mother runs through rivers and streams whenever possible to help try to throw the

pack off our scent. When we are right outside the town, she shifts back, and I throw her some clothes. We run into the town and

find the bus station. We find a bus that is leaving in 15 minutes and she buys two tickets.

We get onto the bus and sit in the back, sliding down as low as possible in the seats. It’s not until the bus doors close and we

start moving that we both breathe a sigh of relief. We stay low in the seats until we are well away from the city.

## Chapter 295

At the first bus station, my mother pulls us off the bus and we buy tickets to another destination. This continues through three

more bus stations, changing destinations midway through our journey.

When we finally get to a place where she decides we can stay, it's the middle of the night two days later. I'm exhausted and there

is only one motel in this small town. We crash on the bed and I fall asleep immediately. I realize, somewhere in the back of my

mind, that my 12th birthday present was escaping from my father, and I know it's the best present that I've ever been given. For

today, my mother and I are safe..

Mom decided that we could stay in this small town. She said that we were not on any pack territory and although there are packs

around, in this part of the Appalachian Mountains, they stay to themselves.

My mother enrolls me in school and she gets a job at the only diner in town. She finds a place for rent, what the humans call a

mother-in-law apartment. It isn't much, but it is safe and I don't have to wake up to my mother healing from bruises or worse

every morning.

It's nearly a year before it starts. Every day after school, I go to the diner and sit at the ice cream bar. I do my homework while I

wait for my mother to finish her shift. She works double shifts every day, so that we will have enough money in case we ever

have to run again.

On this particular day, everything is normal, until suddenly, my mother drops. Her tray and doubles over in pain. Her initial cry

alerts the owner, who is also the cook. He comes running out and sees her on the floor, writhing in pain.

"What happened?" He asks.

I am already at her side. "I don't know, she just doubled over and cried out."

"I'll call an ambulance, we need to get her to a hospital." Benny, the owner says.

s of

"No!" My mother says. Looking at me, she says, "Sweetie, go get me a glass water, I'll be okay in a minute." I can see the effort it

takes for her to even get those words out.

"Mom, no, Benny is right."

Benny looks at my mom and something passes between them. "Go get your

mother a glass of water."

I don't know what my mother tells Benny, but when I come back, he's got my mother sitting up. I bring her the water and she

drinks it down. "I'm okay. "Paige, I can handle one evening. I'll call someone in. Go home and rest."

Mom nods and Benny helps her stand up. "Grace, take your mother home and get her into bed."

I go collect my things and before I leave, Benny gives me a to-go box for dinner." Let me know if she needs anything overnight."

He says before I help my mother back to our apartment.

When I get her into bed, my mother takes my hand. "Sit down Grace, we need to talk."

I sit down next to her on the bed. "Sweetheart, do you understand what happened today?"

rs in her eyes um I shake my head, no. She takes my hand and I can see the important thing is, I think you are safe from your

father now. I think that he has stopped searching for us."

She isn't looking at me, she's staring at our hands, clasped together. "But, he has taken another lover."

She looks up at me. "You

understand what this means?" I shake my head.

She swallows, fighting tears. "It means that your father is cheating on our mate bond. When that happens in a mated

relationship, the person being cheated on can feel it. It feels like you are being stabbed with a knife over and over. From what

I've heard, the feeling continues as long as the cheating continues, meaning every time that your father is with another woman, I

will feel it. I can only guess that this will become more and more frequent. I need you to understand because I don't want you to

worry."

"But what will happen to you?"

She looks down at our joined hands again. "The longer it goes on, the weaker I will become, until one day, my wolf will give up

and we will die."

## Chapter 296

That conversation with my mother happened five years ago. My father's infidelity killed her slowly over three years. In the end, I believe my father took another mate. My mother had been getting weaker

and weaker, but that last day, her scream of pain was something I will never forget.

It was my sixteenth birthday. My mother had taken the day off to celebrate with me. So many of my birthdays had been ruined by

my father, but this one ended up being the worst.

The day had started out amazing. We'd gone to a local river, hiking through the forest. Mom wasn't able to shift any more, her

wolf had become too weak over the years, but we still made the most of our time.

It was while we were having dinner, in the evening, the time when parties and events would have occurred in the pack, that it

happened. At first, mother stopped, food midway to her mouth. She had such a strange look on her face, but then it happened.

She grabbed her neck where her mating mark was and screamed. I ran to her and held her, used to her 'episodes' by now. But

this time, it was more than she could survive

She died in my arms, leaving me alone in the world at sixteen.

If it wasn't for Benny, I don't know what would have happened to me. I probably would have ended up in the human foster care

system. But, I had already started working at the diner, covering for my mother. Mom had told Benny that she had cancer. It's not

something that werewolves get, given their healing power, but Benny didn't know my mom was a wolf, so it worked.

So, he let me work in her place when she was "sick" and when she passed, he covered for me, letting me continue working for

him and making sure that I finished school.

He retired from cooking a few months ago, but he still comes in every day, keeping an eye on me and the diner.

I'm always careful when the buses come through. Lots of transient people hit on me thinking they can have an easy one-night

stand or a 'quickest' with me. Benny makes sure that I stay safe, but I'm always careful when the bus people, as I call them, come

in to eat during their layover.

Several days before my 18th birthday, a giant of a man came in, reminding me of the warriors in my old pack. It wasn't so much

that he was tall, I'm fairly tall for a woman at 5'11", but he was broad and muscular. He stared at me when he first

came in, then disappeared before he ordered food. It was bizarre and I was concerned that he might be a werewolf, but he was a

bus person, so who knows.

On my

18th birthday, I wake up, having no intention of celebrating. My birthdays have become something not worth remembering. I

didn't get my wolf, my father banished me and my mother died. Who wants to celebrate a day where these awful things

happen? The only positive is that I am officially an adult by human standards and no one can force me to leave now.

However, all my plans go out the window when I'm in the shower and I hear her.

'Oh Grace, you've been through so much waiting for me. I'm sorry it took so long.

"Who is that?" I say, looking past the shower curtain to see the bathroom is empty.

'It's me Grace, your wolf. My name is Maia.'

"I don't have a wolf. I'm too old to get my wolf." I say out loud.

'No, I've always been a part of you, but I had to wait before I awakened.'

'Wait for what?' I ask in my head. If it's not my wolf, I won't get a response.

'I had to wait for the Guardian spirit that was meant to be ours. His life was longer than it was meant to be. The Moon Goddess

granted the wish of another Guardian and spared his life. I've been waiting to awaken until I received my Guardian spirit.'

'So, you're real? You're my wolf?'

'Yes Grace. You won't ever be alone again. I will always be with you.'

I hadn't realized just how lonely I felt until now, causing tears to run down my cheeks.

'Maia. It's good to finally meet you.'

'It's good to meet you too Grace.'

At work, I told Benny that I needed the evening off. When he asked, I told him it was my birthday and I hadn't planned to

celebrate, but I changed my mind. He grabbed me a cupcake and told me to go enjoy my evening.

## Chapter 297

That night, I went into the forest surrounding the small town. When Maia confirmed that we were alone, I stripped off my clothes

and let her begin the first shift. It was agonizing. Usually, the human form shifts at age 10 when the body isn't fully developed. My

first shift being at 18 and without any family or a mate to assist made it excruciating.

After hours of my bones slowly breaking and rearranging, I lay panting on the forest floor. Maia pushes forward and picks us up

off the ground. We're wobbly, not being used to being on four paws.

I'm mesmerized by everything. Suddenly, I can hear things in the forest that were quiet before. I can smell the river where my

mom and I hiked on my birthday two years ago. I can hear and smell the small animals of the forest, foraging for food or moving

around in their little dens for the evening. My eyesight is sharper and where I couldn't see in the dark before, now everything is

clear.

Maia takes off at a run and I let her have control. Her yip of excitement causing me to be excited for her. We run until we smell a

stronger scent of the forest. 'It's a pack. We should be careful to stay off their pack lands.' Maia tells me.

We tu

and run in another direction, until we come to another pack territory several miles away. Again we turn, being careful not to cross



into the pack's lands and continue our run. When we get to the river, Maia slows to a walk. She takes us to the edge of the river

and looks into the water. My wolf is mostly black, with colors of light and dark brown intermixed giving her fur an exotic look that

I've never seen on another wolf.

"You're beautiful Maia."

After running all night, we head back, and I'm able to get some sleep before going to work the next day.

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It's been over a week since Maia showed up and I've settled into a new routine. I go to work, during the day and at night I let

Maia run, Now that I have her, I've begun thinking about what I should be doing. She says that as a Guardian, we have a

purpose, but she either doesn't know what it is, or she's not telling me.

I'm enjoying my enhanced senses. Everything is new. I've learned that the cook has a crush on me and has since he started

here. I learned that Benny tells everyone my mother made him my guardian before her death, and that's why no

one ever bothered me. I learned that humans have a rather boring smell, but werewolves smell great, like the forest.

Maia and I skirt along the pack lines at night, taking in the scents. I can tell she misses being a part of a pack, but I have no

intentions of going back to my father's pack and she agrees, knowing everything that my mother and I endured. So, it's a bit

startling when I hear the doorbell chime one evening, as I'm getting close to getting off work. The first scent to hit my nose is the

forest. It's the first werewolf that has come in since I got Maia. I'm not sure how to react. Should I be nervous, or will it be fine. I

don't know if I smell like a rogue to other wolves. Since I didn't get my wolf when I was 10, I wasn't technically banished from a

pack like a normal wolf. It's different when a human is banished.

Maia jumps up in my head. 'Maia, is everything okay?' I ask her.

'I need to see him.' She says. So I brace myself and walk out of the kitchen.

As soon as I do, I smell it, sandalwood and cedar. It smells like the forest, and home and something sensual and mouthwatering

all at once.

I turn to look around the room, wanting to know who the person is that smells so good and that's when I see him. It's the man

from over a week ago and he's

looking right at me.

Maia pushes forward. "Mate." She says quietly.

I huge smile spreads across his face. "Mate." He repeats.

## Chapter 298

The irony of this situation is not lost on me, proving that the Moon Goddess does, indeed, have a sense of humor. I kidnapped a

Guardian nearly a year ago to forcibly take her as my mate. She ended up being underage, so me trying to mark her didn't work.

While I've seen the error of my ways and realize what I did was a terrible thing, here I am, looking into the eyes of my mate, who

is also a Guardian.

She walks over to me, eyeing me cautiously. "What can I get you to drink?" She asks me.

"I'd like a water, your name and what time you get off work. I think we have some things to discuss, don't you?"

"Water. Coming right up." Before she can turn away from me, I grab her hand. "And your name?"

I hear someone standing up behind me. She looks past me. "It's okay, Benny."

She turns back to me. "My name is Grace and I don't think we have anything to talk about. Are you going to leave before you

order food, or should I really bring your water this time?"

Okay, the sass is turning me on. Well, if I'm honest, anything my mate does will most likely turn me on, but I love a girl who is

strong and sassy. Not that I have much experience with them. I've been on the run for years and in a cell for the past 6 months

having my ass beaten nearly every day.

“I’m not going anywhere Grace.”

She nods and turns to head in the back to get my water. I feel the man, Benny, walking up behind me.

“Son, unless you want a world of trouble, you better leave that little girl alone.”

I stand, turning to face the man who may be tall, but he’s not as tall as I am, he’s lean where I’m broad, making him half my size,

physically, if that, and he’s at least twice my age, not to mention, he’s human. “Sir, with all due respect, I don’t have any intention

of hurting Grace, but I do need to speak with her.”

To his credit, he doesn’t back down from what is obviously a fight he can’t win. Before he says something that will piss me off,

Grace is there, getting in between.

1. US.

“Benny, go sit down, I’ve got this.” She turns and looks up at me, but not a lot, my girl is tall. “You!” She points her finger in my face. “Sit down.”

And I know in that moment that my girl is an Alpha. I can feel the power of her aura pushing out. I’m not even sure she realizes it.

I do as she commands, not entirely of my own free will. Damn.

She leans over the table and her delicious scent of cherry blossoms fills my nostrils. “I get off in 30 minutes. I’ll talk to you then.

Do you want food?”

I smirk at her because I can tell that her being this close to me is having an effect on her too. She may be acting like she’s all

kinds of pissed off with me, but I can smell her arousal at being this close to her mate. “I’ll take whatever your favorite is.”

She smirks back at me, and I realize I may have made a mistake.

When she returns, I chuckle. A banana split. Not my choice of dinner, but I’ll deal with it for one night.

I eat slowly, watching her as she goes around taking orders, cleaning tables, and talking to any customer that isn’t me.

I have so many questions for her. Where are her parents? Why is she working, being that she's an Alpha? Why is she working in a diner in a human town outside of any pack land? Does she know she's a Guardian? If so, does she understand that as soon as the word gets out that a Guardian has passed away, country will be searching for her, putting her at great risk. Does she understand the mate bond? Most werewolves respond differently to finding their mate than she did. She almost acted as if she was angry that I'm her mate. I hope she doesn't think I'll let her reject me. Not happening. every Alpha male in the the I need to contact Rik Forte, Alpha of the Canyon Ridge pack, and find out which Guardian died. I'm guessing it was during the battle with the vampires. It won't matter if it was Clint or Angel, both Canyon Ridge and Shadow Falls packs will be in mourning. They need to know that I've found their reincarnated Guardian. I don't know why Grace is here, in this small town, but she will need to be protected if she won't allow me to mark her right away. The safest place for her will be with the other Guardians and me, her mate.

## Chapter 299

There's a lot for us to emotionally unpack in our first conversation.

When her 30 minutes are up, she comes to collect the dishes from my table before going behind the counter and disappearing

into the back. I perk up my ears, ensuring that she doesn't plan to sneak out the back. I'm pleasantly surprised when she returns,

with a purse hanging across her neck and chest, and sits down across from me.

She stares at me a moment. "Well? You wanted to talk? Talk."

"Not here, I'll walk you home."

“I don’t think so. I have no intention of letting you know where I live.”

I lean forward. “You know what I am, so you know that I can track you. I don’t think you want your human friend to hear our conversation, do you?”

She looks past me and realizes that he’s watching us and trying to listen in on our conversation.

She stands. “Goodnight Benny.” She says and waits for me to stand up and follow her out.

Before we walk out the door, Benny calls out to her. “Call me and let me know you’re okay Gracie.”

She nods and we step outside. I have so many questions, but as jealousy flares in my gut, Louis thrashing around in my head,

the first one that comes out of my mouth has nothing to do with anything I’d been thinking about.

“What is he to you? Benny. He’s

old enough to be your father.”

“Old enough to be my grandfather, and he’s most likely the reason that I didn’t end up in the human foster care system. And

you’re not exactly one to talk about being old. What are you, forty?”

I scoff at her comment about my age. I want to know more about Benny, but that will do for now. “My name is Eli, I’m 32, and

does that mean that your parents are dead?”

“My mother is dead, I have no idea about my father, nor do I care.”

“But you’re an Alpha.”

She turns, looking at me startled. “How do you know that?”

“Uh, because you commanded me back there to sit down and I felt your Alpha

## Chapter 300

“This is me.” I tell him when we arrive at my apartment. Maia really could have given me the head’s up about being this guy’s

Guardian. I don’t know exactly what that means, but Maia is adamant that we are now bound to him. This man who is practically

old enough to be my father but is actually my mate.

It’s not that he’s unattractive. He has a dark and broody look to him, dark skin, dark hair, and dark eyes. Even through his

clothes, I can tell that he's ripped. His broad shoulders and chest look like solid muscle. His legs are the size of tree trunks, and I

can see the muscle cutting lines through his jeans like they are molded to him.

But it doesn't matter. I know how toxic the mate bond is. I lived it, watching my father mistreat my mother, then slowly watching

her die. I refuse to put myself in that position.

"Thanks for walking me home. Good talk." I step up to open my door when he takes my hand.

"We're not done yet. We still have a lot to talk about."

"I'm done talking. I gave you more time than I would normally give a stranger. I have things to do. Goodnight." I pull my hand out

of his and go inside, shutting the door in his face.

I wait about an hour before going outside. I sniff the air. I can still smell him, but he's not waiting for me. I take a deep breath,

smelling his sandalwood scent which lingers in the air. Why did our Moon Goddess have to make our mates smell so good. As if

it wasn't bad enough that shifters are physically attractive. already, but then you have to add a mouthwatering scent as well? It's

almost cruel.

I walk to the edge of the forest, quickly pulling off my clothes and shifting. I feel like someone is watching me, but as I look

around and sniff the air, I can't detect anyone nearby. I turn and let Maia run. We follow our usual path, going in one direction

until we come to the pack boundary, then turning and going in the other direction until we get to the next pack's boundary and

finally to the river.

Maia drinks some water and turns to head home when I see him. He's huge, easily the size of an Alpha wolf. He's solid black,

blending into the forest and the shadows. If the moon wasn't so bright tonight, I doubt I would have even seen him.

Maia puts her nose in the air, breathing deeply. 'It's him.' She says, practically

purring in my head.

'Who?' I ask her.

'Our mate, Eli and his wolf.' She starts to walk toward him.

'What are you doing?'"

'Going to see our mate. I want to meet him.'

'What? No! We're going home.'

We stare at him for a moment, while I battle with her in my head. 'Fine.' She finally gives in.

"Thank you.'

When we get to where my clothes are, I can still feel him. I can't walk in my wolf form to my apartment. I don't want to change

while he's watching, but I don't really have a choice. I turn my back from where I feel eyes on me and shift before putting on my

clothes quickly and jogging home, locking my door behind me.

I'm not sure if I appreciate having someone watching over me, or if it feels like I have a stalker.

'He's watching over us.' My love-sick wolf says. 'He was making sure we were safe.'

'Do you know what he meant about Alphas wanting to force us into a mate bond?' 'Yes. The Guardians have a long history of

being forced into mate bonds with Alphas who want to keep them in their packs. We provide strength and therefore power to a

pack we belong to. He is right. Once word gets out that a Guardian has died, every Alpha in the country will be looking for us.

We'll have to be careful and stay away from other werewolves.'

'Well, until today, it hasn't been a problem, so we'll just keep doing what we're doing.'

The next day is much the same. I get up and head to work. I'm only there a few minutes, when I hear the bell ring over the door,

and I smell his scent. I may not have allowed Eli into my home, but I can't exactly kick him out of the diner.

He orders food and literally sits in the seat until the end of my shift. "You know, most people eat and leave."