

## Broken 301

Chapter 0301 "I'll leave when you do. You may be done talking but I'm not." He says and I sigh. "I'm not sure you realize how at

risk you are. I have some ideas for you, but we need to talk privately." "Fine." I go behind the counter to clock out and get my

purse before walking up to him. "Let's go." We walk outside. "You know, until you came along, I wasn't 'at risk' of anything." I use

my fingers to make air quotes when I say at risk. "Up until a week ago, you didn't have a wolf either. Now, you not only have a

wolf, but you have a Guardian. Add to that, you're an Alpha female, and every male Alpha on the planet will be looking for you

very soon. Word of Clint's death. will travel fast." I feel Maia flinch in my head. 'Maia, what is it?' I remember Clint and Donovan.

Donovan was the wolf with the Guardian spirit before me and Clint was his human." "How do you know Clint?" I direct my

question to Eli. "I know all three Guardians or did. I don't have the best reputation with all of them. However, I called the Alpha of

Canyon Ridge Pack last night, to find out which Guardian had died. They recently went to war with some vampires and one of

the Guardians was killed, which is how you ended up with your Guardian. spirit." at you you I nod. "They want you to come there

to visit them. I told Rik, the Alpha, that have some things going on, but I'd try to convince you to go to their pack. You'll be safe

there until you agree to let me mark you." I stop and slowly turn to look at him. "Excuse me? Mark me?" He turns and stands

over me. "Yeah, you know, my canines go into your neck at your marking spot, yours go into mine and then we mate, solidifying

the bond." "I don't think so old man. Not happening. And I'm perfectly happy where I'm at." "You're perfectly happy working in a

human diner, skirting around pack. territories at night, hoping that they don't realize what you are and try to force you into their

pack so their Alpha or his heir can mark you?" He takes my chin between his thumb and forefinger, getting so close that I can

feel his breath on my lips, his eyes boring into mine. "And I'm not old." I scoff at him but I have to admit, his close proximity is having an effect on me. I can feel the heat pooling in my center and that is nothing compared to Mala purring in my head. I swear she's ready to shift then smack him in the face with her tail before presenting her backside to him. How did I end up with a hussy for at wolf? 'I'm not a hussy. He's our mate and look at him. He's big and strong. I wonder if every part of his body is as big as what we can see.' She drools over our mate. "Seriously Maia?" 'Well, if you won't...' And before I realize what she's going to do, she's pushed me forward enough to close the distance between us, my lips pressing against his. Before I can react and pull back, he's moved his hand to the back of my head, holding it in place while he tilts his head, his warm, soft lips pressing against mine hungrily before sliding his tongue across my lips. I'm overwhelmed by his smell. The taste of him on my lips is making me dizzy and I moan without realizing it. As soon as I do, his tongue sweeps into my mouth and a soft growl comes from deep in his chest. I grab hold of his shirt, my head spinning with the sensations that he's causing. His other arm comes around me, holding me up as my knees go weak. His tongue dominates my mouth, tasting me, teasing me. I hope he's not disappointed with my inexperience. My one previous kiss was at age 8, where a pack member in my class stole a kiss at school. Other than that, I haven't exactly had the opportunity to kiss anyone. Wait! What am I doing? I push away from him. "That, that can never happen again." He gives me a cocky grin before leaning forward and rubbing his nose against mine. "Your wolf seems to disagree." He says and kisses my nose before letting me go.

### Chapter 0303

I can see her mind working as she stares into her tea. I stay quiet, waiting her out. "My father was a great father and Alpha for the first ten years of my life. I was his only child, the Alpha heir. When I didn't get my wolf at age 10, he was patient at first. But

then, over time, he became angry and he changed. Eventually, he began taking it out on my mother, trying to get her to conceive

another heir, one worthy of being Alpha." She stresses the word worthy, and I'm guessing that was his word.

"He banished me when I was 12. My mother refused to let me leave alone. I would have died on my own, and she knew it. We

ran and found this place. For the first year, we watched every move we made, every person we saw. We were ready to run at

any moment. Mom was working as many hours as Benny would give her so she could stockpile cash in case we had to run

again."

She stirs her tea, pulling her tea bag out and putting it on her spoon, setting it aside. "Eventually, he began having sexual

relations with other women. I didn't completely understand it at first. Mom just said he was cheating on the mate bond. But as

time went on, it happened more and more frequently. My mom became weak, unable to shift into her wolf anymore."

She takes a sip of her tea before continuing. "On my sixteenth birthday, something happened. Whatever he did, it killed my

mother." A sad smile crosses her face, her eyes unfocused with her memory. "We had spent a wonderful day together. We'd

gone hiking in the forest and were having dinner together when it happened. I'm sure he knew exactly what day it was, since

he'd ruined several of my birthdays at that point."

"What do you think he did?" I ask quietly, trying not to pull her out of this state she was in, caught in her memories, speaking and

remembering at the same time. "I think he marked another she-wolf, taking another mate, knowing it would kill my mother."

"So, that's why you don't believe in the mate bond?"

She looks at me, the faraway look clearing and a fierce resolve replacing it. "Would you? I've seen what the mate bond does.

I've seen it at its best and I've seen it at its worst. I have no intention of ever letting you or any other man have that kind of power

over me.

me.”

I nod, because what can I say. Her story isn't the only one where someone abused the mate bond. Many Alphas feel that they

are above the pull of the mate bond or

that it is a binding that chains them, making them weak. However, I've seen what a positive mate bond looks like. I've seen the

relationship between Rik and Cara, as well as Liam and Angel. There is nothing about the mate bond that made those Alphas

weak. If anything, it made them stronger, better Alphas.

“Not everyone is like your father.” I say quietly.

“But how would I know if they were or weren't. If you would ever become like that.”

“How about you agree to spend time with me and get to know me before you assume that I'm like your father.”

She's already shaking her head. “My dad was different until I didn't get my wolf. If I had, I may never have known what he was

really like.”

“Your father is an asshole. Not all men or werewolves are like that. I can tell your now, even if I was a complete jerk, Louis, my

wolf, would never let me treat my mate or pup like you have been treated.”

“You don't know that.” She says quietly.

“I do know that. I've lived most of my life without a father and all of my life without a mother. I would never wish that on anyone,

especially not my own child.” I tell her.

#### Chapter 0304

When Eli tells me he's spent most of his life without parents, I'm shocked. I wasn't expecting that.

“What happened to them?” I ask. If I'm telling my story, he should tell his too.

“My mother died giving birth to me.” He stops, his jaw tightening.

“And your father?” I ask quietly. I can tell that this won't be as simple as his mother's death.

The muscle in his jaw twitches before he answers. "The short version is my father challenged our Alpha heir to a duel after he

caused the death of my older brother, the future Beta. The Alpha forbade it, but his son agreed. My father in his grief, killed the

Alpha heir, the only child of our Alpha." He stops and takes a sip of his tea before looking back up at me.

"The Alpha forced me to watch as he beheaded my father, blamed him for the death of my brother and the Alpha heir, called him

a traitor, then he banished me. I was 12, so I understand your mother's concern about not surviving alone at that age. I almost

died as well."

I swallow hard trying to get past the lump in my throat. Our stories are very similar, only he didn't have a mother to help him.

"How did you survive?" I ask him.

He looks away from me, a small smile gracing his face. "The Luna of a nearby pack found me after I had been on my own for six

months. I was starving, dying really. She brought me clothes, food and would bring stories and read to me. Those few months

with her were the only time in my life I've ever had a mother figure."

There's obviously more to the story. "What happened?"

He sighs. A deep, heavy sigh that seems to come from his soul. "The Alpha that banished me wanted more power. He wanted

another heir. So, he attacked the pack. I heard that he planned to kill the Luna in order to weaken her mate so he could kill him

more easily."

His voice becomes strained like he's choking back tears. "I tried to save her, but I was too late."

He drinks his tea, and we sit in silence for a few minutes. "Did your previous Alpha defeat the Alpha of the other pack?"

"No, Alpha Leander killed him. However, they thought I was the one that killed Luna Estella, and they hunted me for almost 20

years. I'd only recently been

released from Liam's dungeon when I found you.

Okay, that took an unexpected turn. "Who is Liam and why were you in his dungeon?"

"Liam is the only child of Alpha Leander and Luna Estella. When his father passed away, he began hunting me."

I'm at a total loss for words, I don't even know what to say. His life has been worse than mine and I didn't think that was possible.

"How did you escape?"

He gives me a rueful smile. "I didn't. His mate, another Guardian, could tell that I was speaking the truth when I said I didn't kill

Luna Estella. After that, he bought me some clothes, gave me some money and put me on a bus that led me to you. "So you

see," he continues, "I know all about shitty Alphas. But I also know that they aren't all that way. Alpha Liam and the Alpha I spoke

to about you, Alpha Rik, they are good Alphas. They are both mated to Guardians, and they all seem very happy."

We sit in silence for a while, both of us lost in our memories and the stories we've told each other. I finally break the silence.

"Where did you go? When you left a couple weeks ago. It seemed you left in a hurry."

He nods. "I was listening to the humans in the diner. They were talking about the animal attacks in the area."

"Yeah, I remember. I was a huge problem. Animals were attacking and killing people and then as suddenly as it started, it

ended." I tell him.

"They weren't animals, they were vampires. The same vampires that were heading south to kill Alpha Liam and Alpha Rik's

packs and take their Guardians hostage as blood bags. Alpha Liam's mate, Luna Angel, was held captive for seven years by a

vampire prince. I had to warn them." He takes a deep breath. "I couldn't save Luna Estella, but I could and did give her son

sufficient warning so he could save himself."

Chapter 0305

Wait. You went back to the guy who had you in his dungeon for however many months to warn him that the vampires were

coming?”

“Yes,”

“Why?”

“It was the right thing to do. But also, I owed a debt to Luna Estella, at least in my heart. She saved me, when no one else would

help me. I couldn’t save her, but I could save her son.

“You have a weird sense of honor.” I tell him.

He thinks for a minute. “What if Benny found out what you are and fired you, maybe forced you to leave this town. He’s helped

you, protected you to some level, from what I can see.” I nod my head, not sure where he’s going with this. “Even if he turned

against you, and you found out someone was going to hurt him, wouldn’t you still feel the need to warn him?”

I think about it, then nod my head. “I guess so. I honestly don’t know. I’ve never been in that situation.”

We’ve long since finished our tea. “So, do you want to go for a run with me, instead of following me like a creeper tonight.” I say

giving him a half smile.

He smiles back. “I’d love to. But I would suggest staying farther away from those pack boundaries. The last thing you need is to

have them come sniffing around wondering about the lone female wolf that keeps hovering around their borders.” “Well, I won’t

be alone tonight, will I?” I ask before standing up and putting our mugs in the sink.

He follows me and we head out to the forest. I walk behind a tree to take

my clothes off. Eli, on the other hand, seems to have no problem with nudity. I vaguely remember living in the pack and nudity

was something common since people were always shifting either from human to wolf or wolf to human. But I’ve been living in the

human world for six years and they frown on the whole walking around naked thing.

When I’m done, I shift and Maia walks out. She sees Louis and walks over to him. Well, prances might be a better term. If she

were a human, those hips would be swinging. She walks up to him, nuzzling him before taking her face and rubbing it down the

length of his body. Then she swats him in the face with her tail and takes off. Pretty much exactly as I expected, my wolf is a hussy.

'I'm not a hussy. He's our mate and look at him. He's perfect.' She purrs.

'Did you want to roll over and show him your tummy too?' I ask her.

'I would if I thought you'd let me.'

"You do, and I'm disowning you as my wolf. We're Alpha females, we don't submit.'

'We do if it's our mate.'

I roll my eyes, in my head, since we're now in wolf form. Maia is darting in and around trees, while Louis chases us, periodically

nipping at her heels.

She's having a great time, running with her mate. We're not really paying attention to our surroundings, as Maia is too busy

flirting with Louis, until the scent hits us. We're close to the first pack border, but tonight, there are wolves standing there. They

must have been waiting for us.

Maia goes to turn and run off in the other direction, when two wolves jump out in front of us, cutting her off. Just as she turns

again to try and evade them, Louis jumps over her body, attacking the two wolves as three more come up on his

flank.

With a vicious snarl, Maia turns to face the three new wolves.

Cooper Author

Thanks everyone for being on this journey with me! I hope you are enjoying Eli and Grace's story so far. As with the first two

books, I will be updating every day. I'm hoping to have a fourth book a prequel telling Clint and Lily's story out in the next couple

of weeks, so keep a look out! And as always, let me know your thoughts. Read all your comments and appreciate all of your

feedback and support!



## Chapter 0306

I hadn't intended to tell Grace my history, or at least not yet, but it seems to have opened her up. Maybe our similar stories will

help her see that I'm not all bad and can possibly be trusted, if not as her mate, maybe as her friend.

I'm thrilled that she asks me to run with her. I would have anyway, since I need to protect her, especially with the nearby packs. I

didn't like how close to their boundaries she ran last night. It puts her at too much risk. All they have to do is see her eyes to

know what she is. Only Guardians have golden eyes.

Louis is beside himself in his happiness playing with Maia. She's definitely all in with the mate bond. He's enjoying the chase,

periodically nipping at her heels when we smell them. I hadn't realized how close we'd gotten to the pack's border, but there are

three standing at the border, almost as if they are waiting for Maia to show up, and they probably are. If this is her pattern, they

would have picked up her scent and would be waiting to confront her about why she's constantly at the edge of their territory.

When Maia turns and two more jump out, I know it's going to come down to a fight. I don't waste any time as Louis leaps over

her and begins fighting with the two wolves that blocked her escape. I know the other three will join the fight and I have to hope

that Maia will run and get far enough away that they won't follow her. They've seen her eyes.

I'm fighting off two at once and waiting for the bite to come to my flank, but it doesn't. I realize that rather than run, Maia has

joined the fight and is taking on three at once. While the two I'm fighting seem to have no problem with going for the kill with me,

the other three don't seem to be doing that with Maia. This is good and bad because I don't think she's ever been trained as a

fighter, but it also means that they know what she is and have called in reinforcements. I need to get her out of here now.

I didn't want to kill these wolves, but now it's become serious. I kick one in the throat as I go for the legs on the other. I bite down,

breaking one leg, before releasing him and clamping down on his other leg. I turn, just as the first is jumping at me and Louis's

teeth bite into his shoulder, ripping flesh from bone. He howls in pain, causing one of the wolves corraling Maia to turn toward

me.

As I watch, Maia turns, biting down on the wolf's flank and I hear his femur bone break. His howl of pain is only going to bring

more wolves faster. Time for us to

1. go.

Louis kicks out at one of the remaining wolves, breaking ribs. The last one tries

to bite down on the back of Maia's neck to restrain her, but she turns last minute and bites through his throat, his gurgling sound

the last thing we hear before he falls dead at her feet.

I run to her, nipping at her to move. She seems to understand what I mean, she takes off toward her apartment. We're running

full out for probably 15 minutes before the howls go up.

When we get to our clothes, we both shift quickly and get dressed.

"We have to leave here."

"I can't just leave. Where will I go?"

and

"We'll head toward Rik and Liam's packs. They will protect you, but we need to leave now. They will come for you, and not just

because you are a Guardian. You killed one of their pack members."

"I don't have a car. How will we leave and what about Benny?"

"You can call Benny. Do you need to get anything from your apartment?"

"Yes, everything I have left from my mother is there." I nod.

"You go to your apartment and get what you want to take, and I'll go get us bus tickets. Do NOT leave your apartment until I

come to get you."

## Chapter 0307

I take her face in my hands. "Do you understand?"

"Yes"

I reach down and kiss her quickly. "Go, I'll be there in less than 30 minutes, bet ready to leave."

I run to my hotel, grab my backpack then head to the bus station, looking for the next scheduled bus. The next one won't leave

for an hour, but that gives me enough time to get Grace and get back. I buy two tickets and run back to her apartment.

I can hear the wolves in the forest. They have found her and are surrounding her apartment. I run up to her door and knock. "It's

me, we have to go now."

She opens the door, a bag over her shoulder. "I need to stop and tell Benny."

"There's no time, you can call him from the bus. They're here. We can't fight an entire pack."

I watch as her eyes go wide. But she closes the door and we begin to jog back to the bus station. When we get there, I see the

bus is mostly loaded.

"Get on. If we're lucky, the bus is full, and they won't be able to get a ticket. If we're not lucky, we'll have to be ready to fight as

soon as we stop somewhere."

We get on the bus and find seats together. "What if they follow us?"

"I'm pretty good at evading capture. If they follow us, I'll get us out."

When the bus starts to pull away, I see several pack members pulling up in cars. I watch as they wave their hands around,

pointing to the bus. As we pull out, I see a man standing hands on his hips. His eyes meet mine and I know he's the Alpha. Shit!

This is worst case scenario.

As we start to move, I grab my phone. "I need to call Rik and after that you can. call Benny." I look at Grace. She's looking at her

bag, plucking at the seam.

"Hey." I reach over and cover her hands, waiting until she looks at me. "We'll be okay, I won't let anything happen to you and I

won't let them have you. You're mine." The last is a low, quiet growl, Louis pushing forward.

She nods but I can see she's scared. "When mom and I ran, we switched buses every one to two stops until we finally ended up

in that little town. Maybe we should do that. I have money, mom kept it hidden away in case something like

this ever happened."

I take her chin and turn her head toward me. "Will that make you feel safer?"

She nods.

"Then that's what we'll do. If there is a bus leaving within 30 minutes of our stop, we'll take it. Deal?"

"Deal."

I call Rik. He's willing to send some pack members to get us, but I let him know we're being pursued, and I'll call him when we

can ditch the tail. Then I have Grace call Benny. He's understandably concerned and worried that I've kidnapped Grace. She

seems to convince him that I'm helping her. When she tells him to call if anyone comes to the diner asking about her, I think he

finally believes her.

When she's done, I wrap my arm around her. She lays her head on my shoulder, but it's several hours before she falls asleep.

It's the middle of the night when we make our first stop. I hop off the bus, checking to see if anyone has arrived yet before going

into the bus station and seeing that another bus is leaving soon, heading west. I buy two tickets and go back to get Grace.

When I get onto the bus, she's awake, looking around concerned. When she sees me, her face relaxes. I go to her, I quietly let

her know our plans. "Come on, I got us tickets on another bus, let's go."

We grab our things and head out to yet another bus. Over the next week, we travel in every direction.

We were tailed for the first

three days, but after that, I think we finally lost them.

## Chapter 0308

It's exhausting constantly running, riding on bus after bus. We haven't had a decent meal or shower in a week. Benny called the

day after we left and let me know two 'shady looking men' were in the diner asking about a young woman. When Eli finally feels

like we can stop overnight, we get a hotel room. At first, I was concerned about only having one room, but I'm too tired to argue.

When we get to our room, I see that there are two beds.

"Get a shower. I'll be back in a bit."

"Where are you going?" I ask him.

"I'm going to look around and make sure we aren't being followed and then I'm going to get us something decent to eat. Do not

open the door for anyone."

He comes over taking my face in his hands and kisses my forehead. He pulls back and looks in my eyes.

"You'll be safe. I won't

be gone long."

After he leaves, I grab my things and head to the bathroom. I turn on the water, letting it get warm before stripping off my clothes

and getting under the stream of hot water. I lift my face, letting the water relax me.

Over the past week, we'd gone west to Arkansas, north to Iowa then west again until we got to Wyoming. Once we got to the

Rocky Mountains, we started heading south. We went through Colorado, New Mexico and finally started heading east through

Texas. I wasn't sure if Eli had a plan to get us back to Alpha Rik and Alpha Liam's packs, but he'd been in constant contact with

Alpha Rik. He was very concerned about me and wanted to hear from Eli at least twice a day to know where we were and

ensure we hadn't entered into any pack territories or been captured.

That was harder while we were in the Rockies. Much like the Appalachian Mountains back home, the Rockies are a great place

for wolf packs to live without too much interaction with humans. But we pretty much stayed on the buses and kept to ourselves.

Now we're in the middle of Texas, headed back home. At least I hope we are.

I have to admit, while Eli took my advice about changing buses, he's a master at evasion. I guess twenty years on the run will do

that. He's stealthy, quick and quiet when checking to see if we're being followed. When we were, he was able to guide us onto

buses that didn't have any wolves and get us out of the bus station undetected.

I finish washing off the residue of a long journey, before getting out and dressing in clean clothes. I take my dirty clothes and put

them in the sink to soak until after Eli has showered, then I'll put them in there with his and wash them so they can dry overnight

before we head out again.

I'm just finishing up when I hear our door open. "It's just me." He says just before the smell of food hits my nose and my stomach

grumbles.

I come out of the bathroom and see that he's managed to get us steaks, potatoes and salads. I'm so hungry I could kiss him.

He sets the food out on the small table in the room. "Go ahead and eat, I'm going to get a quick shower, then I'll join you." He

says before heading to the bathroom. I hear the shower turn on just as I dig into my food. I can't help the moan that leaves my

lips. We haven't had real food in over a week and this tastes delicious. I'm in my own world, enjoying the taste of the salty

juiciness of the steak, my eyes closed, as I savor each bite when I hear a chuckle.

My eyes snap open and I see Eli standing there watching me in nothing but a towel. My eyes travel down his body, and I was

right about his physique. He is solid muscle. His broad shoulders slide into a narrow waist giving him a deep V, before branching

out to his muscular thighs.

I unconsciously lick my lips and when my eyes return to his, I see his have darkened. "You need to stop looking at me like that

Grace.”

“Like what?” I ask but my voice is breathier than I expected.

He stalks over to me, leaning over the chair, his arms caging me in and bringing his face to mine. “Like you’re planning to skip

dinner and go straight for dessert.”

His body is so close that I can feel the heat emanating off of him. My throat has gone dry and any retort I might have had dies on

my lips.

I lick my lips and his eyes drop to watch the movement before returning to mine. I’m caught in a trance as he moves closer until

his lips almost touch mine. I feel his tongue slide across my lips and his eyes go even darker.

Chapter 0309

“You taste exactly like you smell. Delicious.” And before I know what he’s doing, his lips have crashed into mine and his tongue

slides into my mouth. I moan into his mouth, my hands reaching up to grab hold of something, anything, and latching onto his

strong biceps as heat spreads to my core.

He takes his time tasting every inch of my mouth before pulling back. “Mmmmm, yum.” He says before licking my lips once

more and standing up.. When he does, I come face to face with the proof of how much he enjoyed that kiss. I don’t have

anything to compare it to, but the man looks big and definitely long if the towel poking in my direction is any indication.

I know my eyes go wide as he steps back, chuckling. He walks over to his bag, grabbing it before disappearing back into the

bathroom. He returns a few minutes later dressed in basketball shorts and nothing else.

He comes back over, leaning down and running his nose over my cheek before whispering in my ear.

“Baby, you smell divine,

but you need to eat and so do I.” He says before taking the seat across from me.

I can feel my cheeks flame at his reference to scenting my arousal. Rather than saying anything, I dig into my dinner again.

Eli speaks first, changing the subject, thankfully. "I think our best course of action will be to continue to head east. I'm very

familiar with this stretch of highway that we're on. It's actually where Liam and his pack warriors caught me. I'd like to follow this

until we get to Florida. From there, I think we should run in wolf form back to north Georgia. That's where we are going. I have a

place in mind where we can stop and get our bearings before going to Rik and Liam's packs."

"How long will it take us?" I ask.

"Probably another week, depending on the bus schedules. They make so many stops in between that it's slow going, but I also

think that if we continue to be safe, we can stop every night or two and rest."

"I like the idea of resting every night. The constant traveling without real food or decent sleep is taking its toll on me."

If I hadn't been paying attention, I might have missed the quick tension in his lips before he wiped it away.

"What is it?" I ask him.

He looks at me "What's what?"

"There's something you're not telling me. What is it?"

I watch as he contemplates telling me before he sighs. "I'm running out of money. I'm not sure how much longer I can pay for

bus tickets if I also need to pay for hotels every night."

I blink at him. How had I not realized that he was paying for everything. I'd been so stressed out about being followed then

exhausted and hungry, that it hadn't even occurred to me. I get up and go to my bag, pulling out a wad of cash.

"Here. I'm sorry I didn't think to give you money before."

"No, you should save your money." He starts to say before I cut him off.

"This money was always meant to be used if I had to run. Well, I'm on the run. You don't have to pay for everything. The only

reason you're even running is because of me. I should be funding our trip, not you. Take it."

It's not the only wad of cash that I have. My mom had stashed nearly \$10,000 before she died, and I've added another \$4,000 to



it in the last two years. I've only given Eli \$1,000. I have plenty of money left if I need to leave on my own.

"Anything that's left over, I'll give back to you." He tells me.

"Keep it all and if we need more, I have it. As I said, I should have been funding this since the beginning."

I stand and begin clearing our takeout boxes, putting them back into the bag and placing the bag by the small garbage can in the

room.

"What time do we leave tomorrow?" I ask.

"The bus leaves the station at 7am." He tells me.

"Then, I'm going to get some sleep. Good night." I say and I walk to one of the beds before pulling the sheets down and crawling

in. I hear Eli get up and go to the other bed, before the light in the room turns off.

"Good night, Grace."

## Chapter 0310

I hate that I don't have the money to support Grace. It's really bothering me. I realize I've spent my life on the run and that I've

been in one of Liam's cells for the last six months, but it doesn't sit right not being able to take care of our mate. What's worse,

she and her mother seem to have stockpiled money over the last six years since they ran from Grace's father. How can Louis

and I prove that we are worthy mates if I can't even afford a bus ticket and a place to stay for longer than a week?

I'm laying in the dark, staring at the ceiling and contemplating what I will need to do once I have her safely within the borders of

Rik's or Liam's territories when I hear her voice.

"Are you awake?" She whispers. I was pretty sure she hadn't fallen asleep. Her breathing hadn't changed to that deep breathing

a person gets when they drift off

to dreamland.

I sit up on my elbow and look over at her bed. Whether she did it intentionally or not, she put herself in the bed farthest from the

door, which is where I wanted her. I know she's a Guardian, but she's untrained and if anyone breaks through the door, I want

them going through me before they get to her.

"Yeah, I'm awake. Is everything alright?" I ask her.

It's quiet. I wait, but she doesn't respond.

"Grace?"

"Can I come lay with you? I...I don't mean for anything to happen, I just....I just got used to your scent when we were sleeping

on the bus and now, I can't fall asleep."

I scoot over, keeping myself between her and the door, and pat the bed next to me. "Come here."

When she crawls in beside me, I lay on my back. She sits up next to me, looking down at me. I'm not sure what she wants, so I

pat my chest in invitation. She immediately curls up beside me and lays her head on my chest. I wrap my arm around her,

holding her close.

A sense of peace flows through me. It's a foreign feeling to me, not something you feel when you are constantly looking over

your shoulder for someone who is chasing after you. And while I'm still looking over my shoulder for a different reason, having

my mate lying beside me calms me in a way I've never felt before.

"What if they catch me?" She says quietly.

"They won't, I won't let them get to you."

"But what if they do? You can't fight an entire pack, and neither can I."

I kiss the top of her head and take a deep breath of her cherry blossom scent. "I'll die before I let anyone forcibly mark you." I tell

her, my voice going deep and gruff as Louis pushes forward.

She lifts her head up, looking at me. "I want you to make me a promise." She

says.

“Tell me what it is before I promise. I won’t promise you something when I don’t know if I can keep that promise.”

“If it looks like I’ll be caught, if it looks like they are going to take me, I want you to mark me.”

I jerk back as if she’s struck me. “I won’t let it come to that.” I say, my mind reeling.

Of course, I want to mark her, she’s my mate. But I don’t want to mark her under those conditions. I want her to accept me, to

want the bond. I want what Rik and Liam have with their mates. I want the love and respect that I see between them. Forcing my

mark, even if she’s asking me to, will not give us the start to a relationship where that type of love and respect comes easily.