

Broken 401

Chapter 401

On the day we are to leave for the tournament, we pack up our four SUVs. Eli and I had pooled our money but could only afford

one for the pack. The other three we rented in the city.

Our destination would take us about twelve hours to arrive, without taking stops into consideration. We were going to a place in

northern Kansas. The council had gotten the state to close a state park for our arrival. This way, we wouldn't risk running into

humans. With the large numbers of werewolves coming into the territory, the state was paid well to shut down their tourist spot.

The location was chosen, I was told, because it's in the middle of the country.

Our day is long and boring. Eli and I practice using our gifts of mind linking our pack but the further away we get, the harder it is.

We link farther than expected, equally annoying different members of the pack as we test our reach. Eventually, we are no longer

able to reach them.

When we finally arrive, it is early evening. We check in, and I see that they are expecting all 298 packs in the country to show.

That means my father will be here.

I hadn't considered what it would be like to have all the packs in attendance, and not all of them. are large enough or strong

enough to bring 20 contestants, but overall, there are nearly 5100 werewolves that will be participating in the battles. That

doesn't include the mates or pups that have come along to watch and support their packs. Our pack is bringing Hope, Amber

and Carlos's baby. Cara is bringing Aolis, as ho

wanted to spend time with Baby Lily Liam and Angel. are bringing Richie, and Dustin is bringing his human mate, Sarah. She

generously offered to watch over the babies while the packs are battling.

As our group signs in for their fights, it looks like tomorrow will be the longest day. There are just over 3300 warriors that will be

battling for points and to win tomorrow's challenge. From our pack, there will be 16 warriors.

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As we're signing in, Rik, Cara and their pack arrive. I haven't seen Lily since she and after saying hello, I snag her from Cara. Eli

and I had talked about trying for a pup after the tournament and ever since, it's been on my mind. With my Guardian sisters both

having pups of their own in the last couple of months it has brought it to the forefront of my mind.

I look down at Lily in my arms. She is looking back at me and while she has her mother's curly brown hair, she has her father's

glacier blue eyes. She reaches her little hand up and I give it kisses before she starts fussing.

I look at Cara. "She prefers Rik. She has ever since the day she was born." She sighs. Rik turns. coming over to rub Lily's head

and leave a kiss on her forehead. She immediately calms.

"Wow, that must be frustrating." I say, watching in awe at Rik's uncanny ability to soothe his

daughter.

Cara laughs. "You'd think so, but it's great in the middle of the night when she's fussy. She doesn't want me, only her daddy."

Rik takes Lily from my arms, holding her against his chest. "Daddy doesn't mind, does he Princess?"

My heart aches with the sudden desire to have a baby. To feel Eli's pup growing inside me. I feel tears of longing prick at my

eyes before I swallow the lump in my throat and pull myself together. "Where do they have your pack staying?" I ask them, trying

to divert the conversation.

"Uh..." Cara pulls the map out and points to where the dot is circled. "Here."

I pull out our map and compare. "We're close, that's good. How many warriors do you have battling tomorrow?"

"Fourteen tomorrow. I know Angel and Liam have sixteen. How about you?"

"We have sixteen as well. But we don't have anyone battling on day two. We don't have a Lead Warrior yet and we left Noah and

Sirona in charge of the pack.” I lower my voice. “We’ve had several individuals coming to us who needed medical attention. I

know some of the problem packs and I can’t wait to meet their Alphas. I hope I have all of them in battles.”

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Cara scoffs. “Don’t be greedy. Save some for me and Angel. You know if they are arrogant Alphas it will kill them to lose to a female.” She says and we both smirk at that.

“Lily, your mommy and Aunt Grace are scary. So, take note, that’s exactly how I want you to be when you grow up.” Rik coos to

Lily, and we all laugh.

Eli walks over, saying hello to everyone. “Hey, we’re close to where Cara and Rik’s pack are going to be staying. I hope Angel

and Liam are close by as well.”

Just as I say it, I hear her voice. “Where do you want us?”

“Angel!” Cara and I make a beeline for her, pulling her into a group hug. I haven’t seen her since she had Richie.

“Where is that baby?” Cara says as Liam walks up behind her, carrying a car seat in one hand and a huge baby bag thrown over

his shoulder.

Angel turns and takes the carrier from Liam. “Cara, Grace, I’d like to introduce you to Richard Clint.”

He’s beautiful. His head is covered in peach fuzz, no real hair yet. He’s sleeping, so I can’t tell what color his eyes are.

Cara and I ohhh and awwww over him and I once again feel my heart ache with my desire to have a baby. Sirona said it might

take some time after coming off the birth control I started months ago, but after today, I’ll be quitting those pills.

“Did Alessia go nuts when you could finally shift again?” Cara asks Angel.

“Oh my goddess. I thought she was going to have an orgasm on the spot. She ran around like a fool for hours making Cyran

chase her all over the pack lands.”

Liam comes up behind her, kissing the side of her head. “He didn’t mind at all.”

Cara is smiling at them. “Kai didn’t mind either. He was so excited to have Artemis back.”

“Did you find out where you’re staying?” I ask Liam as Rik and Eli join us. Angel immediately grabs Lily from Rik’s arms.

I Liam pulls out the map and shows me where his circled dot is. Cara and I pull out ours and compare. “Looks like Cara and Rik’s

pack is in between ours, but it seems like we’re all fairly close together. Have you guys been here before?” I ask.

“No, the place changes every time.” Rik says, looking around. “Last time it was in the Rocky Mountains. That was great.”

“Looks like everything starts early tomorrow. I think we’d better head to our cabins and get settled, baby.” Eli says to me.

“Yes, the first day is, by far, the longest. But it’s also where you have a chance to get ahead in points. Even though the warriors

don’t have the ability to get as many points per person as the other days, there are more of them, so you can rack them up.”

Liam says, looking very eager to get the battles started. I’m not surprised. His pack has been named the strongest for the last

two tournaments, or eight years, ever since Liam was 18.

We say our goodbyes, making plans to meet up for breakfast at 4:30am since the battles start at 6am.

As I turn to head back to the SUV, I see him. He’s walking across the parking lot, heading in a different direction. My father. He’s

holding a toddler and laughing with some of my old pack members.

As I stare, he turns and looks me in the eye briefly, before turning away. He didn’t even recognize me.

Chapter 403

I wait until we’re alone in the cabin, Grace’s emotions have been all over the place since we arrived. I know some of it is concern

for seeing her father, but there was something else that I felt

and didn't understand.

"Baby, what's going on? Your emotions have been all over since we got here. It's not all about your father. It feels like something else."

She walks up to me, leaning against my chest and my arms immediately go around her. I pick her up and sit on the edge of the

bed, putting her in my lap. "Talk to me."

She's got her head tucked up under my chin so I can't see her face. When I hear her sniffing. I lean back, putting my finger

under her chin and lifting her face. "Baby?"

"Yes." She says as if answering my question, her voice quivering as the tears start to fall. Okay.

saying 'yes' to me asking her what's going on doesn't answer my question.

"I'm not sure I understand."

She tucks her head against me again, her hand rubbing the tears from her eyes. I'm rubbing my hand up and down her back,

trying to comfort her.

"I want a baby."

I feel like time stands still for a moment. My hand stops its comforting motion on her back. When I feel her tense in my arms, I start my motion again.

"We talked about it before. We said after the tournament. And now, seeing Lily and Richie it feels like my ovaries just dropped a

bunch of eggs into my uterus to get fertilized but I'm still on birth control, so it won't take but, but." She sniffles, burying her face

in my chest again.

"But?" I ask gently. Honestly, I'm thrilled. We've done so much in the pack that I'm not nearly as concerned about bringing a baby

into the world. And the thought of my mate's stomach growing with my pup has me and Louis ready to do cartwheels.

She looks up at me with her beautiful milk chocolate eyes, glistening with her tears. "I want to start trying."

I lean down and gently kiss her lips. "Okay."

She pulls back looking at me, hope shining bright in her eyes. "Really?"

I chuckle at her. "There is nothing that I want more than to build a family with you, Grace. I wanted to wait until our pack was in a better place, but I feel like it's good now. Things will

+15 MONO

continue to improve, but yeah, let's start trying." I can't help the smile that spreads across my face. "Want to start right now?" I

ask, wagging my eyebrows at her.

She laughs but then her face drops. "There's something else."

"I'm listening." I tell her, but I'm distracted by the idea of putting a pup in my mate.

"I saw my father." That gets my attention and all thoughts of pup making get pushed aside.

"Where? When?"

"When we were walking to our SUV to come to the cabin. He looked right at me."

I tense. I wanted to make sure she wasn't alone when she faced her father.

"And?"

"And he didn't even recognize me."

I think for a minute. "You were only 12 when he banished you, right?"

"Yes."

"Well, you're a lot different than you were six years ago, Grace. Not only that, but I'm also sure he's not expecting to see you

here."

"He was carrying a toddler. I think it's the child Liam and Rik told me about." She says quietly.

"That's very possible, and it's

possible that his mate will be here. If you plan to confront also very him while we're here, you need to be prepared for that." I

hold her for another couple of minutes.

"Come on. Let's take a shower and get into bed. We have a very early morning and we've had a long day of traveling."

"What about trying?" My sassy mate says as she gets off my lap.

“Who says we can’t ‘try’ in the shower?” I say, and I chase my mate into the bathroom where we ‘try’ three times before we finally drop into bed.

The next morning, we both groan when the alarm wakes us ridiculously early, but by the time we get to breakfast, the energy is buzzing from everywhere and we’re ready to cheer our warriors on to victory.

As we’re eating, the elders come in to announce the beginning of the tournament.

“Welcome to the Tournament of the Moon Goddess. This four-day tournament will showcase the strengths of your packs and allow us to rank the packs in strength and numbers.”

He goes through an explanation of how the days will be divided, points given and that each day the packs will be ranked based

on their total number of points. There is a challenger board, where we can watch the progression of the matches and see which

of the challengers progresses as well as who they will fight in the next round. All fights will be in human form, which is why

Carlos is able to participate.

Chapter 404

After breakfast, the battles begin. These initial fights are elimination of the weaker packs, and because there are so many packs,

it’s time consuming.

At lunch time, everyone breaks to eat. We meet up with Cara, Rik, Liam and Angel. All our warriors are still in the battle. The first

two rounds have been completed, eliminating just under 2500 wolves. The afternoon battles will have fewer contestants, but they

will last longer as the stronger warriors progress to the next levels.

We’re getting food and finding a table when Angel turns. “Jude?”

I watch as an older gentleman turns, looking at Angel. “Do I know you?”

Angel sets down her tray before walking over to the gentleman. Liam is watching her uneasily, and Grace reaches her arms out

to take Richie. Liam passes him off and follows Angel.

“Jude. It’s me, Angel Bennis. Well, I’m Angel Holstin now.

“Angel? Angel, oh my goddess.” He says and pulls her into a hug, eliciting a loud snarl from Liam. Jude immediately drops his

arms stepping back.

“Alpha Liam. I meant no disrespect. I was friends with Angel’s father. We were warriors together.” He says, exposing his throat in

submission. I guess everyone here knows the Alpha of the pack that has been named the strongest for nearly a decade.

Angel turns to Liam. “Jude was the one that helped my family. The only time I remember feeling safe after we left the pack.”

Liam’s entire demeanor changes and he reaches o helping my mate and her family.”

his hand. “I owe you a debt of gratitude for

Jude looks back at Angel. “When we found your parents...” He stops, getting choked up. “We thought, we thought you...”

“It’s a long story. One I’d be happy to share when we have more time if you want to hear it.”

“I want to hear it.”

As I watch, another Alpha walks up. “Jude, what’s going on here?”

“Alpha Paul, May I introduce you to Liam and Angel Holstin. Angel is the daughter of Richard and Kathryn Bennis.” Jude’s

manner changes as the Alpha approaches. He is no longer relaxed. His Alpha or this conversation is making him nervous.

The Alpha turns to Jude. “The couple that left our pack so suddenly and we later found killed? But I thought their daughter died

with them.” He says, turning back to Angel.

I can see that Angel is following Jude’s lead and treading lightly in the conversation. “No, as I mentioned to Jude, it’s a long story

and one that we don’t have time to get into right now.”

The Alpha stares at Angel a moment too long, causing Liam to step closer to her, putting his arm

around her protectively.

"I would like to know why your family left. From what my father tells me, he never understood why his Lead Warrior would just

leave and turn rogue. He searched for your family for years until we found them dead."

"Angel's father didn't trust your father with his daughter's life." Liam says.

"My father would never have harmed a member of his pack. That is preposterous. I don't know what you think your father's

reasons were, but my father was a good Alpha." As I watch, Jude's jaw clenches. Definitely something going on there.

"What is it?" Grace asks me, patting Richie on the back and bouncing softly like I've seen Angel and Cara doing when they are

holding the babies.

"Something is off with that Alpha. We've seen too many of our pack members react around Alphas. not to notice the signs." I say

quietly. Grace looks over and it only takes her a minute.

"Definitely something off. Do you know who they are?" She replies just as quietly.

"I'm getting that they are from Angel's pack. The one her parents ran from when they found out." I don't say any more since

we're in a room full of shifters and everyone can hear. Angel hasn't announced what she is, and it isn't my place to say it.

Liam reaches over and kisses she side of Angel's head, his eyes never leaving the Alpha. "Show him, little angel."

My eyes go to the Alpha. I see the minute Angel's eyes change. His eyes go from offended to covetous. And that's why her

parents took her and ran.

"Guardian." He says it in a purring voice that makes even my skin crawl.

"Well, the wolf's out of the bag now." Cara says beside us. I look around the room and see that it's gone quiet. But they aren't all

just looking at Angel. They've noticed that our packs are close. They are looking at Cara and Grace now, too.

Chapter 0405

Maia pushes forward, answering the question of the Alphas in the room. I hear a collective gasp and realize that Artemis has

come forward as well.

“All happily marked and mated.” Rik says, his voice a challenge as he stands. I realize he has passed Lily back to Cara. He’s ready for a fight.

Eli’s arm goes around me possessively. When I look, I see Louis shining in his eyes. Rik’s and Liam’s eyes have their wolves

shining in them as well. It’s a clear threat. Do not touch what is mine.

One of the elders who is managing the tournament stands. “Alphas. No one will attempt to take your mates from you. This is a

competition, but it is friendly. Your mates are marked, and everyone here can smell your scents on them. Anyone who is paying

attention will have seen the three females that will battle on the Alpha Day. Perhaps they believed they were Alpha females. but

now we all know, it’s the Guardians that are here to battle. Let us finish our lunch and get back to the competition.”

With that, the tension dissipates. Liam guides Angel back to our table, but his eyes haven’t left the Alpha. When they sit, I hand

Richie back to Angel. It’s almost like everyone in the room just realized that there are two babies at our table that belong to

Guardians. It feels like it solidifies.

the fact that we are taken.

After lunch, the packs with warriors still in battle go back to the battlefield. Others choose to go watch while some take the

afternoon to let their wolves run or relax. By 4pm, we have gotten to the final 100 warriors. All the warriors from our three packs

are still in the running. By 6pm, that number has dropped to 50 and some of Rik’s and Liam’s warriors were eliminated by our

warriors and a couple other warriors that are doing very well are still in the fight. By 8pm, we are down to the final 10. Eli and I

have five warriors still fighting, Liam has three and Rik has two. All the other packs have been eliminated.

By 10pm, the battles are over. Our warrior, Ezra, came in first, and Eli and I decide we will offer him the Lead Warrior position

when we return home. Liam's warrior took second and Rik's took third place, Liam's warriors and ours both earned extra points for either taking out their opponent with one hit or fighting through their injuries.

At the end of the day, the rankings flash up on the leader board:

1st Place: Shadow Falls Pack 230 points

2nd Place: Safe Haven Pack

225 points

3rd Place: Canyon Ridge Pack 140 points

Throughout the day, I have spotted my father. The toddler I saw him with yesterday is definitely his son. I've also seen his mate.

She's younger than he is. Not quite as young as I am, but I'd guess in her early 20's, closer to Angel's age, meaning my father is

old enough to be her father. It makes me wonder if she agreed to this mating or if her family forced her into it.

As I've watched, I've picked up on certain things. When I was younger, I didn't understand the dynamics of being a good Alpha.

My father was strong, and he insisted on showing his strength and dominance to his pack. As a pup, I thought this was a good

thing. Now, as a Luna and being mated to a strong Alpha, I've learned that when you are a powerful Alpha, and you are good to

your pack, you don't have to constantly prove yourself to them. When you earn their respect, they accept that you are their

leader and trust that you will do what's right for the pack. They don't constantly challenge you, requiring you to continually prove

your position. That is what I see when I watch my father. His pack doesn't trust him, meaning, they don't respect him.

I don't know if that is new, since my mother and I were banished, or if this is always how our pack dynamics were. You see things

differently as a child than you do as an adult.

As I've watched, I've also seen Jack, my father's Gamma and the one that let my mother and I leave so long ago. I need to try to

find a way to thank him. If he hadn't let my mother go, I would most likely be dead.

When we get back to our cabins, our warriors are celebrating, happy with our showing today. Eli and I check in on all of them to

make sure they haven't been harassed by their previous pack members. Some of them had been approached earlier in the day,

but since everyone realized that there were three Guardians here, they have been left alone.

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We let them enjoy their wins. We don't have anyone competing tomorrow, and while I want to be there to cheer for Shadow Falls

and Canyon Ridge, our score will stay the same. Eli lets e

know how proud he is of them and after mind linking me, he decides to take this opportunity offer the Lead Warrior position to

Ezra. He accepts and the party continues while Eli and I go to our cabin, hearing the party last until well into the early morning.

The next day, I'm not surprised when there are only a few of our pack that make it to breakfast. Today, at least breakfast didn't

start until 5:30am as the battles would begin at 7am. Day two of the tournament is the battle of Lead Warriors and Gammas.

Liam's new Lead Warrior is fighting

as well as Trevor and our own Maddison. I'll be rooting hardest for her, since she came from our pack.

Today starts with a total of 1,790 contestants. Nearly half of yesterdays contestants, but each day, the battles should be tougher.

We watch the first two rounds again before we break for lunch, As we are walking over to get the babies, Sarah and Aolis, we

see that there is someone speaking

to them.

As we get closer, I hear what he is saying. "What kind of pack associates with humans and—what

are you? A pixie?" He sneers at Sarah and Aolis.

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Aolis stands and puts himself in between what I can now smell is a Beta, and the others. "I'm an elf, a royal elf."

The Beta snorts. "Whatever. I don't know what pathetic pack you come from but go crawl back to it before I send you in a body bag."

I'm about to step forward when I see Cara step up behind the Beta. "Beta. Are you insulting an Elf Prince and my guest?"

He turns, the sneer still on his face. By the quick look of fear that spreads across his face, I have to assume that Artemis is shining in Cara's eyes.

"Gu—Gu—Guardian." Even from here I can see his Adam's apple bobbing nervously.

"Or perhaps you were threatening my Beta female." Angel comes up on his other side. His head whips around.

"Wh, what? No, no." He stutters

"Aren't you going to go over there and help them?" I ask Rik and Liam.

"Why would we insult our mates like that?" Rik asks.

"Yeah, that would just piss them off." Liam adds. Neither of them has taken their eyes off the scene, but they aren't moving

forward to assist either.

Angel and Cara back the Beta against a wall, effectively cornering him. "Perhaps you need a lesson in manners, Beta." Cara

says, stressing his title.

"We were just having a bit of fun, weren't we?" The Beta says, looking at Aolis.

"That guy is an insult to Betas." Eli says beside me.

"I told you I think you have Alpha blood. You are more Alpha than Beta." I tell him. Watching the intense scene unfold.

“I have to agree with Grace. No Beta could have lasted as long as you did in my dungeons.” Liam says to Eli, never taking his eyes off his mate.

“Sometimes, Betas descend from Alphas. They might be the second or third sons of an Alpha, but over time, people forget.” Rik chimes in, his eyes also never leaving his mate.

As we watch, Angel and Cara have the Beta basically shaking in his boots. I can’t be sure, but I think he might have pissed himself.

“Is it wrong that I’m turned on right now?” Rik says.

“It’s so fucking hot watching our girls showcase their power.” Liam says.

Suddenly, an Alpha is there beside the Beta. As he’s talking to Cara and Angel, Eli tenses beside me. The Alpha pulls his Beta away and they begin walking in our direction.

“I think it’s time to put another pup in my mate.” Liam says, walking toward Angel in what I can only describe as a predator going after its prey.

“Seriously? Richie’s only two weeks old.” Rik calls after him.

“Exactly. It’s been way too long since she was carrying my pup.”

We watch as he walks up to Angel, picking her up. We hear her giggle before he kisses her passionately, walking them toward the surrounding forest.

As the Beta starts to pass us, Eli reaches out and stops him. “You’re from Red Dawn Pack?” He asks him.

He looks from Eli to me. “That’s right.”

Eli sucker punches him in the face. “That’s for Carlos. He sends his regards.”

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Chapter 407

When I saw the Alpha of the Red Dawn Pack, I knew immediately from the resemblance it was Carlos’s brother. While Carlos was the oldest, without a wolf, his father gave the position to his younger brother. When his

brother became Alpha, he let Carlos stay in the pack, but chose this asswipe as his Beta. From what I heard from Carlos, this

guy tormented him relentlessly and his

brother never did anything to stop it. Based on what I just saw, Carlos wasn't exaggerating.

"What the fuck! If my brother has an issue with my Beta or anyone else in my pack, he can take it up with me." His brother says, helping his Beta back to his feet.

"Santiago, right? Well, I'm Carlos's Alpha, and I was only giving this idiot what he deserves. And you're a fool for not giving the

Beta position to your brother. But, hey, your loss is my gain."

"You took a wolf less man as your Beta? What kind of stupid excuse for an Alpha are you?"

I step up, getting in his face. "The kind that understands that even without a wolf, my Beta can run circles around yours all day,

every day."

"Maybe you'll get lucky enough to test that theory. If they are matched up in the first round. No way Carlos lasts longer than one

round without a wolf. Doesn't matter that he's an Alpha."

I

"Lucky for you, I saw the challenger boards for tomorrow before we came over here. My Beta fights your Beta in the first round.

May the best man win."

"Oh, he will, and it will be my Beta that wins." Santiago says.

"Good luck with that, you're going to need it."

I watch a moment as they walk away before turning to Grace. "Let's go, I want to make sure we eat before we head back to the

battles this afternoon. Maddison is still in the running."

"You know Carlos can fight his own battles, right?" Grace says.

"Yeah, but that guy had it coming. Angel and Cara didn't hit him, so someone needed to."

We walk into the dining area and get some food. Just as we're about to sit down, Carlos comes jogging up.

"Alpha, did you punch my brother's Beta?"

“Sure did.” I say, taking a bite of food, completely unphased.

“May I ask why?”

I look at him. “You mean besides the obvious? He was harassing Sarah and Aolis, threatening

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them and being a general douchebag. Angel and Cara put him in his place, but I thought her deserved a broken nose, so I gave

him one. I might have mentioned that you sent your regards.”

Carlos sits, shaking his head. Then begins shaking with laughter. “I wish I had been there.”

“You know you are scheduled to take him on in round one tomorrow, right?” I tell him.

His head pops up, a slow smile spreading across his face. “Oh yeah?”

“I expect you to mop the floor with him, Carlos.” Grace tells him.

“I’d consider it a pleasure, Luna.”

plates of food, one for her and one for Carlos

Amber joins us with two before getting Hope from

Sarah.

We chat some more before heading back to the battles. Maddison is doing great. I knew she would, but I can see Trevor’s

influence on her. She was good before, but he is making her a better warrior.

At the end of the battles, Maddison has come in third. Our entire pack cheered for her. Liam’s Lead Warrior came in second and

Trevor came in first. That didn’t surprise me, the guy loves training against the Guardians and does every chance he gets.

At the end of the day, the day two totals are added to day one and the overall rankings flash up on the leader board:

1st Place: Shadow Falls Pack 280 points

2nd Place: Canyon Ridge Pack 240 points

3rd Place: Safe Haven Pack

225 points

Rik's pack has made a huge jump. I'm surprised that even though we didn't battle today, we're still in the top three.

Grace had walked over to congratulate Maddison and I was talking to some of the other warriors. When I turned, I see she's no

longer with Maddison. I begin looking around, searching for her.

I know that Grace can handle herself, but after yesterday and the Alphas all looking like they wanted to steal our mates, Liam,

Rik and I have been more on edge.

"She's over there, talking to that Alpha." Rik says, having seen me looking for her. Without saying it out loud, we've all been

looking out for each other's mates and pack members.

When I follow his line of sight, my blood runs cold. She's talking to her father. I immediately start walking in that direction. The

look on his face is almost smug.

+15 BONDS

When I get close enough, I hear Grace. "You don't know who I am, do you?"

"Oh honey," he says condescendingly, "everyone here knows you're a Guardian. I know exactly who you are."

I step up behind Grace. "Do you now? You think you know my mate?" I ask, placing my arm around her waist, gently embracing

her so she knows she has my support. Edgar's mate and son are standing a couple steps behind him, watching the interaction.

He looks me up and down, apparently not impressed by what he sees, which is hilarious because I could take this guy out with

one punch. He's well past his prime.

"I was just explaining to your mate, that while I am flattered by her attention the last couple of days, I am a happily mated man."

He turns back to Grace. "I'm sorry if you are not happy, my dear, but I can always offer you a place in my pack. We'd be happy to

host a Guardian."

I snort at the irony, but Grace actually laughs in his face. "Is that so?"

He frowns like she's lost her mind. "Yes. I would have been happy to have you as my Guardian, I just couldn't take you as my mate."

You understand, of course.”

“Yes. I understand. I understand perfectly well that you have no idea who I am. Father.”

Yikes! Looks like the confrontation is coming!

Chapter 408

The audacity of this man. This man that I once respected, that I looked up to like he was the answer to every question I ever had. Now, I see him for what he really is. A washed up, pathetic excuse for an Alpha.

The arrogance of him thinking that I was staring at him because I want him, it’s unfathomable, not to mention disgusting.

I watch his face shut down after I call him father.

“Of course, I was what, twelve, when you banished me? Do you remember me now?”

“That’s not possible.”

“Why, dad?” I say the term sarcastically. “Because you couldn’t be patient enough to wait and see if I got my wolf? You couldn’t

be a good enough father to love me, even if I had never gotten a wolf? Well, surprise, here I am. It’s me, Grace. You banished

your daughter, a future Guardian. from your pack. Is this starting to ring any bells for you?”

“How dare you?” He snarls, his hand coming up to strike me.

I grab it in mid-air, refusing to let it go, even after he tries to pull it out of my grip.

“Does your mate know?” I ask him.

“Shut up!”

“I guess not, let’s fill her in then, shall we?”

I continue holding his arm in the air as I turn to his mate. “The only reason I’m alive is because my mother fled with me when he

banished me.” I can see the horror filling her eyes. She had no idea of mine or my mother’s existence. I don’t want to hurt her,

but my father’s lies need to be told. I’m not even sure that the pack really knows what happened.

“We knew when father finally gave up looking for us. I had to watch for years while my father cheated on the mate bond, slowly

killing my mother.” My father’s mate is clutching her son to her.

tears rolling down her cheeks.

“Shut up, you fucking bitch!”

“Oh, father. The days of me being intimidated by you are over. The days where you abuse me, are over.”

“But do you know what the kicker was? The thing that actually killed my mother? It was when you marked your new mate. You knew my mother was still alive and you knew it would kill her, but you did it anyway.”

I pull him toward me, so my face is inches from his. “And you did it on my sixteenth birthday. I can only guess that was intentional as well.”

I shove him away from me, releasing his arm as he stumbles back.

“What do you want?” He spits the words at me.

“I’m glad you asked.” I thought facing my father would be frightening, but instead it’s liberating and it’s helping me see things

clearly.

“I want my pack. I am the rightful heir, the pack’s rightful Alpha, and I. Want. My. Pack.” I enunciate the last words, Maia coming

forward putting her strength behind it.

I hear the gasps of the bystanders around us, watching the interaction.

“You’ll have to fight me for it.”

“No problem. I’ll be sure to show you the same mercy you showed my mother. You have one week. Alpha.” I sneer his title at him

before turning to his mate, my voice softening.

“I have no problem with you. You obviously did not know about my mother or me. As long as you don’t try to keep me from taking

my rightful place as Alpha, you can remain in the pack. But I’d suggest thinking long and hard about whether you want this man

to still be your mate when I come for the challenge.”

I turn back to my father. "Because I will kill you for what you did, to my mother, to me and I can only imagine to the pack."

"You think you can just come here and threaten to take our packs. I don't care if you are a Guardian, I'm not afraid of you."

Another Alpha steps forward, having watched the entire interaction. I see some other nodding in agreement.

Angel and Cara step up beside me. "You don't need to be afraid of us. But you will respect us." Angel says and she pushes her

aura, full-strength forcing the Alpha to his knees and making him expose his neck in submission.

Cara looks out at the group. "Anyone else want to question our strength as Guardians? Grace and I would be happy to show you

our strengths as well, but we don't have the ability to direct our aura like Angel. We'd bring you all to your knees." She snarls at

them, Artemis coming forward.

I can see that my father finally understands the situation he is in. He turns his fearful eyes back to

1. me.

"One week, Alpha." I say and he turns and starts to walk away.

I stand with my sisters, ready to show our strength if anyone else wants to challenge us. Liami walks up to Angel. He wraps his

arms around her and rubs his nose through her hair.

"Baby girl, I think you've taught the Alpha a lesson he's not likely to forget. Release your aura."

She gives a final snarl before pulling her aura back. The Alpha falls forward, just catching himself with his hands. His Beta comes

up and helps him to his feet before the crowd disperses.

Eli comes up behind me, wrapping his arms around me. "So, we need to make plans to assimilate another pack into our already

large pack?"

I turn in his arms. "I'm sorry. I should have talked to you about it, but I hadn't realized that was what I wanted until I confronted

him."

He puts his forehead against mine. "It's lucky there are elders here. I'll talk to them about adding to our pack lands. The area

between ours and the canyon is open, I believe. We will have to borrow the money to buy it, but now that our pack is starting to

make money, we should be able to

do it."

"If not. Liam and I will help." Rik says, having come over to wrap his arms around Cara.

"Do you have any idea how many pack members we're talking about?" Eli asks me.

"One hundred and seventy-five, give or take." A deep voice says behind me.

"Jack." I pull out of Eli's arms. "I owe you a debt of gratitude."

He shakes his head. "No. I should have done more. I didn't know. I didn't realize what was happening and as his Gamma, I

should have."

"Do you think the pack

will follow me." I ask him.

He looks at me for a long moment. "The pack has been miserable for a long time. They will follow you and accept you as their

rightful Alpha."

Chapter 409

After speaking with Jack, Grace and I head back to our cabin. We're only there for a moment when Angel and Liam knock.

"May we come in?" Angel asks.

for the

I stand back, gesturing to enter. "Of course."

Grace puts on a pot of coffee, and we s

in the small seating area of the cabin. "You saw my

interactions with Jude this afternoon at lunch?" Angel jumps right in.

"Yes. He seemed edgy around his Alpha." I say.

"Alpha Paul. He is the son of the Alpha that was in his position when my family ran from the pack."

Angel clarifies as Grace

brings over a tray of coffee, cream and sugar.

As Grace pours the coffee, Angel continues. "He approached me after lunch. He's heard of your pack, and he's been wanting to

leave the Great River Pack, but he didn't know where to go."

She looks at Liam, who nods before she continues. "He's afraid to come to our pack, thinking his Alpha will look for him there."

"Not that it would matter, once we make him our pack member." Liam cuts in.

"But he doesn't want to deal with what my family dealt with, basically being hunted by the pack. He wants to know if he could join

your pack."

"My pack, your pack. I'm with Liam, I'm not sure that it matters." I look at Grace. "But we'd be happy to take him and his family

in." I pause. "Does he understand that our pack is still under construction, and he will have to put a lot of work into it?"

It's Liam who answers. "I was very clear with him about that. Apparently, they are being taxed nearly to starvation in the pack, so

being able to build his own home is a very exciting option for him."

I rub my hands down my face. "I was worried about this. We know some of these packs are mistreating their pack members

because they are now in our pack. I worry that we'll have an even larger influx of people coming to our borders now that they

know who, what and where we are."

Grace reaches out, putting her hand on my arm. "We'll find a place for anyone that needs it. Everyone deserves a chance. You

and I both know that."

I turn back to Angel and Liam. "He and his family are welcome. Do you know how he plans to get there? It's a long way from

Minnesota to Georgia."

Angel looks at Liam. "We're going to help him with that. We just wanted to make sure that you were willing to take them in before

we told him.”

We talk briefly about the Beta battles tomorrow, Liam and I good naturedly taunting each other. that our Betas will win.

When they leave. I turn to look at Grace. “We may need to buy all the land between us and Canyon Ridge.” I joke.

“Do you know how much land that is?” She asks.

“I’d guess it’s somewhere around 600 acres or one square mile. The reason it takes us so long to run to the canyon is the rocky

terrain and the mountainous territory.”

She whistles low. “That’s going to cost a lot of money.”

“Maybe. The land isn’t good as the only place for a pack to settle, but as an add-on, it could work and would give us safety by

bumping our borders up against Liam’s and Rik’s. The council may be willing to give us a deal because no other pack would

want that land on its own.”

pull my mate to bed. “I’ll talk to the elders after Carlos kicks some Beta butt tomorrow and shows his brother and that nasty piece

of a Beta what a real wolf looks like.”

“I can’t wait to see the looks on their faces.” My mate agrees before we drift off to sleep.

The next morning, I’m up and ready, my nerves on high, ready to see Carlos get some payback for his treatment in his previous

pack.

We meet at breakfast and Carlos looks cool as a cucumber. His mate, however, looks like she’s about to vomit all over everyone.

“Amber? Are you okay?” I ask her.

“Mhmm.” She says, not looking away from her plate.

Carlos wraps his arm around her, pulling her in so he can kiss the side of her head. “Just do your best, baby. You’ll be amazing,

no matter what.”

“Amber, you’re a great warrior. Why are you so nervous?” Grace asks and I swear I see Amber’s lip tremble. If it’s this stressful

for her to compete, I’ll remove her.

It’s Carlos who answers. “She’s afraid she’ll disappoint both of you.”

“Amber, you’re here. We’re already proud of you. You have nothing to prove to us.” Grace says.

taking her hands.

Amber looks up at her. “You’ve given me so much and I want to prove that I was worth your time and energy. But I’ve never done

this before.”

“Amber, I wouldn’t have chosen you if I didn’t think you could handle it. But, if you don’t want to compete, I can pull your name

from the competition.” I tell her.

Her head whips up. “Oh no! I’m competing! I just want to make you proud is all.”

“Well, then. No worries, we are already proud.”

After breakfast, we make our way to where Carlos will have his battle. Today, there are only 448 contestants. Any acting Beta,

retired Beta or person over 18 with Beta blood can battle today, so some packs, like ours, have two contenders.

“I’ll go cheer on Amber. You stay and watch Carlos.” Grace says, knowing I need to be here for him. I kiss her before she takes off.

“Link me and let me know how she does.” She turns and winks at me before moving to follow Amber to where her battle will take place.

I turn back in time to see Carlos enter the ring. He is calm and quiet as he stands, waiting for the fight to begin. As his Alpha, I

can feel his nerves, but I can also feel how he pushes them aside so he can focus. He’s always been this way and while I love

having him as my–Beta, he would have.

made a fantastic Alpha.

His brother’s Beta, on the other hand, is a show boater. He comes in like this is some sort of

human boxing match, bouncing around on his feet, shadowboxing around the ring, holding his fists up in the air, trying to get the

crowd behind him.

When the fight is called, the other Beta comes in hard and fast. Carlos ducks under his swinging arm and delivers a punch right to his gut, before turning around ready to go again.

The Beta is still dancing, but it's slower, catching his breath. The hit has him rethinking his next move. He wasn't expecting

Carlos to be that strong. Carlos gets in a defensive stance and waits

him out. It only takes a minute before the Beta comes in swinging again. Carlos takes a jab to the ribs, but it gives him the

opportunity to punch the Beta in the face, knocking him to his knees.

I can hear Santiago yelling at his Beta to get up. He wipes his hand across his lips, spitting blood before getting back to his feet

and rushing at Carlos again. Carlos side steps him, swinging around to swipe his legs out from under him. When the Beta hits

the ground, Carlos swings a fist, slamming it into his solar plexus. You can hear the air wheezing out of the Beta's lungs.

Carlos gets back up, waiting for the man his brother replaced him with to get back to his feet. Santiago is threatening his Beta

that if he doesn't get up, he'll lose his position as Beta in the pack. When he stands and turns back to face Carlos, Carlos finally

speaks.

"You should have stayed down." This time, Carlos goes on the offensive. He begins punching the Beta mercilessly. He hits his

gut, his ribs, his kidneys, his head until the Beta falls at his feet.

"Do you submit?" Carlos asks him, his voice even, showing no emotion.

"Fuck you!" The Beta says, getting back to his feet, blood dripping from multiple parts of his body.

"I gave you a chance." Carlos says, before going in, swiping his leg and this time, instead of going for the gut, he brings his

elbow down on the Beta's knee, dislocating it. There's an audible pop before the Beta begins screaming.

The referee calls it and Carlos wins. Our pack cheers and howls for his victory. Carlos turns and walks toward me without giving

the Beta or his brother another glance.