

Broken 581

Chapter 581

Lily and I are finally ready to start a family. And while I'm excited, it also makes me nervous that Alpha Jerome is now very desperate. He no longer has a mate or an heir. He replaced his Beta, but we heard it was someone from Alpha Benjamin's pack that joined theirs. That didn't make any of us feel better.

We were hoping that Calista would give birth to their son before Lily went into heat, but apparently everything with Guardians is faster. Three and a half months after stopping her birth control, one month before Calista's due date, she went into heat.

Anders and I are discussing some concerning patrol reports that had come in when the scent of orange and ginger hits my nose. The scent is so strong I can't help the feral snarl that erupts from my lips as I leap to my feet. Anders takes one look at me and orders every unmated male out of the packhouse.

He opens his mind link to me and Lily. "Lily, where are you?"

All we get in return is a whimpering, wailing sound from Lily.

"Go! Take care of your mate. Charles and I have this." He says.

The words are barely out of his mouth before I'm rushing out the door and up to my mate, following her

potent scent. I find her in Calista and Anders' room, writhing on the floor. When she looks up, Andra is flashing in her eyes, and she growls, her eyes full of

desire.

“Get her to your room, Clint!” Calista shouts, breaking through the haze that the pheromones are causing.

I'm barely able to maintain control, the animal instinct taking over. I pick Lily up, her body wrapping

around me as she mews against my neck. When I turn, Anders is standing in the doorway. I snarl at him, ready to fight him for my mate. Somewhere deep in my mind, I know he's my Alpha and he has a mate, but right now, my mate's scent is so strong, any male would want her. But she is MINE! They can't have

her.

“Go, Clint. Get her out of here. I can't move Call, she's nesting. GO!” I can tell he's holding his breath. He steps aside and I rush from the room, taking my writhing mate to our room? I'm barely, through our door when her claws come out. She's tears through my clothing, wanting me naked.

I'm so lost in the animal side of myself, I don't think about making sure she's

ready for me. I rip her clothes off as she claws mine out of her way. As soon as the clothes fall away, I'm slamming myself inside her.

She croons as I sheath myself in her hot, slick pussy. She's so ready for me, it's dripping down her thighs. I take her against the wall, making her scream, her inner walls pulsing around me before I pull out. turning her around and pulling her

hips toward me, slamming into her again. Her back arches, trying to take me deeper. I'm lost in the sensations of her body, her heady scent surrounding me, the sounds coming from her drawing me to the brink of control.

As her body clamps down on my cock, I explode inside her. She feels so good, I sink my teeth into her

mating mark. When we finally come down, I realize I'm still hard inside her. She pulls away from me, turning and jumping on me. "The bed." Is all she says. Her voice sounds more normal, but it's still

flooded with her desire, her need for me.

I move to the bed, laying on my back and let her ride me, let her take what she needs from me. When we both cum again, she collapses on me. We're both sweaty and panting. We only have about 20 minutes before her heat starts to take hold again.

I lose track of time over the next week. All there is, is her and me. We sleep when we can, 10-15 minutes

here and there. There is always water outside our door to help us stay hydrated. We eat what we can, but the heat continues to drive us both, wanting nothing but each other.

..hody aches/can

Eight days later, I feel like my dick is going to fall off. I'm raw and every muscle in only imagine how my little mate feels. When it finally seems that her heat is over, I carry her to the bathtub, gently setting her on the side of the tub while I turn on the water, making sure it's warm, but not too hot. Neither of our bodies could take that.

When it's half full, I pick up my mate, sitting in the tub and putting her between my legs. She leans back against me. "Don't let me drown." She says, her exhaustion making her words slur.

"Never." I tell her. I may be nearly as exhausted as she is, but my body wasn't a raging inferno. I'll take care of my mate while she rests. I bathe her and wash her

hair, forcing her to wake up periodically so I can rinse her. Then I bathe myself before wrapping towels around both of us and carrying Lily to bed. I towel dry her hair, before collapsing behind her, pulling the blankets off the floor where we threw them a week ago, and laying them over us.

We must sleep for at least a day, maybe longer. When we wake, we're starving. I mind link Anders to let him know her heat has passed, and he tells me that there are clean sheets and food outside our door. I leave Lily resting and go to the door, pulling in the cart of food and the clean sheets.

I open a window, realizing that our room smells like a brothel. And, if I had to guess, this room has had more action in the last week than any brothel I've ever heard of.

I grab a piece of toast as Lily begins to stir. "Come on, baby. Come get some food. You must be starved. I know I am." I tell her, going to her and picking her up. I take her to our couch, sitting her down and pour

her a cup of coffee.

“That smells like something the goddess made.” She says, taking a deep breath and inhaling the rich

scent of caffeine.

I leave her on the couch with the food and coffee, continuing to stuff the toast into my mouth as I strip our bed of the sheets. I remake our bed and then join my mate on the couch.

“How do you feel Lily bud.”

“Better. But still sore. How about you?”

I chuckle. “They aren't lying when they say that a she—wolf's heat is brutal. I thought it was an

exaggeration, but that was....a lot.”

“You seemed pretty up—to the task, my mate.” Lily says, giving me a mischievous smile.

“I hope I kept you satisfied.”

She leans in kissing me. “Every minute of every day, my love.”

Two weeks later, my mate and I went to the pack hospital and learned that she is

carrying my pup.

I didn't know that I could be any happier in my life, but somehow, I am.

That heat was intense! But Cara is here, even if she is still in Lily's womb.

Chapter 582

I was so excited to find out that I was carrying Clint's child. We have waited until the time was right, or as right as it could be. We spent our time together, enjoying each other and doing the things in life that we wanted to do. While we may have wanted it to happen after Anders and Cali's son's birth, it didn't. But we'll make it work.

My heat was intense but finding out that I'm pregnant was the second best day of my life. The first was when Andra smelled Clint and Donovan on my birthday and recognized them as our mates.

Donovan might actually be cuter about us having a pup than Clint. Every night, he wants to sniff my stomach and he rumbles against me, telling me that he wants our pup to know he's here.

"I know we won't know for another couple of weeks, but your scent is stronger than before. If I had to guess, I'd say we're having a girl." He tells me.

"Would you be happy with that, Donovan?"

“I'd be happy with a healthy pup, regardless of gender.” He tells me.

I kiss Clint's lips. “I love you both so much.” I say. “As do I.” Andra says in our mind link. She is wrapped around our little one, protecting him or her while we are pregnant.

A week after I find out I'm pregnant, Anders hears that Alpha Jerome is planning to attack our pack. He begins to assemble the group that will go to the Silver Dawn pack and attempt to sway them from a war. They will lose, and they need to know it is a suicide mission to attack us. But more than that, Calista is due within the next two weeks. She is having a boy. Canyon Ridge will have an heir, and Anders is not willing to risk Cali or their son.

When Clint tells me that I am not part of the assembled going to Silver Dawn, I stomp to Anders' office

and burst into the room.

“What is the meaning of this? How can you assemble a show of force and not include me? I am a Guardian. I am the second strongest member of this pack.” Everyone in the room goes silent as I go on my tirade. Clint has walked in behind me, but he stays quiet.

I see Anders look at Clint before looking at me. “You're pregnant. I will not risk your child. You're

staying.” He says, dismissing me and turning back to his meeting.

“Excuse me?” My anger dripping in my tone.

“Clint, do you want to explain to your mate why she can’t come with us?”

“Don’t put me in the middle of your fight with my mate. She's a Guardian, I understand her desire to participate.” Have I mentioned how much I love my

mate?

Anders half-turns looking at Clint. “Seriously?”

“Let me explain something to you, Alpha. I am not a regular she-wolf. I am a Guardian. If you want to show how strong our pack is, you need me there.”

“I disagree.” He interrupts me.

“Fine! I'll fight you for it.”

Now he really does turn around. “Fight me?”

“Yes. We'll spar for it. You win, I shut up and stay home. I win, you shut up and take me with you and we never again discuss the fact that you underestimated a Guardian in your pack because she was a

female.”

Clint walks up, wrapping his arms around my waist. Anders looks at him. “You're really not going to say anything?” He asks Clint.

“Lily has beat you before. I don't see how her being pregnant will impact that. It's not like she's showing. Donovan agrees that Andra is perfectly capable of protecting our pup in a sparring match against you.” Anders stands up, and I can tell he's equal parts furious and proud. He won't admit it, but he knows I'm right.

I turn and we walk through the packhouse to the back yard. Cali runs up to us. “What's going on?”

Chapter 583

“Anders thinks that because I'm a pregnant female that I can't go on the trip to Silver Dawn as part of our show of strength.” I say, stomping out the packhouse door and into the yard.

“Clint?” I hear her ask from behind me.

“It'll be okay. Cal

Calista. Lily is stronger than Anders is giving her credit for and she's about to remind him of

that.” And I hear him chuckling.

I have no intention of dragging this out. I've become stronger since the last time Anders sparred with me. Back then, I was using the time to learn and practice my moves. Now, I'm going to take my Alpha down and remind him that a Guardian is a Guardian, regardless of gender.

As soon as we are in place and Charles blows the whistle, I don't hesitate. I immediately go on offense, kicking and swiping at Anders' head and feet. I swipe his legs, taking him down, but he jumps back up immediately.

I anticipated this and my next kick goes straight for his head. He ducks in time and begins to spar with me for real. Maybe he thought he would need to be gentle with me, but that's not the case. Even if he punched me in my stomach, Andra's shield would protect our child.

However, I don't give Anders that opportunity. I keep going at him, taking him down again and again. When I finally get my chance, I grab his arm, twisting it just to the point of dislocation. He drops to his knees and looks at me over his shoulder.

"Fuck Lily!"

"Do you submit, Alpha?"

He grimaces and I twist just a bit more to make sure he knows I have him. "Yes, fine. You can come with

us."

I release his arm and turn. Seeing my mate's proud smile, I run and jump into his arms. "That's my girl." He says, hugging me.

The night before we head to Silver Dawn, Clint and I are laying in bed, curled up together..

“Lily, I know you can take care of yourself and you're an excellent fighter. But you are my mate, and you are carrying my child. I need you to stay close to me tomorrow. If they fight, you won't be able to shift, and Donovan and I will need to be close to protect you and our pup.”

I can feel his worry bleeding through the bond. “I will. I have no intention of risking our pup for that asshole. But I don't think it will come to that. If he doesn't listen to Anders, Andra and I will just remind him of what it felt like to have her teeth sinking into his throat. And we weren't even adults yet when we had him pinned.”

“But you can't shift.” He says, and I can feel his confusion.

“Yes, but Alpha Jerome doesn't know that.”

Clint chuckles behind me. “I hope that's all it will take for him to back down. I know Anders is worried about Calista and their pup. He doesn't want to do anything to risk either of them.”

“Alpha Jerome is a pompous, arrogant coward. He thinks too highly of himself. But his fear for his life will make him back down.”

He kisses my hair, pulling me closer to him. “Have I told you today how much I love you? How amazing you are and how lucky I am to be your mate?”

I make a point of pretending to think, tapping my finger against my chin. “Hmmm, maybe? I don't think so. Perhaps you can make it up to me by showing me just how much you love me and just how lucky you

feel

I turn my head, smirking at him over my shoulder and that's all it takes. Clint never leaves a question in my mind. My mate loves me more than anything in the world.

So, my little Easter Egg of "That's my girl. When I wrote it in Broken Warrior when Anders told Clint that Cara had pinned him in 15 minutes, I knew Clint had said it to Lily. His smile at the time was his memory of this day, when Lily took Anders down. I hope you enjoyed the tie-in.

Chapter 584

We decided to run in wolf form to Alpha Jerome's pack. From Canyon Ridge, it's about four hours over rocky terrain. We leave early, Lily riding on Donovan's back. Our plan is to stop in about three hours to regroup and send out scouts before walking to the Silver Dawn borders to make our stand.

When we stop, I make sure Lily eats. Now that she's pregnant, she eats small meals all day long. She

hasn't had any morning sickness, unlike Calista who doesn't emerge from her bedroom until after 10am when her nausea finally settles. I have to assume it's a Guardian thing. If anything, Lily looks even more beautiful pregnant. Her skin glows, her hair seems thicker, and her body moves with more grace than before.

Or maybe it's just me loving my mate being pregnant with our child.

When the scouts return, we decide to run halfway in our human form, then move more slowly to Silver Dawn's borders. Our pack is the largest in the country, so

while we left a full contingent of warriors at home to protect the pack, we've brought enough with us to take out Alpha Jerome's pack if necessary. His pack has gotten larger since he's taken in Alpha Benjamin's pack members, but I doubt they are as dedicated to their warrior training as our pack is.

When we arrive. Lily and I flank Anders, walking up to the borders. The border patrol stops us there.

"What do you want?" Rude and obnoxious. As expected.

"Tell your Alpha, that I'm here to see him."

"And who might you be?"

To his credit, Anders doesn't snarl or growl. All packs know the Alphas of the other packs and even if

they didn't. Anders' aura is making it obvious that he's an Alpha. "Alpha Anders, the Alpha of Canyon

Ridge Pack."

"I think Alpha Jerome is busy." The patrol looks at his four partners.

"He's definitely busy."

"Well, he's about to be a whole lot busier if he doesn't show his face here in the next three minutes. If he

thinks he can threaten my pack, then ignore my presence, he's about to see why Canyon Ridge is the

strongest pack in the country."

They scoff at Anders. In an instant one of them pulls a knife and goes for Anders' throat. I reach out, grabbing his hand, breaking it in mine, and bending it behind his back, forcing him to his knees in front of

1. me.

"Looks like these guys are as smart as they look. Which is to say, not at all." Lily says.

The patrols sneer at Lily before looking at me. "Let him go.

“No.” I say, twisting the guy's arm even more.

“You do realize he's a Guardian, right? He could take all of you at once.” Lily says again.

They look back at me and I let Donovan flash in my eyes.

“Sorry, we're contacting our Alpha now.”

“Two minutes.” Anders says, folding his hands together in front of him.

The patrol's eyes go wide but he relays the message.

“Alpha says we should bring you to him.”

“No. He comes here.” Anders says. “One minute or my Guardian dislocates your friend's arm.”

The guy in front of me turns and looks at Anders with wide eyes, then looks at me.

“One minute.” I mouth to him.

I watch as all four patrols' eyes go blank as they mind link their Alpha trying to get him here before ! dislocate this guy's arm. But there's no possible way unless he's been laying in wait for us to cross his borders.

“Alpha Jerome. How unpleasant to see you again.” Lily says and I follow her eyes to where Alpha Jerome just stepped out of the shadows.

“I would suggest that you tell your warriors to stand down. More than half of them are not on your pack lands and we would be well within our rights to kill them for the threatening posture they are taking.” She growls. I was busy watching the patrols to make sure they didn't try anything with Anders. Lily was watching our surroundings. As usual, together, we are perfect.

“Lily Raines.” The Alpha purrs at her.

“It's Lily Nelson, now.” I say!

His head whips to me. “A Guardian mated to a Guardian? It isn't done.” He spits out.

“Apparently, it is. Or maybe the Moon Goddess just found me worthy.” I can't help

it. I smirk at him.

"About those warriors..." Lily says.

His eyes go blank for a moment and about 40 warriors move back onto his pack lands.

"Now." Anders starts. "I understand that you think you and your pack, can take me and mine. I'm here to help you change your mind before you make a terrible mistake that will cost you not only your pack, but also your life."

Alpha Jerome scoffs. "You think you and your group here are going to intimidate me?"

"I'm not here to intimidate you. I'm here to let you know that if you or anyone from your pack attacks me, or anyone from my pack, I will consider that an act of war."

20

He turns and nods his head at me. I slice the head off the patrol member in front of me and let him fall to the ground at my feet.

"Consider that your warning. Your patrol came at me with a knife. His life was forfeit. Who's next?"

Anders asks, looking around at Alpha Jerome's warriors.

Alpha Jerome's lip is curled in what I guess is a cross between anger and what is supposed to be a threat.

"Alpha Jerome. Need I remind you what it felt like to have Andra's teeth wrapped around your throat? And that was before I was an adult. I can only imagine how much easier it would be to take you down now." Lily throws out her ace card.

I watch as Alpha Jerome swallows and his hands twitch as if he wants to cover his throat. Yeah, he definitely remembers that.

"I would never be so foolish as to attack a pack with two Guardians. Your pack is

well known to be the strongest in the country, Alpha Anders, and that was before you had two Guardians.”

“Be warned Alpha Jerome. If I have any hint of a threat against me or mine, we will not hesitate to decimate your entire pack.” Anders says. I know he’s bluffing. He would never kill the innocent, but Alpha Jerome would, so it's a believable bluff.

We return home but add to our patrols anyway. Alpha Jerome isn't to be trusted.

That was quite a show of power. Lily and Clint work well together.

Chapter 585

Two weeks after we went to the Silver Dawn pack, Alpha Jerome attacked Shadow Falls. Anders received the call for help. He immediately sent out a mind link to the entire pack, ordering half the warriors to assemble in the back immediately and the other half to surround the packhouse. All pack

members unable to fight were ordered into the safe rooms within the packhouse. I was in our room when the mind link went out. Clint rushes into our room, finding me quickly. He goes into our closet grabbing an overnight bag before taking my hand and pulling me to Anders and Calista’s room. When he opens the door, she is waiting, wide-eyed.

“Anders said you would come for me.” She says.

Clint rushes to their closet and pulls another overnight bag before corralling us down the stairs and to a

safe room. I know I can't go with them, but I don't want him to leave me.

"Clint!" I'm not sure what I want to say, but he pulls me into his arms and kisses me like there's no

tomorrow.

"Take care of my girls." He says to me.

"Come home and take care of us yourself." I say to him.

"As soon as I can. I love you Lily bud."

He makes sure we're in the safe room before racing off. I watch and see him shift into Donovan before

he's even out the door.

I turn and it's not long before the door is closed and locked with a resounding clang. For a moment. I'm terrified, lost in my own emotions. Then, Calista is there, clapping her hands.

"Okay everyone. Let's take a look around and see what we have here. I know this was sudden, but we plan for this every month. Our warriors are protecting the packhouse, so I believe we'll be safe. We just

need to wait it out."

Calista organizes our room, which is a mix of elderly, mothers with young children and other pregnant women like us. As we begin to settle in, I send up a prayer to the Moon Goddess to look over Clint, our

pack and the Shadow Falls pack.

That night is one of the longest of my life. I don't want to bother Clint, knowing he's fighting, but I can't help reaching out to him periodically, just to feel his presence, I make sure not to interrupt him or push too hard. My amazing mate, while he doesn't speak, will open his mind for a second when I push, just to let me know he's okay.

Calista and I are sitting side by side on a makeshift bed, holding each other as we both worry about the fate of our mates, our pack and our friends. At some point, I finally fall asleep.

I jolt awake when I hear the door to the safe room unlocking. I jump up and stand in front of Calista. I may be pregnant, but I'm still her Guardian. When the door opens, the first person I see is Clint and I rush into his arms. He is covered in

blood and gore, but I don't care. As soon as his arms wrap around me, I begin to sob. I was so worried that he wouldn't come home, and I realized, I can't survive without my mate. He is my everything. There is no life for me without him.

"Shhh. Lily bud. I'm here. I've got you."

I hear others in the room or those that have moved out of the room crying, happy to see their mates alive and well.

"Are you hurt?" I ask stepping back and wiping my eyes. I look over my mate. I can't tell if any of the blood is his. He has so many scents on him.

“Nothing that won't heal.”

“Clint. Go shower. Meet me in my room in 30 minutes.” Anders directs, holding a stoic Cali.

Clint nods before wrapping his arm around me and guiding me to our room. He immediately goes to the shower, and I grab him some clothes.

“Was it Alpha Jerome?”

“Yes. He's dead. Leander killed him.”

“Well thank the goddess for that. I can't help but be angry that the elder council didn't move faster. This could all have been avoided. Did they lose a lot of warriors?”

Clint looks at me for a moment. “Anders will give you and Calista an update at the same time. Come on, let's go to their room.”

My heart rate immediately spikes. I know my mate. If he's not telling me something, it's because it's bad. If they are telling us together, they are concerned that what they are going to tell us will affect us enough to impact our babies.

Chapter 586

Anders lets us into their room and Clint walks me to sit on the love seat next to Calista. Clint sits beside me and Anders bring him a glass of amber liquid that

smells like bourbon. Clint downs it in one go.

I look at Calista and she looks at me. We both know we aren't going to like this news.

*Just tell us. Anders." She says quietly.

He pulls up a chair and sits in front of Calista, taking her hand as Clint reaches out and takes mine. wrapping his arm around my shoulders.

"Luna Estella is dead."

My stomach clenches, my whole body goes rigid and my eyes fill with burning tears as Clint's arm tightens around me. Calista's free hand flies to her mouth.

"Dead?" She whispers, blinking back her own

tears.

"I'm sorry love. I know all of you were close. I'm not sure I believe the story of what happened. It was a war, after all. But you'll hear it, so it's better that you hear it from me. They say they found her dead body in the arms of Eli Gunnar, the boy that Alpha Jerome banished nearly a year ago."

I feel like I'm in shock. "What about Liam?" I ask.

"He's okay, Lily bud." Clint says, pulling me into his lap. His hands go to my stomach. He begins rubbing

circles on my stomach, easing the tension I was feeling.

“How is Leander?”

“He's alive, but barely. Leander's Beta is watching over Liam. He knows he can call on us if he needs any

assistance.”

“Did we lose any warriors?” I ask. No one in our safe room lost a mate, or we would have known, but

there are multiple safe rooms.

“No. Having us join the fight tipped the scales. Many of Jerome's pack members got away, so we'll have to be extra careful, and I'll be doubling the patrols.

Leander lost some of his pack members. Once they have their dead ready to send to the Moon Goddess, I'll go back and stand in as Alpha if Leander isn't capable.”

“Liam's going to need you now, Anders.” I tell him.

“And I'll be there for him as much as I can be. He's only six. For now, the biggest thing I can do is help keep his pack from being taken from him.”

The Shadow Falls pack laid their dead to rest. Anders was there acting as Alpha, speaking over their dead and attempting to calm the pack and support those that lost their mates.

»IS BONUS

Luna Estella had her own funeral. Clint brought me and Call to her services. Anders presided over her funeral while Leander and Liam sat in the front row. Leander looked like a body that was empty of it's soul, Liam cried silently.

When it was over, I was watching Liam and so I saw when he quietly left the room. I followed him, wanting to make sure he was as okay as he could be. I found him in a library, curled up in a corner. sobbing.

I went and sat beside him, putting my arm around him. He immediately stiffened, his head shooting up as he wiped his tears from his face.

“Guardian Lily. I apologize. I know Alphas aren't supposed to cry.”

“Who told you that?” I ask him softly, helping him to wipe his eyes.

“My father.”

“Well how about we make this our little secret. I won't tell if you won't. And you can cry until you're done. What do you say?”

He nods his head before the tears start to fall again. I pull him against my side, wrapping my arms around him and rocking him as his tears fell. When he finally finished and pulled away, he looked at me.

“Thank you, Guardian.”

“Call me Lily. And if you ever need anything at all, Liam, just call me. Do you have a phone?”

He nods again.

I get up, finding a pen and a scrap piece of paper and write my number down.

“Any time, Liam. If you need to talk, want to cry or just need a friend, you call me.

I'll always answer.”

“Thank you, Lily.”

Over the next several years, Liam would call me off and on. I always answered and usually he just

needed a friend. I realized quickly how lonely he was. Leander never recovered from Estella's death and

the only person Liam had in his life was his father's Beta who was busy running the pack and the Beta's son who was several years younger than him. Some days, I was all he had.

w

it was hard writing about Luna Estella's death, but more so the aftermath for Liam

Chapter 587

A week after we laid Luna Estella to rest, Calista gave birth to their son, Rik.

Anders and Calista allowed Lily and I to be there immediately after the birth. Lily

went straight to Calista, hugging her while she laid on the bed, holding her child. I gave Anders a slap in the shoulder and hugged my dearest friend. I know this is one of the proudest days of his life. It's made even more precious knowing what happened in Shadow Falls a week ago,

I was worried that Lily would suffer after hearing the news that her friend had passed. She took it hard, but thankfully she's early enough in her pregnancy that it didn't affect our little girl.

Yep, that's right. We're having a girl. Lily and I are already thinking of names. I think Lily was worried at first, that I wanted a boy, but honestly, I'm thrilled. I know she'll be daddy's little girl in no time. Donovan is just as taken with our little girl as I am. All he talks about is how he's going to take her for runs in the forest and show her the pack lands.

Patrick and Olivia join us in the delivery room, and everyone takes turns holding our next Alpha, Lily and Olivia cooing over him. As Lily is holding him, she looks at Calista. "He's already got his father's dark head of hair." I see Anders smirking at this.

"He does but wait until he looks at you. He's got my eyes." Calista says, smiling at her mate. Anders leans in and kisses her softly.

A week later, Lily and I are back on protection duty as Anders brings in our neighboring Alphas to celebrate Rik's birth. I'm not thrilled to have Lily on protection duty. Her stomach has been growing and our little girl is an active baby. Andra and Donovan say we're still okay, but it won't be long before any significant activity will become a risk for the baby.

Alpha Eric and Zoey come, bringing their three children. Surprisingly, Alpha Christopher comes and brings his daughter, Anastasia. His eyes still look haunted, but I can tell he is trying for his daughter. Leander didn't come, but his Beta brought Liam. Anders explained to the young Alpha that he and Rik will grow up as friends and remain allies in the future so our packs can continue to thrive together.

As Anders and Calista stand on the stage, introducing Rik to our pack members and the neighboring Alphas, Lily and I take our positions on either side of them. While there is a lingering sadness among the Alphas, overall, the weekend was relaxed and enjoyable. There were a lot of children running around and Lily seemed to have fun talking about babies and the joys and difficulties of parenthood.

Since I was watching over Lily, I heard Luna Zoey telling the story of Alpha Eric who apparently can't change a diaper without gagging. Zoey has all the girls doubled over laughing at her reenactment of Eric's gag reflex when he's changing a diaper. "I mean seriously! Tell the man to go into a battle and he can slay an army, come home covered in gore and not blink an eye. Ask him to change a diaper and the minute he sees a bit of poop he's practically hanging over a toilet.

I notice that Lily makes time to speak with Liam, and it's the only time all weekend that I see him almost smile. After that, I realize that Lily has developed a bond with Liam. She's not necessarily a surrogate mother to him, but she gives him someone to talk to when he feels like he doesn't have anyone else.

The next couple of months before our little girl is born, I let Donovan come forward every night. He's as excited as I am to meet our pup, and since he can't spend time with Andra, this helps him to feel better. I've noticed that our daughter responds to our touch and Donovan's purring. So, every night, Donovan comes forward, purring to our daughter and then when she settles, I talk to her. I tell her about my day. about how wonderful her mother is and about how great her future is going to be.

My mate becomes increasingly grumpy. She can't spar, but Anders has her lead training morning and afternoon to keep her busy. However, as the days go by, even that is too much for her. In a bizarre twist, my mate who only loves apple pie, which she says is what I smell like, suddenly only wants brownies. I'm not sure if I should be concerned that the scent that my mate used to love has suddenly changed. I ask her if there is another person in the pack that smells like brownies, but she assures me she still loves my scent. She just has a pregnancy craving for brownies.

Thankfully, our Luna is the best. She makes brownies every time Lily wants them and I'm equal parts amazed and horrified that my mate can sit down and eat an entire pan of Calista's brownies. And since she wants them at least twice a week, that's quite a feat, even for a werewolf.

Lily and I finally decide on a name, Cara. Lily had been researching names in her spare time. She stumbled across the name Cara and found out that it means "beloved. We both decided that, since we know our little girl is going to be loved beyond belief by both her parents, it is a fitting name.

One night, as we lay in bed, Lily moves around as usual trying to find a comfortable position. She keeps rubbing her stomach and pulling my hand over her to calm Cara, since our little girl is especially responsive to me and Donovan. When that doesn't help, I move down, letting Donovan come forward. He begins purring to Cara, trying to soothe her.

Lily has been having Braxton—Hicks contractions so we've become somewhat accustomed to her stomach contracting as we touch and hold her. Usually, our touch can calm the contractions, but tonight, it's not helping. Lily keeps shifting around and even Donovan's purring doesn't seem to be helping.

All at once, I feel the bed go wet under me. My head pops up and I look at my mate. Her eyes are wide as

she looks at me then down at her body.

"Clint." She says, looking back at me. "I think it's time."

I'm out of bed in an instant. I'm rushing around trying to remember what I'm supposed to do.

"Okay. Breathe." I take several breaths trying to calm myself, when that doesn't work. I start pacing."

"We're supposed to stay calm." I turn to my mate. "Are you calm?"

My mate has gotten up off the bed and is moving to the closet. She looks at me like I'm crazy, her brows furrowing. "Yeah, are you?"

“Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I'm calm. I'm really calm.” I feel like my head is bobbing up and down like one of those things humans put on the dashboard of their car. My brain has completely emptied of everything.

My pup is coming!

“Get your fucking head out of your ass and help our mate!” Donovan yells at me. I look up and see that Lily has grabbed her bag that has been packed for weeks. “Here, I'll take that!” I

say, thankful that I can do something for her. I throw the bag over my shoulder and look at Lily.

She looks at me for a minute. “We need to get to the car.” She says to me very slowly as if I'm too stupid

to understand her.

“Right! Car!”

I take off down the stairs and rush out to get in the car. I put her bag in the car and get in the driver side. I

put the car in drive and Donovan starts yelling in my head again.

“You're leaving our mate you moron!” I throw the car in park and as I open the door, Donovan forces a

shift.

“Donovan, what the fuck?”

“You're acting like a crazed man. You're a fucking Guardian and you're acting like an idiot. I'm taking

over.”

He grabs the bag out of the car with his teeth and runs back into the packhouse and up the stairs. Lily is holding on to the walls trying to get down the hall.

Donovan gently walks up to her, leaning against her as she has a contraction.

“Hey Donovan. Did you get tired of Clint acting stupid?”

He chuffs at her.

“I'm sorry Lily bud. I freaked out. I'm good now.” I say to her in the mind link.

She turns and looks at Donovan, raising her eyebrow. “Is he?” She asks him.

“Don't know, don't care. I'll get you and our pup to the pack hospital. Get on my back.”

Donovan lays down on the floor and once the contraction passes, Lily climbs onto his back. Anders door opens and he looks out. “Lily? What's going on? Why is Donovan here?”

“I'm in labor. Clint freaked out and Donovan took over.”

“Do you need help?”

“No, Donovan will take good care of us.”

“I'll get Calista up and have someone come to watch Rik. We'll meet you at the pack hospital”

Donovan stands and begins to gently walk down the stairs. Lily holds on tight and once he's outside, he begins to move as fast as he can without jostling her. When we get to the hospital, he walks in howling. He needn't have bothered. Anders obviously let them know we were coming. A nurse comes to help Lily off Donovan's back and helps her walk to a delivery room. Lily has another contraction as I shift back, rushing up to hold her.

“Welcome back, mate.” She says through gritted teeth.

I get her into bed and settled. They hook her up to machines that will monitor her heart rate and Cara's. The doctor comes in and checks her. “You're doing well, Lily. It won't be long now.

I turn and look at my mate, her face screwed up with her next contraction. “Have I told you today how much I love you and how wonderful you are, Lily bud.”

“I love you too, and no matter what I say to you between now and when our daughter is born, don't forget

that!”

Over the next couple of hours, my mate curses my name to the Moon Goddess and anyone that would listen. But in the end, she delivered the most beautiful,

precious little girl a father could ever ask for.

Chapter 589

As easy as my pregnancy was, adjusting to having a baby has been difficult for me. It's supposed to be easy, right? Everyone says it comes naturally. Well I'm here to tell you, it doesn't always come naturally. Like latching on to my breast. Cara is supposed to have some instinct to latch on and my body is supposed to be what she needs, but we struggled.

It took weeks for us to figure it out and countless tears on my part.

"Don't get frustrated, she'll feel it."

"Don't give up, you can do this."

"Don't do this, don't do that, try it this way, try it that way."

Everyone has a damn opinion about how I should nurse my child or what I'm doing wrong. All it did was

make me feel more like a failure that it wasn't working.

After another bout of crying about being a worthless mother who can't do the one thing my body is

inherently meant to do, feed my child, Clint comes and takes her from me. He heats up a bottle, balancing our little girl while managing to heat up the bottle and test it. He's a natural. I'd love watching him if it

didn't make me feel even more like a failure.

He walks out of our room, and I stand up, putting my breast back into my top and walking to the

bathroom to splash water on my face to wash away my tears. My face is in the towel, drying off when

Clint comes back in.

"Come on, Lily bud. We're going for a run." He tells me, coming up behind me and wrapping his arms

around me.

"Where's Cara? We can't just leave her."

"She's with Calista and yes, we can. I told her you need to get out and run.

You're too stressed out and

this will help. Andra hasn't been out in months and Donovan misses his mate.

Come on."

"He's right. I miss Donovan too." Andra tells me.

"Okay."

Clint takes my hand and I follow my mate down the stairs and out the back of the

packhouse. My breasts

are huge with milk, or at least huge for me, so I'm uncomfortable stripping like I normally would. I walk to the tree line and Clint follows me. He waits until I shift, it takes a few moments longer than normal while Andra and I adjust to the slightly different shape of my body.

Once I've shifted, Donovan is beside us in an instant. Andra takes off and the feeling of the air flowing through her fur, the scents and sounds of the forest, bring a calm to me that I didn't know I was missing. We run for hours, Donovan and Andra taking time to reconnect and mate several times while we're out.

+15. ROHUS

When we finally stop at the lake. Clint shifts back. He waits for me to shift as well before wrapping his

arms around me.

"Feel better, Lily bud?"

"Much. How did you know?"

He kisses my forehead. "I know my mate. You want to be the best at everything. But you are perfect, just the way you are."

I lean into him, missing our time together. I take a deep breath, breathing in his scent of apple pie. Goddess, I love his smell. His hands begin to rub up and down my body, slowly, gently. We make love beside the lake in our spot, the spot

where we first connected as mates. When Clint pushes my body over the edge of bliss, I sink my teeth into his mate mark, making him growl his pleasure before he sinks his canines into my mark. This is what I needed. This reconnection with my mate, my life, my love. Everything in my world rights itself and I feel like I can breathe for the first time since Cara was born.

Chapter 590

When we get back to the packhouse, I rush to take Cara from Calista. Maybe it's true what they say, that just needed to relax. Or maybe I just needed my mate, but whatever it is, everything finally begins to connect between me and Cara and I can finally just enjoy my daughter.

Clint and I get back into a routine and while it can be exhausting having a newborn and training twice a day, working to get my strength and stamina back, it's worth it. Clint is there beside me every step of the way, and I stop being jealous of how easy my mate makes being a father look and appreciate how amazing his is with our child.

Clint and I take Cara to Maine for her first birthday. I have some tourists take a picture of the three of us in the same place where we took the picture of Clint and I, the one I gave to him on our first anniversary. I'll get this one blown up as well and it can go beside the one hanging in our bedroom. In this picture, I'm holding

a laughing Cara between us while Clint and I smile at each other over her head, his arms are wrapped around both of us. It's a perfect picture of our perfect family.

Over the next few years, there is an increase in attacks on surrounding packs as well as ours. Clint and I are always on the front lines of an attack and Calista is

responsible for getting Cara and Rik to the safe rooms. While there are new leaders who are instigating the attacks, many of the fighters attacking us are those from Alpha Benjamin and Alpha Jerome's previous packs. Sometimes it's new Alphas who have taken over their packs and want more power or strength and don't realize the strength of our pack.

While we are able to defeat our enemies fairly easily, it's not just our pack that we are protecting. Anders made a promise to Liam that he would help him, and he continues to stick to that. More and more. Liam is taking on an Alpha role. My heart aches for him. He's so young to have so much responsibility placed on him, however, Leander never recovered from Estella's death and Anders can only do

so much. Liam called me the morning after his first shift. He was alone and the shift was long and painful for him, but he told me he couldn't wait to introduce me to his wolf, Cyran.

In between these times, Clint and I enjoy our daughter. Watching her grow, begin to crawl, then walk and eventually run everywhere. Donovan insists on taking her on walks as soon as she is able to hold on.. She learns quickly how to stay on him while he was walking and running. Sometimes Andra will run beside them and sometimes Donovan wants alone time with his pup. As she gets older, he runs with her in the forest, or curls up around her and guards her if she gets tired and falls asleep while laying on him. He and Clint continue to be the most amazing fathers to our daughter.

With the frequent attacks on the pack, Clint and I decide to put off having another child. We are still young and Cara is young, so it seems like the best idea. Anders is happy with our decision. He and Cali decided something similar, not wanting to have to worry about more pups or having Cali pregnant and trying to manage two pups while Anders, Clint and I are away fighting. And this way, I could continue to

be not only Cali's Guardian, but also Rik's, leaving Clint to focus on Anders.

While it's busy and Clint and I always seem to be fighting to protect our packs, it's a great life.