

Chosen by Fate 241

Chapter 241 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 5

Carter

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"Dude, you can't be serious?" My best friend Bentley was laughing at me as I explained to him what my situation was. His big round face glinted in the light, making the creamy, light brown color of his skin stand out even more. His short brown hair was a mess from him running his hand through it as he laughed. And his hazel eyes were filled with mirth as he took pure joy and happiness from my pain and sorrow. He could really be a jerk sometimes. A damn good friend, but also a major jerk and a pain in my ass.

"I don't see what's so funny." I growled at him before I took another swig of my beer.

"Carter, your mate is from an enemy pack. That would be fine normally. But you said that she's the daughter of the Alpha. And not just any Alpha, Bryce. That man is an asshole and a psychopath. If he knew you mated with his daughter after spying on his pack he'd kill you." Bentley was still laughing so hard it looked like he was going to cry.

"I know what I said, you jackass, but what I don't get is what you find so funny."

"I'm just wondering what I am going to wear to your funeral, man. That's all." He was smirking as he said this.

"You know what, I don't even know why I hang out with you anymore." I snapped before finishing the rest of what was left in the can of beer I had been nursing slowly for the last ten minutes.

"Because I tell you things with no sugar coating and I share my liquor with you."

"I could just go to a bar." I informed him.

"Then you'd have to drive home and get the third degree from your parents. Plus, your fake ID sucks and since you're not twenty-one you can't go to a bar." I bowed my head in shame. I had gotten that fake ID when I was fifteen, of course it sucked, but I was almost twenty-one now anyway so there was no need to worry for much longer.

I sighed and hung my head as I thought about it all. I knew he was just yanking my chain. Giving me a hard time to help me to stop being so damn depressed about it all. I just hoped it would help.

"What do you plan to do about all of this?" Bentley asked me with a serious look on his face.

"Is there really anything that I can do? I mean, like you said, he would kill me if he found out that I spied on him."

"So leave this pack and join his. Then you can mate with his daughter with no issues."

"It's not that simple, Bent. I can't leave this pack, not yet anyway."

"Why not?" He seemed genuinely confused about this. "If she's your mate it shouldn't even been an issue, you would have done it without a second thought."

"If I didn't have reasons tying me to this pack, then you'd be right. But I need to stay here, at least for now."

"Dude, are you fucking serious? Why the hell are you not running to her right now?"

"Because I can't leave Trinity. Not yet."

"She's just your cousin man." He scoffed at my answer. Bentley was a good guy, and my best friend, but he wasn't as family oriented as I was and we hadn't had much time to hang out since we turned eighteen.

"You don't know what you're talking about." I snapped at him and I watched as his eyes went wide.

"What the fuck?" He seemed shocked that I had gotten so angry. "What's the matter man?"

"Trinity isn't just my cousin, you know that. She's like my little sister. And now she's been taken to the Alpha's house and is being forced to mate with him. I can't leave her like that in good conscience. This is my duty as her family, as her pseudo big brother. This isn't just what I need to do, Bentley, it's what I want to do."

"Carter, not only does she have her new mate, the Alpha, she also has her guards, your brother, and the elders all watching over her. And there is the Beta too. She's got plenty of people to help her."

"Noah's loyalty is questionable. He might choose Reece over Trinity. And I don't trust that Beta at all, something is off about him. Then there's the fact that they already had to replace two of her guards for some mysterious reasons."

"Mysterious reasons?" Bentley seemed skeptical as he asked the question.

"Yeah, they didn't tell me why, but right after she was marked, two of the guards she had were reassigned and replaced with the Asher twins."

"The Ashers are good guys, I remember them. They were older than us by a few years but they were cool."

"Shane was anyway. Shawn was always a prude." I joked, remembering the times we had all hung out around bonfires when we were younger. "But that's not the point." I shook my head as I pulled myself back on track. "What I'm trying to say is that Trinity, my little sister, is in danger and I can't leave her here alone."

"She's got the rest of your family."

"But I was the only one that was there for her. I was the rock she relied on, I was the one that got her through it all, and I am not going to stop now. Not until she's safe. Not until she's ready."

"That's some loyalty you have there, Carter."

"If you knew what she had sacrificed growing up, what she missed out on, just because of our Grandfather and her mother and the bastard that caused all this."

"What bastard?" Bentley looked confused.

"The asshole bastard that took my aunt away for a weekend and knocked her up. Whoever he was, he left a child behind and a scared teenage girl. If it wasn't for him Trinity would have lived a normal life."

"But that's not on you Carter. You deserve your own happiness too, man." Bentley was my friend, someone who had been there with me through thick and thin when we were kids, but he didn't know what my family was like. He didn't know why I couldn't leave my cousin to fend for herself.

"Trinity deserves happiness too. She deserves it more than I do. And I am the only one who ever saw that while we were growing up. But someday, someday soon, everyone else will see that she deserves to be happy. That's she's special."

"You are insane, man." Bentley was laughing at me.

"No, people just don't see things the way I do. You'll see. You'll all see."

"But you need to remember Carter, that you are the one that just found your mate. That you turned tail and ran from that mate. You're the one hurting here. Your mate might be hurting too."

"She's not." I told him firmly, my conviction with that was solid. "She didn't notice me at all. I got away before she saw me or smelled me. It would just kill me inside if she thought I left her, that I didn't want her."

"Do you want her?" Bentley asked me with a serious expression.

"Like life itself. I don't just want her, I need her. But I have to wait. I need to wait until the time is right."

Once that part of the conversation came to an end we decided to change the subject. It was New Year's Eve after all and I just wanted to get shit faced and forget all of my problems for the current time.

We talked about the good old days. The stupid antics that we had gotten up to when we were in our teens. We talked about the future, our prospects, dreams, and what our dream women looked like. We talked for hours, all while drinking.

I remember the first fifth of vodka, but not the second. I remember the first and second fifth of Jack, but not the third or fourth. I didn't even remember the tequila, but the six empty bottles that were strewn across the floor in the morning clearly indicated that we had gotten that out as well.

The night had become nothing more than a big blur. I stopped remembering what I said, what I did, where I went. All I know is I woke up the next morning with the worst hangover of my life and a strong, intense desire that this year would be a lot better than last year.

But, so far, I couldn't figure out how that would happen. Ever.

This situation, this depression of mine, would last for a long time. But I was strong, and as long as I was certain it didn't affect anyone but me I could handle it. I could hang in there. Hang in there until there was a solution in sight or I died of loneliness, whichever came first.

Chapter 242 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 6

8-10 minutes

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Emmalee

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"Ok, stop. You're being an even bigger weirdo than usual." Lacy, a fellow pack mate, friend, and now classmate seemed frustrated as we sat at the little cafe near the University Center. I had been picking at my food and not actually eating any of it, which was so unlike me.

"What?" I asked her as she stared daggers at me.

"What? Oh she wants to know what." She laughed as she got a sarcastic smile on her face. "Let's give her What? for five hundred Alex." She braced her hands on the edge of the table and put her eyes on the same level as mine. " 'What' has got you acting like someone went and killed your puppy, pony, or some other small fluffy animal you wanted?" I couldn't help myself, I smiled at her as she made her joke.

"You're silly, you know that Lacy?" I laughed at her.

"Yes, I know, I'm silly, funny, hilarious, and anything else that means funny and is another reason why you get to delay answering my question."

"It's nothing Lacy, nothing serious anyway." I told her as her face fell.

I hated not telling her the truth. But how was I supposed to tell her when I barely understood exactly what had happened? I knew what had happened, don't get me wrong, I knew that my mate had abandoned me for some reason, but I didn't know why. I couldn't explain anything to Lacy yet if I didn't know, could I?"

"Emmalee, I know we're not best friends, but we are friends aren't we? Can't you please tell me what's going on with you? You're hurting, I can see that plain as day. Anyone can see that. So can't you tell me what's going on."

"Lacy." I felt like the emotions were welling again. "You are one of my best friends. We grew up together, and we go to school together. I hope you know you're one of my closest friends, Lacy. And you know I love you." I squeezed her and.

"I love you too, Emmalee. You're my friend, my Alpha's daughter, my pack mate, my classmate, you're my best friend." Lacy hung her head, like she was embarrassed. "I want to help you."

"I know you do, Lacy, but it's not that kind of problem." I smiled through the awkward feeling I was getting. "It has to do with my mate."

"I didn't know you had found your mate." She was getting excited like my dad had done.

"I scented him, but I haven't found him yet." I laughed at the confused look that caused to appear on her sweet little face. Lacy's rusty red curls seemed to bounce as she swiveled her head side to side in confusion. Her deep, forest green eyes popped open as she stared at me. She really was a cute girl with a unique look.

"How can you scent your mate but not find him? Didn't you follow his trail?"

"Oh I did. I followed his trail for hours and hours. I searched our whole pack, but he wasn't there. Either he fled our pack to get away from me, or he's not from our pack." I could feel the dam breaking, the emotions were surging again. Why did I get like this every time I talked about my mate?

"How long ago did you scent him?" She asked me, like this mattered for some reason.

"Somewhere around a month ago maybe. It was when I was helping to plan the family birthday party."

"Is that why you were so emotional over the holiday." She seemed saddened now. I hadn't told her what was going on before now and so she was upset that she hadn't been there to help me.

"Yeah, that's why." I sighed heavily.

"How do you know you checked everyone?" She was curious now.

"My dad had that Christmas party."

"Oh my Goddess." She interrupted me before I could add more. "Is that why everyone was forced to go to the party? It was a mate hunt for you. That's so funny Emmalee, you were fishing for your mate at the party." She was laughing but she didn't really seem to be making fun of me, just the party so I ignored it for now. I could have been wrong but I was a wreck anyway.

"Yeah, but I didn't cast my net wide enough obviously." I went along with the joke for her.

"Could it have been the stranger that used to be here?"

These words sent a shock through me. I felt my brain rattle from the force of the wave of awe that just hit me.

"What stranger?" I asked her. "I didn't know about any strangers in the pack."

"There was a man, a nomad I think, that was here for almost a month. He left last month though. He just up and left and no one ever saw him again."

"When? When exactly did he leave?" I felt the intensity start to blaze inside me, this could be him. Maybe he left because he didn't think my father would approve of me mating with a nomad. I would find him, even if I had to search the whole world. "Did he leave about when I went to help with the party?" I could feel the heat and intensity burning in my eyes.

"I think so." She put a hand on her chin to think, she looked childish and cartoonish, and just really not helpful right now.

"What was his name?" The fire was lit now and I would grill her until she was done.

"I don't know, I think it was Chris or Chad. I know it started with a C, that is all I know."

"It has to be him, Lacy. It has to be. What else could explain it? My dad said I had met every man in the pack but I didn't find him. And he hesitated when I talked to him, when he was saying no one had left the pack. But he lied, someone did leave. My mate left. And I think he left because he was scared Dad wouldn't approve."

"Do you really think that's the reason?" Lacy seemed apprehensive as she asked me this question.

"I think so." I smiled hopefully. "I hope so." I added less confidently.

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Carter

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I felt like I was in a daze. It had been happening to me a lot lately. I remembered being at home, eating dinner with my mom and dad. I remembered going up stairs to watch a movie in my room to try and get my mind off of things. Then, things got foggy.

And that's all I remembered before I got here. I had been walking along the side of the road into town. I had already made it past the trees and was at the curve, the bend in the road that would slowly take me into the city and beyond.

I came out of the fog and realized what was going on only when my phone rang. It was pitch black outside and having no memory of getting here was disconcerting the only thing I knew that was on my mind was my mate at the Black Canyons. But I ignored that and answered the phone instead.

"Hello?"

"Where the hell are you right now?" It was Noah, he sounded frantic and angry.

"I went for a walk." I told him as I looked down at myself. I must have had my phone in my pocket when I left, because I didn't even have my shoes on. What was wrong with me.

"Get to the estate now." Noah growled into my ear.

"Fuck you." I snapped at him.

"Trinity is gone!" He yelled the words at me so loud that I had to take the receiver away from my ear so my hearing wasn't affected.

"What?" I felt my heart stop and my stomach sink. "No, this is why she stayed here, to stop this all from happening."

"She's gone now and we're on our way back. We will be there as soon as possible. Go meet up with Vincent and the others."

"I'm going to kick Vincent's ass, he's her guard and he didn't protect her." I growled, panting heavily as I ran.

"We don't know what happened yet. Just get to the house and help out however you can."

"I'm already on my way."

I ran as quick as I could, but I did make a stop at home for a pair of shoes first. They would come in handy.

I didn't know what had been going on with me, but I would need to focus and push past that. I had a feeling my wolf had taken control and was trying to guide me back to my mate, back to the place he knew our heart was waiting for us. He would have to wait though. I could never live with myself if I ignored my family like this. I needed to fix this and fast so that I could try to find my happiness.

Chapter 243 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 7

10-13 minutes

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Carter

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I couldn't believe that Trinity, my cousin, the girl that should be my sister, had been taken. And by the Beta no less. I never trusted him, but I never trust anyone so that was hardly a surprise to anyone else. I was livid that her guards hadn't stopped her from leaving the house, that they weren't there to protect her. But, then again, she had left with someone that they would have trusted. Apparently no one but me and the Alpha had reason not to trust the Beta. But, dammit, I was still pissed off.

Then, in the course of trying to track down my lost little Trinity, we found out where she was most likely at. Or, at least some where she was near. And that was the last place I wanted to go right now.

Don't get me wrong, I would love to go there and sweep my mate off her feet. I wanted nothing more than to go and be with her, but it wasn't the right time yet. I needed to find my family first. I needed to settle this.

But, I was also nervous. I had only met Bryce once during my time in the canyons, and there was no telling if he would recognize me or not. If he did, would he be angry that I was now travelling with the Alpha of another pack? Would he resent me?

Then, if he did recognize me, when I come back for my mate, would he chase me away? Would he fight me for the right to mate with the woman that the Goddess herself said is the only one for me? Would he stand in our way and stop us from being together?

I was scared, I didn't know what to do? I didn't know who to be at the moment. Should I put on my nomad facade and pretend to be who I was before? Or should I tell the truth of who I am and come clean about my mating with Bryce's daughter?

The prospects, the options, none of them were appealing to me. And I was afraid to see her, to let her see me and know we've mated but to not have the time right now. Even if they were to accept me I had to find Trinity first. My family took priority here. GAH! What the hell am I going to do?

All this emotional back and forth has had me twisted up into knots. What the hell am I supposed to do? My wolf was even taking over for me to walk us to the canyons in the middle of the night. This was out of control.

I was sitting on the plane, flying toward the canyons, toward Bryce and his daughter, toward my possible doom, when Reece came over and clapped me on my shoulder before he sat down next to me.

"Is something wrong?" He asked as he gave me an appraising look.

"No." I answered apprehensively. My eyes avoided his.

"Are you worried about Trinity? Or about the fight?" He was focused on his mate, my cousin, our shared family that linked us. If it wasn't for Trinity then I would never trust this man sitting before me, Alpha or not.

"No, neither of those. I know we will find Trinity, and I will kill anyone who hurt her." I spoke calmly, evenly, as I made this declaration. And it was true too, I would kill anyone who was responsible for hurting my family. Even Noah, though I'd never tell him that.

"Then what?" He looked confused as he stared at my tense expression.

"I'm just not looking forward to seeing certain people tonight." I whispered these honest words to him.

"Ahh." He seemed to understand now. "You're worried they will know you lied to them."

"Basically." I hung my head in shame.

"Well, basically you did, but we can smooth things over eventually. But you can always claim to have left and settled in my pack after leaving their pack." He was trying to give me an option, an out, that would help me to make things work.

"True." I thought for a moment. "That might stop some people from hating me." I laughed apprehensively.

"Oh, Reece." Noah called out to him and I stopped listening after that. I needed time to prepare my mental defenses before I came face to face with my mate, and her crazy Alpha father.

Before I was ready, before I was mentally prepared with titanium brain shields, it was time for us to land. And there was no hesitating before going to the pack house. Nope, Bryce had sent along a couple of his lackeys to pick us up at the small private airstip. Oh joy!

We piled into the cars, I could even smell a small trace of my mate inside. She had ridden in this car before. She most likely sat on this seat at some point. Why did that make me smile and want to run away at the same time?

I watched as the Alpha house loomed in front of us, coming nearer and nearer and bringing with it my impending doom.

The front yard still held her scent, traces of it tickling my nose. The entry hall was nearly unbearable. It was obvious that she lived in this house with how strong and overwhelming the scent was. How did other men stand it? How did being around their mate's smell not drive them wild and insane on a daily basis?

The deeper into the house we went, the stronger her scent was. I was going to die with the over abundance of it. My wolf had longed to smell this scent again for so long and now he was howling with joy at the back of my mind. This was bliss and torture all at once.

The good thing was, that Bryce didn't seem to recognize me. It could have been that there was just too much going on, it could have been that he just really didn't remember me because we only met once for like ten seconds. I was hoping for the latter because then I might be able to smooth this over later.

We spent hours discussing the mission that would be taking place. The house and surrounding area that Reece had seen in his vision from the mate mark. Bryce worked mostly with Reece, Noah, and Vincent. The rest of us were working with Bryce's Beta, Gamma, and son.

Jordan, Bryce's son, had been there that day when I had seen my mate. I remembered his voice and his face. I desperately wanted to talk to him about his sister, but I couldn't bring myself to do it. What would I say anyway?

"Jordan isn't it?" My grandfather cut in to speak to the man sitting in front of me. He was around Noah's age, putting him maybe three or four years older than me.

"Yes, Sir?" Jordan spoke politely and with the respect that a former Beta would deserve. He might even remember my Grandfather from back when Reece's father was the Alpha.

"How have things been? I have not seen you or your family in quite a few years? How's your mother, Bree wasn't that her name? Then there were your sisters, Emmalee and the little one, I don't quite remember her name, she was just a baby when I was last here."

"Katie." Jordan was smiling at my grandfather now.

"Yes, that's it, Katie, she was quite the spunky little one. And your sister Emmalee was such a beauty."

"She still is, especially if you listen to her." Jordan laughed. "Everyone is wonderful, thank you for asking. My father always did appreciate the visits that you and the former Alpha of your pack used to make."

"That's good to know. I would like for our packs to be allies once again."

"That would probably help us out too. After the death of your former Alpha, my father stopped trusting anyone. Things have not been the greatest with us trying to isolate ourselves. I would like to see things move in a positive light."

"That sounds like something a great future Alpha would say." My grandfather clapped the other man on the shoulder, eliciting a smile from the younger man. This was not how I viewed my grandfather. He had made Trinity's life hell. He had forbidden her from doing everything. I partially blamed him for this whole mess too. This was just such a surreal experience.

But, my grandfather had opened the floor to discussion. I could talk about Jordan's family without looking like I was prying too much.

"Where is your family?" I asked him, trying to sound offhanded and not truly interested.

"When your Alpha called and explained what had happened and what he wanted, my dad sent my mom and sisters to stay with family for a couple nights. He doesn't want them here if something bad were to go down."

"That was a good decision. Don't need women getting in trouble or being put in danger."

"Like your Luna." I wanted to growl at those words, I wanted to smack him for saying that.

"Exactly like our Luna. But we will find her and I will kill the bastards that took her."

"Why are you so gung ho about it?" he looked at me like I was some strange beast.

"My Luna, Trinity, is my cousin." I spoke carefully, making sure I kept my tone even, I was getting too angry as I thought about what had happened to her.

"Oh." He looked like he wanted to console me after he said that one word but he managed to hold himself back. "I promise, we will do all we can to help you." He gave a nod of his head and the determined look in his eyes told me he was a good man. I was glad my mate had a sensible older brother like him.

We had a plan set and were ready to start the search first thing in the morning. It had been a long, long night. But then we found out the next morning that Reece had been given a mate mark by Trinity. This was a revelation to us all. If Trinity could give a mark then she must have a wolf, something no one even considered to be possible anymore.

After an interesting conversation that morning, we went in search of the house, and found it later in the day.

We managed to take the house by storm, blitzing the warlocks and wolves that were hiding out there. Reece, Noah, and Vincent were the ones who had gone in search of Trinity in the basement.

Thankfully, they had found her, but they needed to battle their way in and out. Also, we learned that the Beta wasn't the only pack member behind the abduction. The two replaced guards and a female that didn't approve of my cousin mating with the Alpha had assisted in the kidnapping. They all paid with their lives, as did the warlocks that tortured Trinity. The only one who made it out was their leader, who also happened to be Trinity's father, a powerful warlock named Gannon Edmond. Hopefully, it was the last we would ever see of him.

After the fight was over, we went back to Bryce's pack house. Trinity had shifted into her wolf and was unconscious.

I was nervous and scared that Bryce's daughter would be back at any time now. But I managed to see Trinity the next morning and rush out of there, heading home, before she could see me and know that I had been part of an enemy pack spying on their family when I scented her. When I got the chance, I would come back and finish this mating for real.

Until then, I just had to calm my wailing wolf.

Chapter 244 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 8

9-12 minutes

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Emmalee

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I didn't know why, but Dad had told us to leave. Not all of us really, just mom, Katie, and me.

Apparently there were some major things going on with another pack and they were on their way to our land. I guess Dad thought it would get dangerous and wanted to keep us away until things were safer or until they were all gone.

So, until we were allowed back, we were staying with my aunt and uncle a couple hours away. We were out of our territory and safe from anything that should be affecting them. Mom didn't like this, I could tell, but she left anyway and took me and my sister with her.

I didn't care where I was, I was just glad I could skip class for a couple days and try to forget about my problems.

Typically I am a very sociable person and I love being in a crowd, but right now, with how depressed I had been feeling, I wasn't up to it, I hadn't been for a while now actually.

During the two days we were away I spent as much time as I could just exploring the woods near their house. I may be a total girly girl, but I am also a wolf and I love being in among the trees. I often hiked in them when I needed to think or to be alone.

These trees looked similar to the ones back by our house, and after a while they stopped giving me solace. Instead they made me think about running blindly into the forest, trying in vain to track a scent that was already vanishing.

I had woken from a nightmare of just that more times than I could count since I realized that my mate had run off. I would dream that I was walking into the woods, alone. I would be on a peaceful hike, something to bring me joy. Just after entering the trees, though, I would smell the man that had just been there moments before.

His scent would intoxicate me, make me smile and fantasize all at the same time. I would follow my nose, trying to track it, and just as I got a good trail going his scent would disappear.

Frustrated, I would start again. Finding a new path with a strong trail. But just as I was getting close the scent would dissipate again.

That would happen over and over until I just ran around the forest screaming for him to come to me, begging him to not reject me. Most nights I woke up screaming or with tears streaming down my face.

I wished I wasn't so affected by all of this.

I had been happy to visit my family at first, but the dreams were worse there for some reason. All I wanted to do was to go home, so when Dad called and said everything was settled and we could come home I was the first one in the car.

The first thing I noticed when I got home and exited the car in the middle of the driveway out front was that sweet, dessert scent again. At first I thought my dreams, my nightmares, had started to come to me when I was awake. I thought that I was just finally going crazy.

When I smelled the scent inside the house. When I smelled it go all the way down the hallway to my dad's office where it pooled thickly with a dizzying, glee inducing intensity, then I knew that he had been here.

"Dad, where is he?" I ran to him, asking my question breathlessly.

"Who?" He seemed confused.

"My mate. I can smell his scent."

"Sweetheart, he was not here. The only people who were here were the family and guards of the Alpha and Luna from another pack."

"Then one of them was my mate."

"I doubt that sweetie. None of them have ever been here before."

"But I smell him Daddy."

"I think you're just tired, baby girl. Why don't you get some sleep." My dad kissed me on the top of my head then and sent me away like I was a child. Did he not understand anything? Why did he have to treat this so lightly? I would show him, I would prove to him that he was here.

As I was walking back to my room I noticed traces of his scent again. It was scattered in different places. How could it be in so many places if he wasn't here?

One of the guest rooms had a particularly strong trace of his scent, but the room had already been cleaned and the traces were fading.

Next, I was walking down the hall and I noticed another pooling of the scent. There were people in the room down here, but his scent was all over the place down here. I needed to know what was going on.

I went and talked to my mom this time, asking her who was still in our house. It seemed the other pack's Alpha and Luna were here because the latter had been injured after she was kidnapped. The kidnapers had made it as far as our pack and were hiding out. They had been in our territory when she was rescued. And the Luna was a woman who was just about my age. I was envious of her having found her mate.

I wanted to go introduce myself, possibly ask who had been in the room with her before.

"Hi, Trinity, can I come in?" I knocked on the door and waited.

"Yes, come in." A female voice answered sweetly, but I heard a male growl unhappily.

When I went inside I saw a very pretty young woman with dark, dark wavy brown hair and beautiful blue eyes. She was smaller than me by a few inches and really pretty. She looked sweet and very friendly, and I instantly wanted to be her friend.

"Hi, I'm so happy to meet you." I smiled at her as sweetly as I could.

"Um, hi." She seemed a little apprehensive.

"Oh, I didn't introduce myself." I giggled. "I'm Emmalee Evans. My father is Bryce, the Alpha of this pack." There was shock followed by relief as the emotions flitted across her face.

"It's nice to meet you Emmalee." She smiled at me. "Was there something I could do for you?"

"Actually, I came to help you. I was told you needed some more clothes and things that were forgotten, but no one has had a chance to go yet. I would have stopped on my way home if I knew, but will my clothes work for you?" This hadn't been a lie, Mom told me when I went to see her that Trinity was missing a few things that her mate had forgotten to pack for her.

"Oh." She looked surprised by my offer. "Actually I think that would be great. Thank you." Relief was settling in now.

"Not a problem, we girls need to help each other out when we can, right." She looked so happy right now, like she didn't get out much. I was glad I could help.

"I'm just not used to this is all. But I would appreciate the help a lot." Nailed it.

"Well, come on to my room then, you can pick out something to wear to dinner tonight. And I can get you a brush, it looks like someone might have forgotten to bring you one." I laughed as I offered the use of my things.

"Is it that bad?" She asked self consciously.

"It's not too bad, we can fix it easily." I assured her.

"Sounds good." She tried to get off her mate's lap, but he held her in place. "Reece?" She asked him, looking confused. "Can I get up now."

"Trinity." He looked at her with concern. "You can't just go." Awe, he seemed so lonely.

"And why not? I'm not going to leave the house Reece. I will be inside and safe the whole time." She patted his shoulder to reassure him.

"I'll keep an eye on her, I promise." I was smiling at him to show him I meant what I said.

"Fine, I have to go talk to someone anyway, so I'll walk you there." He grumbled. I was pretty sure he just wanted to know what room she was going to be in.

"Whatever you say." She rolled her eyes at him with a smirk on her face.

Her mate didn't leave her side until he saw us safely into my room. He was caring, sweet, and doting. Not to mention hot. I wish I could find my mate and have all of that too.

"Dinner isn't going to be formal or anything, but if all he brought you was loungewear I can understand why you would want something else for tonight. With how much staff we have, even I don't feel comfortable wearing my loungewear around the house." I laughed as I spoke.

"See, you get it, why can't he. No woman wants to walk around a strange house with a bunch of people she doesn't know while basically wearing pajamas." She laughed right on back at me, a bright smile on her face.

"Still, I envy you." I could hear that my voice had turned somber and the tears were building again.

"You envy me? What for?" She sounded astonished.

"You've found your mate. I want to find mine. I thought I had recently, but I guess I was wrong." The emotions were almost too much right now. I had to rein myself in and soon.

"Yeah, well, it hasn't been all perfect." There was an edge to her voice, some darker emotion from her memories.

"You seem so happy though."

"I am, now. But we weren't so happy when we first got together." She seemed to be remembering something from the past.

"I wouldn't care, I just want to find my mate. I know that I will be happy." I tried to sound happy but even my heart broke at the sound of my voice and I could tell that my smile was crooked and uneven.

We talked for a while longer, Trinity was finally ready for dinner, and her mate showed up to take her down to the dining room. I walked them leading them as their hostess. It was fun, and I was glad to have the new people around to help me be happy.

During dinner we learned that it was Trinity's nineteenth birthday. We were only a little over a month apart in age. This was going to be exciting. I knew what I had to do. I hurried through my meal and stormed out of the room, taking my sister, my brother, and her brother, ok well he was her cousin but should be her brother from what I heard.

These hostages I took with me helped me to get everything ready. I called other pack members and friends to get last minute things together. A cake from my favorite bakery. A friend to buy a gift on her way in. And lots of decorations from my stash of emergency decorations.

And VOILA!

We had a small party ready for her in no time, and she looked happier than anyone I had ever seen before. I was glad that I had met her and I hoped we could be friends for a long time.

Chapter 245 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 9

13-17 minutes

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Carter

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I was on a mission across the country when I got a call from home. It was a video chat and I wasn't really expecting it.

"Hey Trinity, what's up." I smiled at her as happily as I could trying to drown my sorrow in false happiness.

"How've you been Carter? Are you taking care of yourself?" I could have been honest and told her I was pining over my lost mate and I was working myself to death to deal with my heart ache. I had been looking for the missing warlock, her father who had gotten away. I seemed to be the only one overly worried about him right now.

"Hmph. I can always take care of myself, it's you I've got to worry about." I laughed and smiled playfully at her.

"Rude." She snapped at me sarcastically.

"So what's up? You never call me when I'm out like this." I was worried that something else had happened, that something was wrong.

"Well, I wanted to tell you something." She smiled at me, she looked really happy right now. "There's going to be a wedding next month."

"No shit. Really?" I was skeptical for a moment. "I'm happy for you cuz, I know that you must be super excited." I tried to sound happy for her, but I felt the sadness growing inside my heart and threaten to spill over

"I want you to be there. Will you be home?" She smiled at me with a look full of love and hope.

"Yeah, I will be there. Nothing could keep me away." I gave her my most sincere smile.

"Hey, Carter, I got something else to ask you." Reece butted in.

"Hey Alpha. what do you need?" I spoke formally, since I was out on business after all.

"No reason to be so formal man, I wanted to ask you something personal." Reece was smiling which just confused me. "I want you to be one of my groomsmen." Reece got right to the point.

"Seriously?" I laughed as he spoke. "If you're asking me dude, you must not have many friends." I joked which made Reece growl slightly. "I'm messing with you man. Of course I will, it's Trinity's big day after all, I wouldn't miss the opportunity to be part of it."

"Good to hear." Reece smiled but still looked a little unhappy. I was just glad that Trinity was happy and that they had thought to call me and ask me to be part of their special day. Maybe having something big like this to look forward to would stop me from being so lonely and depressed.

~~

Emmalee

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I was sitting at my desk doing work when my phone rang. The caller ID showed that it was Trinity. We had been talking for the last month and had gotten to be good friends. She was really nice and sweet and I would never say no to making a new friend. When I went to answer the call I saw that it was a video call so I propped my phone up and pressed the answer button.

"Hey Trinity, what's up? I just finished an assignment for class, ugh this homework never ends." I laughed, I knew that Trinity loved school while I loathed it, we were opposites there but it was fun.

"Hey Emmalee, how've you been." She chit chatted with a little smile on her face.

"Good, it's all good." I noticed that she seemed happy. Really happy.

"Well, I wanted to ask you something." She jumped right into what she wanted to tell me.

"What's wrong?" I was worried that something might have happened since we last talked.

"Nothing's wrong, I just wanted to ask you to be one of my bridesmaids." She blurted the words out in a hurried rush.

"Oh, I'm glad it's noth-." I stopped, finally realizing what it was that I had just heard, it had taken a minute for her words to process through my mind. "Did you say bridesmaid?" I asked her, still skeptical of the functioning abilities of my ears. She nodded her head to answer my question. "EEEEEEEE!" I squealed so loud and long I thought the windows might break, I was breathless when it was all over.

"Oh Goddess, Trinity, if you thought I loved birthdays, wait until you see me get excited over a wedding. I am so going to help you as much as I can." I was happier than I thought I would be. I knew I was missing my mate, and pining over him constantly, but I would not let that stop me from helping my friend to have the best wedding of her life.

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Carter

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Just after Trinity and Reece had called and asked me to be part of their wedding, some serious shit started to go down in town. It seemed that the Warlock that I was looking for, that piece of trash Gannon Edmond had kidnapped some kids, human and wolf. Now we all had to work to find them all.

There had been talks about postponing and cancelling the wedding, but we all put our foot down, collectively. Trinity deserved to have her day with everything that had happened to her. I would not let her father ruin anything else in her life. And I guess Reece deserved to be happy too. I mean, he was marrying my cousin after all.

Needless to say it had been a busy time, searching and planning, and time was passing fast. Before I knew it, the wedding was just around the corner and I was with Noah on my way to Trinity's house. I needed to be fitted for my suit along with everyone else.

When we got to the house we saw Reece standing in the yard with none other than Bryce. I didn't see anyone else there with him, unless you counted the severed head of Stanley, the now deceased Alpha of the Black Moon pack.

"Well, looks like he lost his head." I joked as I walked over to the two men standing near the SUV.

"Good one boy." Bryce laughed and clapped me on the shoulder. Now if only I could get him to accept me as his daughter's mate as easily as I could make him laugh.

"Um, Reece, is there a reason why you two have, that uh, well, Stanley's head?" Noah seemed a little nervous as he spoke. Not afraid, just apprehensive.

"It's a wedding gift." Bryce laughed.

"We made a promise that whoever found Stanley first would get to kill him. I have been a little busy, so Bryce took the lead. What do you think, should I have it mounted?" Reece's joke seemed to go over my brother's head.

"Absolutely not." Noah shouted.

"That'd be fucking awesome. He'd be a warning to assholes everywhere, fuck with you and you get mounted, and not in the good way." I laughed at my own sexual joke and was surprised when Bryce laughed too. This guy was actually quite friendly, when you got past his rough attitude and gruff way of talking.

"You're a riot man." He was smiling at me as he talked.

We were all still laughing when we went inside. My mind was so befuddled by the laughing and smiling Bryce and the intense smell of the blood from outside that I never noticed the other scent in the house.

I had been walking behind Reece and Bryce, my head down and their scents blocking most of the others in my distracted state of mind. All of a sudden I heard an excited, yet musical shout.

"Oh Goddess! He's here." The sweetest, most beautiful voice I had ever heard seemed to be coming from the other room. I knew that voice but I didn't expect to hear it right now.

I heard pounding footsteps as she came running toward us. In a dazed stupor I raised my head. That was when I saw a blonde head bobbing and darting right at me. I smiled as I saw her running toward me, the sight made my heart sing.

Then, while I was lost in my daze, she pounced on me. Tackled might be the better word for it. Her upper body slammed into my chest and together we toppled over backward and she landed on my chest.

"You're not getting away this time." Her words and voice were full of elated joy and rage filled anger.

"EMMALEE!" Her parents both screamed at the same time.

"Carter are you alright?" Trinity asked, sounding shocked.

"What the?" Noah gasped.

After a few shock filled moments, the tension passed and everyone started to function again.

"Emmalee, what are you doing?" Bryce demanded.

"Emmalee?" I just stared at her while my wolf howled with glee and yanked on the tether of control I was desperately trying to maintain.

"It's alright Bryce, I think we should just watch for now." Reece smiled knowingly and Bryce stared on in confusion.

"Why did you run away from me?" Emmalee seemed to be on the verge of tears as she looked at me.

"I had no choice. I couldn't be found out." I put every ounce of regret I had into my voice.

"What's he talking about?" Bryce asked Reece.

"When the Warlocks were after Trinity, I knew that other packs were part of it, so I sent scouts." I expected Bryce to be mad, but he just smiled. Reece had been right, Bryce did understand.

"Exactly what I would have done. Smart boy."

"I don't care that you could have been found out. I thought my mate didn't want me. I thought you looked at me and ran away." Her words broke my heart.

"I never even got the chance to speak to you. But I saw you, and I wanted you." I turned my head to look away from her in my embarrassment. "I have been wondering if I'd ever get the chance to make it right. I knew that if I went back to the pack and talked to everyone then they would know that I was a spy. I thought you would hate me too, for being a spy."

"You were following orders, and we had nothing to hide. I don't know why you were investigating us, but I know our packs are allies now." Emmalee was smiling, but I just couldn't let it go. I had hurt her, I thought for sure she hadn't noticed me but she did. And knowing that, knowing that I hurt her, that made me feel like scum.

"I just thought I blew it before I had a chance to meet you as myself."

"Who are you? Why are you here? What's your name?" Emmalee bombarded me with questions.

"My name is Carter, and I am Trinity's cousin."

"So you mean Trinity and I are going to be related now?" She squealed excitedly.

"Does that mean you forgive me for running?" I asked nervously.

"Not yet, but eventually." She joked playfully as she smiled.

"Emmalee, get off the boy and let him breathe for crying out loud." She slowly rose, her soft, comforting, sexy weight was removed from me and I stood, only for her to grab my hand immediately.

"Mom, Dad, this is the mate I was telling you about before."

"So, Reece, it looks like our packs were already bound together before you came to me for help." Bryce laughed. "It's good to meet you Carter." He smiled and shook my hand with an open, friendly smile, but I noticed a protective fatherly glint in his eyes.

"Thank you sir, it's good to meet you as well."

~~

Emmalee

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We were surprising Trinity and Reece today. It was so exciting and I couldn't wait to help her plan the wedding. I knew I was going to be staying here until the wedding since I was in the wedding party and I needed to help finalize the details. I had missed so many of the planning sessions and the important parts of what makes a wedding perfect, but I was going to be here for the rest of it.

I was bouncing up and down on my heels when we knocked on the door and waited for them to answer.

"Trinity!" I leapt toward her as soon as the door opened. "I'm so happy for you."

"Emmalee, it's great to see you." She said as we hugged each other.

"Emmalee, give the woman a chance to breathe." Daddy scolded me from behind. "I'm sorry Reece, my boy, I never can control that girl."

"No worries Bryce, it's fine. To what do we owe for the surprise visit today?" Reece asked with a smile.

"I have some personal business to discuss with you. If I may borrow some of your time for a little while."

"Yeah, no problem. Should we discuss things in my office then?"

"No, I would prefer to talk outside if that is alright with you."

"Ok." Reece seemed confused but agreed.

"Emmalee, Bree, would the two of you like to join me in the living room. I can get some refreshments and we can catch up." Trinity smiled and ushered us inside.

"Yes, oh Goddess, I need to hear details about the proposal and the wedding." I linked my arm around hers as we walked. "Let's have some champagne to celebrate."

"Emmalee!" Trinity squealed.

"No!" Dad and Reece yelled out at the same time causing me to freeze.

"Emmalee Jade Evans, you are not using Trinity as an excuse to drink, not after last time." I hung my head after Dad's words.

"Trinity and you are both underage anyway." Reece looked angry.

"Come on you old fuddies. It's not like we're humans, a little celebration is nothing to fear." I pleaded with them.

"No, Emmalee, I can't drink." Trinity declined my suggestion.

"Don't let those boring boys staunch your fun Trinity."

"It's not that Emmalee, I can't." Trinity smiled while I was confused.

"Oh, congratulations Trinity." Mom cooed.

"Reece, boy, you dog." Dad smiled. "Congrats. Hopefully you have better luck than I did." He laughed and Reece grinned a goofy grin.

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

"Are you kidding me?" Dad asked in exasperation.

"Emmalee, Trinity is pregnant, so she can't drink alcohol." Mom's words hit me like a brick.

The words swirled a moment then sank in. Then, I squealed.

"EEEEEEE! Trinity! Congratulations." I hugged her tight.

"Thank you Emmalee. Now, let's go so the boys can have their play time. See you later." Trinity waved them away and we went off into the sitting room.

We talked about all the different wedding plans they had made already. The dresses that were designed and made, my measurements having been sent in for my dress already. We discussed flowers and food and arrangements. It was the most fun I'd had in a long time. Then something amazing happened.

I was in the middle of saying something to Trinity when I smelled that scent again. My mate was here, and I would not let him get away this time. I leapt to my feet with a shout.

"Oh Goddess! He's here." With those words I was running. All I could think about was what mom had told me before. If I had to tackle him to stop him from getting away then I would.

I ran as fast as I could and slammed right into him. I intended to knock him over and expected him to brace himself. I did not expect him to look at me and smile like he had seen an angel. Oh goddess, why had it taken me so long to find him?

The moment I touched him, the moment I felt him against me, I knew that he was the one. His touch was like static electricity sending little charges through me everywhere that he touched my bare skin. I felt peaceful, happy, and content. But there was also the anger and sadness at him having run away. I had to know why he had run away from me.

But we had lots of time now, I wasn't letting him get away this time.

Chapter 246 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 10

8-10 minutes

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Carter

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It turned out that Emmalee was planning on staying in town until the wedding. She wanted to be part of the process and to be there for her friend. I wouldn't lie that this made me very happy as well.

I couldn't believe that everything had settled itself, that my mate was finally mine. And it was all thanks to my cousin Trinity and the Alpha, Reece. I couldn't thank them enough.

I guess things really do work out in the end.

After Emmalee's family left and she went to the room Trinity had shown her to, I decided to make my way upstairs. I had hung around the house after everyone else had left and I guess I was getting on people's nerves.

"Just go see her already." Reece had snapped at me, laughter clearly present in his voice. I wanted to, but I was nervous. "Get out of here and go see your mate, that's an order." He laughed, but he actually made it a command. I had to follow his orders. Well, might as well follow the direction my feet were already taking me. I happily let my nose guide me to the stairs and up to the third floor where she was staying.

I just stood outside the door reveling and basking in her beautiful scent while nervously trying to decide if I was brave enough to knock on the door. I guess I was standing there for too long and she noticed me, because before I knew it, the door in front of me flew open and was replaced with her smiling face.

"Are you just going to stand out there forever?" She laughed at me. "You don't have to hide from me anymore. Unless you really don't want me as your mate." I saw the sadness flash across her eyes at those words.

"No!" I hurried. "I want you as my mate. I always did." I didn't want to see that sad look on her face ever again.

"Then why are you acting like a ghost at my door?"

"I was nervous." I looked down at the floor, hiding my eyes from her, in the process I saw that she was standing in front of me barefoot. Her cute little toes had a pretty purple polish on them that looked perfect on her. I couldn't help myself, I smiled then. "I grew so accustomed to running from you, thinking you'd never accept me after I ran because of what I had done, who I was. I guess that feeling is a little harder to shake than I thought."

"You don't need to be afraid anymore Carter." Her sweet voice, her smiling face, they were working together to mend my broken, dismantled heart. Just being near her was making me feel whole again.

"I never knew it was going to be that hard, that painful." I ran a hand through my hair sheepishly as I gave a small chuckle.

"What?" She asked me with a look of confusion in her eyes.

"Staying away from you. It was the hardest, most painful thing I had ever done. My wolf even took over when I fell asleep once. He was trying to walk us back to your pack territory."

"Really?" She laughed. "Well, at least he likes me."

"I like you." I told her in a rush of words as I moved to stand closer to her. I took her hands in mine as I pleaded with my eyes. "I more than like you, Emmalee. I think I fell in love with you the first time I saw you, the first time I heard you speak, the first time I smelled you. Before I ran away that day, my heart was already yours, forever and ever. It nearly broke me to leave. I thought I would die of loneliness."

"That's how I felt. I thought my heart had shattered into a million pieces and would never be whole again. I thought you had seen me and thought I wasn't good enough."

"No, never. If anything I'm not worthy of you." I put my hands on her downcast face and brought her eyes to meet mine. "I didn't know you had scented me that day. I thought I got away before you noticed me. I didn't know I had hurt you as well. I thought I was the only one suffering and I could live with that. But to know I had hurt you, caused you so much pain, I am so sorry. I can't go back and change it, but I can promise that I will never do anything to hurt you ever again." I was making a man's promise, something I would never break. This was a promise to my partner, my soulmate.

"Promise?" She asked me apprehensively, her eyes rimmed in unshed tears, tears that I had caused.

"I promise." I assured her as I looked into her eyes.

I felt the pull. The undeniable urge to gently place my lips against hers and feel the warmth of her soul. I saw no resistance in her eyes or face, none in the way she was nearly leaning against me. So I went for it.

I closed the distance between us, leaning my shoulder against the frame of the door we were still standing near. My right hand stayed on her face, cradling the softness of her supple cheek. My left hand slid down the side of her neck, across her shoulder, and down her back. It came to rest at the small of her back, pressing and holding her against me.

My lips settled onto hers lightly, but even that was like paradise. The kiss started soft, gentle, and sweet. But there was an underlying need and urgency inside me that soon took control. With a humming growl of pleasure, my wolf took over.

When my hand slid to the back of her head to better angle her for the kiss I heard her gasp, but it was a surprised and happy gasp, one that had her smiling against my mouth as I deepened the kiss.

My hand on her back moved as well. It slid from its position just above her waist down to settle on her soft, glorious bottom. I kneaded the supple flesh through her jeans and felt her jolt of excitement as she clung to my shirt.

When I licked my tongue across her lips, encouraging her to open her mouth to further the kiss, she responded in stride. With the path now clear my tongue dove right in. I moaned against her mouth with satisfaction as I twisted my tongue with hers.

I don't know how long we stood there, the kiss intensifying with each passing second, but I didn't care. I just needed more. I was learning the feel of her mouth, the touch of her hands on my body, the warmth of bodies pressed together, the taste of home as my tongue mapped out the contours of her mouth.

We were both breathing hard by the time the kiss had broken. The smile on her face made my wolf purr in satisfaction. I could finally be with my mate, and I would never leave her again.

"Maybe you should come into the room, so we can talk." She smiled at me. For a moment I wanted to make a suggestive joke, but I wouldn't. Not yet. We would just talk for now, and maybe have a few more of those mind blowing kisses. I could go for a few of them.

"Yeah, I think we should definitely talk." I smiled at her as I followed her into the room, shutting the door behind me.

The room was set up a lot like Trinity's, only smaller. I kind of wanted to complain, but I knew that would be stupid. Trinity had been given one of the largest rooms because she was the Luna and lady of the house, but still, didn't my mate deserve the best too?

The room was still very large, with the bed, dressers, sitting area, and all of the same amenities. It was just slightly less grand. The room was done in shades of purple and green with hints of blue, pink, and yellow all around. It actually made me think of a flower garden with all the colors splashed about. It fit Emmalee perfectly, she was my little bouquet of flowers after all.

Emmalee took my hand as she led me into the room. She guided me over to the lavender colored loveseat. It was just big enough for the two of us to sit together. She planted me in one corner and she sat in the other, facing me. I may have had a few less than pure thoughts at that moment, but I pushed them out of my mind. I was going to treat her right, with the respect she deserved. I'm sure it would be just as hard as staying away from her was, which felt like it nearly killed me.

Chapter 247 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 11

10-12 minutes

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Emmalee

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When I had found Carter at my door I did not expect that he would give me my first kiss before he was even in the room. Or that it would be so mind numbingly, brain meltingly, heart stoppingly amazing. I had followed his lead and let him guide me through it and I thought I was going to die of happiness, embarrassment, and nervousness all at once. But nothing could ever ruin that moment. It was ours, mine and his, and it would always be just like that.

"Maybe you should come into the room, so we can talk." I smiled at him encouragingly. I didn't know if he was going to let his guards down and come in or if we still had to build up to that. After that kiss though, I had hoped things were better.

"Yeah, I think we should definitely talk." He smiled right back at me as he followed me into the room.

I saw him look around the room for a moment, taking in the layout of the area as he got himself steadied. After he took a deep breath I took him by the hand, it just felt natural and right. And the smile he gave me when I held his hand could have melted an iceberg, I know it melted my heart.

I led him by the hand over to the lavender loveseat in the sitting area. It was soft and would be perfect for the two of us to talk. I could have chosen the couch instead, but we were closer here and I liked how close he was to me.

With my eyes locked onto his, my heart racing a mile a minute, and a smile firmly locked into place it was time for us to talk.

"Carter." I said his name, finally knowing it made me happy, being able to see the look in his eyes when I said was almost worth the three months of heartache, almost. "I want this to move forward between us, in a good way. In a positive way. I think we need to get to know each other, so we can be true mates one day." He was already nodding his head before I was done talking.

"Yes, oh Goddess, yes. That's what I want too. I never want us to be apart. I mean I know we can't spend every moment together, but I don't want us separated like we were before. I want us to be here for each other so I can spend forever making up for the stupid things that I did."

"At least you admit they were stupid." I laughed at him. "That means you have potential."

"I want to get to know you. I want to date you. When you're ready we will get married and have a family. But we will do it all at your pace, Emmalee, I never want to rush you or pressure you at all."

I couldn't help it, I laughed at his sincerity.

"Carter, we don't have to try so hard. I know that you're the mate for me. I can feel it in my heart, my wolf knows it, that's all that matters right now. The Goddess chose you for me and I trust her. And I will learn to trust you too. But until then, we will get to know each other. And I like the sound of dating."

"Have you dated anyone before?" He asked me, it was clear that he was nervous about my answer as he looked at me with expectant eyes.

"No, I haven't." I looked away, embarrassed. "I've never been with anyone before."

"So, that was your-." He trailed off, unable to finish his question.

"That was my first kiss." I blushed.

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be." I cut him off before he could say anymore, before he could regret what he did or make me regret it. "I loved it, I was happy that you kissed me. I wanted you to, but I was too shy to ask you to."

"But I shouldn't have rushed it."

"It made me really happy Carter, so please don't be sorry." I was pleading with him and he finally nodded his agreement.

As I was watching him, I had a sudden thought. He didn't kiss me like it was his first time. He had kissed me like a man who had experience with that sort of thing before.

"Umm, Carter, have you, dated much?" I was afraid to hear his answer, especially after I saw his eyes go wide.

"W-we-well I-I have dated a c-couple times." He stuttered, nervously. "It was nothing serious, just casual. You know we don't ever date anyone seriously because our mates could come along at any time."

"I know." I didn't know why it made me sad to hear that he had dated people before me, but it made me feel upset and jealous and sad all at the same time.

"I'm sorry. I never should have dated anyone. I should have saved all my firsts for you." He looked upset as he leaned forward, grabbing my hands in his and holding on tight.

"You can just share in my firsts. Isn't that what counts?"

"Yes, that's all that matters. Because nothing before you mattered at all, my life didn't truly begin until I saw you that day. Hell, it didn't truly begin until today. You helped to wake me up, to bring me to life."

His words were making me want to cry. He was being so sweet right now. I could trust that he hadn't been promiscuous, but I knew he had experience. That much was obvious.

"Enough with the histories, that's not a good road to go down yet." I giggled, worried for the future conversation we'd have about it. "Let's learn more about each other."

"Yeah." He looked relieved as he smiled at me.

I know we would usually learn this stuff over time, but I thought it would be fun to play a little game with it all.

"Want to play twenty questions?"

"An ice breaker?" He looked apprehensive.

"A way to learn a lot in a little bit of time."

"Sounds like a plan." He agreed more readily than I had thought he would. "You start."

It was my turn, and I was going to use my questions to learn about him and my possible future.

"Where did you go to college?"

"I haven't yet." He answered quickly. "Trinity's life was too miserable for me to leave her behind. So I skipped and stayed with her." His answer was so sweet.

"You love your family." I smiled contentedly at him. He nodded before he spoke again.

"My turn." His smile was sweet and innocent. "What's your favorite color?"

"I love them all, but if I had to pick, I would say purple. It's such a pretty, soothing color to me. What's your favorite color?" I asked him, this was fun, getting to know each other like this.

"Green." He smiled happily looking into my eyes. "That beautiful shade of green that is your eyes. I've never seen anything more beautiful." His words made me smile and I squirmed to hide the blush I knew was deepening on my cheeks and ears. "What did you want to do, career wise, when you started college?"

"Honestly I didn't know. I just love being around people and making them happy, but I don't really like school." I put my head in my hands, ashamed.

"There's nothing wrong with that. You're a people person. And you like to plan parties right? I had heard that somewhere, why not go for event planning." My head shot up.

"Why hadn't I thought of that." I grinned at him. "I can actually get a degree in party planning and make even more people happy. I can have my own party planning business. Oh Carter, you're amazing." I threw my arms around his neck and hugged him excitedly. Then I seemed to remember what I was doing and I pulled myself away from him in a hurry. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be." He was smiling. "It's your turn."

"Well, what are you going to do for your future?"

"Well, right now I am a scout, for the pack. But I don't know if I want to be that forever. I never thought about a career because I didn't want to leave Trinity with no one to help her with my grandfather. But things are different now so I will have to seriously think about it."

"We're still young and we have time." He nodded at me happily.

"Which pack would you want to live in?" His question was a serious one, one that we would need to put a lot of thought into, but I knew what I wanted.

"I wouldn't care, as long as I was with my mate." I looked up at him through the lashes of my half lidded eyes. "I guess it would depend on careers. Our packs are allies so we could live in either one and be happy, right?"

"That we could."

"What kind of music do you like?" I was too embarrassed to ask any serious questions.

"I like lots of different kinds of music. If it's catchy, has good lyrics or a good beat I'd probably like it. I get made fun of sometimes for the vast variety of music I like."

"Oh my Goddess, I am the same way. But different music fits different moods, it's the only way to truly appreciate it all."

"What kind of house would you want?" Another major question from him.

"I grew up in the pack house and that's great and all, but I don't need anything like that. I wouldn't care as long as I was comfortable and had just what we needed." My words made my heart ring with truth and I smiled to myself. "What's your favorite place to be?"

"Now, or when I was younger?"

"Now."

"Wherever you are." I was so taken by his words that my jaw actually dropped. I wanted to bury my face in my hands and hide my crimson cheeks, but I also didn't want to look away from his handsome, smiling face and those love filled eyes. "How many kids do you want to have?" I did bury my face at that one, choosing to instead answer the question through my fingers, causing the words to come out muffled.

"I don't know. I never thought about it before. But a couple I guess." I heard a soft chuckle come from him as he heard my embarrassed answer.

"You're so adorable."

We continued on in this way for quite a while. It didn't progress beyond our game of twenty questions, but we got to know a lot about each other. Favorite foods, things we did when we were younger, good memories, bad memories, there wasn't anything off limits and that was wonderful.

Just as he was getting ready to leave I walked him to the door and he gave me another one of those kisses. I felt his lips press against mine softly at first but the intensity grew. I was holding onto him for support as my knees went weak, and by the time it was done my heart was pounding and my breaths were coming in pants. He had affected my head, my body, and my heart all with just a kiss. What was I getting myself into?

Chapter 248 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 12

10-12 minutes

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Emmalee

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Two days after the big reveal about me and Carter, I was on my way to meet his parents. He had already met mine so it was only fair after all. I was excited, I wanted to meet his parents and see what my in-laws would be like, but I was also nervous too.

Since this was a 'family' dinner Trinity and Reece were there, as were Noah and his wife Nikki. I had met Noah when they were all back at my house in January, but I hadn't known at the time that he was married. His mate, Nikki, was pregnant. She and Trinity were just over a month apart and I thought it was going to be so sweet to have the babies that close in age. They would play together all the time.

Eve, Carter's mom, was so amazing. She was so sweet and so nice, and very polite. I could see how they were all such wonderful people with someone as great as Eve around. And Wesley, his dad, was the nicest dad I had ever met. I thought my dad was great, but he can sound so mean sometimes. But Wesley was amazing. Carter's whole family was amazing.

While we sat down to an amazing dinner there was a lot of talk and a lot of laughing.

"Emmalee, are you sure it's this numbskull you want?" Noah asked me with a look of confusion that was clearly fake.

"I'm sure. Carter is amazing."

"You don't even know him yet." Noah pointed out. "I promise you, there's not much there."

"Hush now." Eve snapped at him. "Don't scare her away. I need another girl around this house. Soon, we might be able to outnumber all of you naughty men." Eve was giggling as she spoke. "I just know Nikki is going to give us a girl, and Trinity too. Then with Emmalee she will make us all the winners."

"Too many girls will make all these walking piles of testosterone flip out. They're all bound to be overly protective dads. You know that, Mom." Trinity had apparently just started calling her aunt and uncle mom and dad and it had made the whole family happy. She had not thought that she was allowed to for the longest time and now it was something that was out in the open. This whole family was full of so much love.

"Don't get me started on these cavemen. And Carter is the worst of them all."

MOM!" Carter snapped his head up from his dinner plate so fast that I thought he was going to break something.

"Well it's the truth. You were the one that gave me the most headaches. I swear." She fanned herself pretending to be distraught. "Oh the heartache you have caused me."

"Stop being mean. You're going to make her think I'm horrible."

"But you are." Noah added.

"If it wasn't for your bad influence I wouldn't have done half the things that I did." Trinity added. Nikki, Reece, and I were just laughing as they were all ganging up on him.

"Dad?" Carter was pleading with him.

"Alright, give the boy a break." Wesley laughed. "Let her figure some of his faults out on her own." That's when I laughed so hard I nearly choked on my dinner. Not because of what Wesley said, no it was because of the loud yelling whine that Carter gave.

"WHY?!" I don't know if it was playful or not but it was funny. The whole night was fun, and I thought his family was amazing.

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Carter

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When Emmalee walked me to the door I felt like I was walking on a floor made of clouds. Now I know what it was Trinity was feeling when she was falling in love with her mate. Being mated, falling in love, these feelings were the best things in the world.

I was probably grinning like a fool the whole way home, but I didn't care. I had ridden here with Noah and he was long gone, but I didn't care. I just walked out the front door, down the driveway, and whistled happily as I walked home. Nothing could bring me down.

I still had work to do, trying to locate the warlock and finding the kids, but Reece said we had plenty of people on the job and I had just gotten home so I could take some time off. I think he was just being a nice guy and letting me have time with my mate. Since he and Trinity had made nice he had been a pretty good guy. I tried not to think about the fact that it was most likely due to him sleeping with my little sister. But since my mind was currently focused on my mate, I kind of knew where he was coming from.

The wedding was right around the corner and Emmalee was busy with that a lot, but she still made time to see me at night. And I managed to talk her into going on a date with me.

There was an end of winter carnival being held at the fairgrounds. They had set up an ice skating rink that was aided by cooling fans. There were game booths, a few rides, and lots of really bad for you but really delicious carnie foods. I didn't want our first date to be constrained, I wanted something fluid, something where we could move around and talk, and the carnival seemed perfect.

I had walked to her room with a giddy hype in my step. I had dressed casually, dark jeans, a green t-shirt, black hiking boots, and a leather jacket. I felt ready to go.

When she opened the door my breath flew away just moments before my jaw hit the floor. She was wearing a lilac colored, sleeveless dress with a black leather belt across the middle. The belt matched perfectly with the knee high boots and leather jacket in her hand.

"Oh look, our jackets match." She grinned. They were both leather and both black, but hers was a tight little thing that really accentuated her curves when she put on.

After she grabbed her purse she grabbed my hand and pulled me away from the door.

"Come on." She was smiling excitedly as she led me away from the door.

"Yes Ma'am." I grinned as I let her pull me to the stairs.

Once we got to the stairs I put my hand around her waist and held her to me. We walked like that, pressed against each other, until we were out the door and I had led her to the car. I opened the door of my white Jeep Wrangler and helped her into the tall vehicle.

Once we were down in town and parked at the fairground I walked around and opened her door again, holding her hand and she slid down and out of the Jeep. The smile on her face told me she had been looking forward to this date as much as I had and neither of us could wait to get started.

It wasn't the location we were waiting for but the time together. I had never spent time truly alone with her. We had been at the estate, and she came and met my parents, but we had never truly been alone without family and friends nearby.

There would be people around today too, but hopefully none we would know.

First, we went skating. I thought it best to do that before it got too cold. She was wearing a dress and even though we don't feel the cold like humans, I didn't want her getting cold near the coolers and ice.

Skating was fun. I hadn't been since I was a kid and I wasn't that good anymore but Emmalee was amazing. She skated circles around me and I enjoyed just watching her. The skirt of her dress blowing out behind her as she did loops and jumps.

"Have you skated professionally?" I asked her with awe when she came to stop next to me.

"No, but I did take lessons and I like to skate a few times a year at least."

"That was amazing. You're so beautiful and talented."

"Stop." She blushed and looked away.

After that I took her hand and we just skated in the oval a few times. It may not have been exciting but it was fun, and we were together.

After skating, we went to play a few of the carnival games while snacking on food. That was a must. The food was greasy, artery clogging, and delicious. We loved it, especially because as wolves we didn't have to worry about that as much as humans.

When we were at the ball toss, I couldn't help showing off the wolf skill, for her and the humans around, but mostly for her. I had to knock them all down ten times in a row to get the biggest prize. I could tell by the look on the man's face that no one had ever done it while he was running the game. Time to be the first.

First ball? Perfect shot. Second Ball? Another perfect shot. This continued on for all ten balls. I didn't miss a shot and got all the bottles knocked over each time. I was kind of happy that I had won, cause I know that these carnival games are rigged to make people play more and spend more, but I won on my first try. Ha, that would show them.

The biggest prize was a little spot on for us. It was a giant stuffed wolf, gray and white mostly with some black thrown in here and there. The wolf stood almost as tall as she did, it was so big. But she loved it. She said she didn't care what it was, she would have been happy because I had won it for her. I grinned when she said that.

There was one ride I was really looking forward to. There was something that I wanted to accomplish on this date. I didn't care how cliché it was either.

After we had ridden all the other small rides, it was time for the ferris wheel. We waited in line until it was our turn. The man opened the car and I helped her in. Once we were seated Emmalee was looking excitedly out the side of the car.

I was waiting and biding my time. I waited while the ferris wheel made several large rotations. Then we started to slow down and I knew what would happen.

We had been the last ones in, so that meant we would be in this position first. Just as the ferris wheel was almost to a stop, right at the top, I called her name.

"Emmalee?" She looked at me with wonder and curiosity.

The moment she looked at me I pressed my lips to hers. The kiss wasn't exactly chaste, but we were surrounded by people so I couldn't make the moment into something more. I still explored her mouth with my tongue and devoured the flavor of hers that poured into my mouth. She was gripping my shirt and holding me to her as tightly as I held her when the ferris wheel started to move again.

That was when I broke the kiss and grinned at her. Her eyes had darkened and she looked at me with desire. I just smiled at her and the knowledge that one day we would come together. That, and I was smiling because of the kiss. They say if you kiss at the top of the ferris wheel your love will last forever.

Chapter 249 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 13

9-11 minutes

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Emmalee

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The date Carter took me on was perfect. It was amazing and fun, and the kiss was enough to knock my socks off. But things were moving so fast now. The wedding was just a day away and we had the bachelorette party first. I knew that would be fun.

I got to spend a lot of time with Trinity, my future sister-in-law Nikki, a wonderful new friend named Juniper, and a few people I had never met before that night. It was fun and we all had a good time, even though the guest of honor and another guest were pregnant so there wasn't a lot of craziness we still enjoyed ourselves. It was a great night that I would never forget.

And the next day was the wedding. I worked with Nikki, Juniper, and Eve to make Trinity look amazing. The wedding was perfect. The ceremony was beautiful. Everything was going right, there were even some new mated pairs from the wedding. Then, the others showed up and dropped a bomb on us all.

Trinity was the new Incarnation of the Moon Goddess and that meant she was the Luna Queen. I knew she was special the first time I met her.

The problem was that it made things move just that much faster. The warlocks needed to meet with her, the Sentinelle had to talk to her, and the kids needed to be found. The thing is, they probably had to all roll in together somehow.

I was waiting in my room while Carter had some sort of meeting with the others. I didn't know how long it was going to take so I was just reading a book. I was still staying with Trinity and Reece so I was still treating this like a vacation. I was really enjoying my time here and I was loving being with Carter so much.

As I was sitting on the couch, my nose buried in the story of romance and intrigue, I heard the door open. But, oddly, when I looked up no one was there. I got off the couch and walked toward the door.

There was no one in the hallway, I didn't see anyone, hear anyone, or smell anyone. I thought it was odd, but I ignored it. I just shut the door and moved back toward the couch and where I had left my book.

When I was halfway to the couch, I noticed that my book was gone.

"What the?" I asked the empty room. "I know I left it right there."

That was when I felt a brush of air and the distinct sensation that someone was moving past me. The sensation was enough to make me shiver.

"Who's there?" I asked. I knew that there had to be someone in here with me. I couldn't see them. I couldn't smell them. I couldn't hear them. But I knew they were there.

Something brushed past me closer this time, close enough to make my hair move, and I thought I felt fingers run along the skin of my arm playfully. I couldn't help it, I jumped.

I felt goosebump start all over my body as the movement around me made me shiver. I wrapped my arms around myself for comfort as I backed away from where I had been.

"What's going on in here?" I asked my empty bedroom. "Is there a ghost in here?"

I heard a chuckle then, something soft and quiet. The sound wasn't scary but the situation was.

"Carter?" I called for him. I didn't know if I thought he was here or if I was wanting him here, he was just the only thing that I could think of.

As I was backing away toward the wall I ran into something. I ran into something where there was nothing for me to run into. And just as I felt the scream building up inside of me the empty, yet solid, space in front of me started to fill in with color. In the blink of an eye, Carter was standing in front of me.

Carter leaned in quickly and kissed my cheek while I stared, gaping, at the formerly empty spot in the room.

"Hey babe."

~~

Carter

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Today had not gone as I expected. Here, let me recap:

I was in the meeting with Noah, Reece, Trinity, and all her guards. We're getting ready to go to the Aerie Convento to speak with the warlocks. Everyone was a little tense because of the attack on Ella and then Trinity using her Luna Queen abilities to grant powers and sucking herself dry. She apparently could now give out these new powers to make people strong. She had been staring at us all with a smile on her face. I will never forget the words she told me then.

"Carter." She smiled at me, one of familial love and happiness. "You are my brother, there was never any doubt. We were as thick as thieves when we were kids. Whenever I did something you were always there with me. You helped me, guided me, and protected me. Without you I never would have been able to be a part of the world, to blend in with those around me."

The moment she had said those words I felt the power begin to tingle within me, to slowly build. But it wasn't until she was done with all the blessings and there was a bright flash of light that I could really truly feel the power inside me.

"Welcome to the Goddess Guard, use your new abilities to serve your Queen well." A mysterious voice had accompanied the light. Goddess Guard? I guess that meant we were now part of Trinity's special army. I had always been in her special army, protecting her.

When she went on to explain my powers I had to fight really hard not to grin. I could camouflage myself. They thought that was just with being invisible, but I could feel what the power was allowing me to do. I could mask my footsteps if I wanted to, and I could mask my scent.

I had always been good at hiding in plain sight, I guess now I was just that much better at it. And yeah, it would come in handy for a fight, but there were other things too, and I already had an idea.

When I left the meeting I noticed that Shawn went off with Dietrich somewhere in the house. Noah, David, and Vincent all went outside. Gabriel stayed behind to talk to Reece, and the FBI agents left.

I didn't have any pressing plans, and I really wanted to see Emmalee, so that's where I decided to go. With a nice little plan in mind.

Before I even got to the hallway that Emmalee's room was on I started to mask my scent. I had been told that when I wanted to hide before it was like my scent was less strong and would fade away, I guess this power was always lying dormant inside of me.

Once I had masked my scent I hid the sound of my steps and turned myself invisible. It was now like I wasn't even there. I was a ghost in the house. And this was going to be fun.

I crept down the hallway, slowly even though I was masking my movement. When I got to her door I stopped and listened to what was on the other side for a minute or two.

I didn't hear anything on the other side of her door, but I could tell she was in the room. Her intoxicating scent was already going to my head.

Slowly, and silently, I turned the knob and opened the door. I pushed it just enough for me to squeeze into the room and hurriedly walk to the otherside.

I almost laughed at the look on her face when she stared at the door for a moment. She wasn't thinking too much of the door though, because she just stood up and walked across the room.

While she was quickly checking the hallway, I grabbed her book and hid it.

It took her a moment, but as she was walking back to sit down she saw that the book was missing, which made her stop dead in her tracks.

"What the? I know I left it right there." She seemed to be at a loss for a moment.

While she was distracted I took the opportunity to walk past her, really close. While I walked I blew a small stream of air at her and I grinned when I saw her shiver.

"Who's there?" She asked, but I stayed quiet. This time I walked closer to her, gently tracing two fingers on her arm as I went. I saw her hair move and she jumped to get away from the sensation.

"What's going on in here?" She looked around nervously. "Is there a ghost in here?"

I couldn't help it, I chuckled then. But that's when I learned that my voice would be muffled as well as it came out soft and sounded far away.

"Carter?" She called my name, but it was like she was calling for me, for my help. Not like she was accusing me of being the one in the room. I smiled happily knowing she would want me in her time of need.

She started to back away then, like she was scared. It was time to bring this to a close. I positioned myself behind her and let her bump gently into me. She turned around, a look of wonder in her eyes and just as she opened her mouth I reappeared before her.

I leaned in quickly and kissed her cheek while she stared with wide open eyes.

"Hey babe." I said playfully as I pulled away.

She didn't scream, yet, she didn't yell, yet. No, that would have been expected. What I didn't expect was the hand that came shooting out of left field, or out of sight of my left eye, as it slammed into the side of my head.

"OW!" I screamed in pain at the same time she started yelling at me.

"DAMMIT CARTER!" She was panting heavily and holding her chest with one hand as she continued to yell at me and beat me with the other hand. "What the hell were you thinking? You could have given me a heart attack. What the hell is the matter with you?"

"Ow, stop it. I'm sorry. Ow, please stop hitting me. Ow." She kept hitting me over and over as she yelled at me.

"How did you even do that? You scared me half to death."

It took a long time to calm her down and explain what had happened. By the time it was done, I was covered in bruises. And she wouldn't even let me kiss her for the rest of the day.

Chapter 250 - SIDE STORIES BOOK 1- CARTER AND EMMALEE CHAPTER 14

10-13 minutes

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Emmalee

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Things passed in a blur again. I had been so scared when Carter went off with the others to visit the Warlocks and rescue the kids. I had known he was granted a special power by Trinity, he had shown me in a not so nice way, but that didn't mean anything. He could be invisible, not invincible. They didn't mean the same thing but he didn't seem to understand that.

The entire time he had been gone I was a nervous wreck. It really made me miss being home. And I wanted to go back and visit my parents when I got the chance.

It turned out that right after they rescued the children, Trinity and Reece were leaving for France with all their guards. Noah was staying to run the pack and Carter was staying behind, he didn't say what for but I had a feeling it was for me.

Things had been hard for Carter's family and the pack lately. They had to deal with the missing children, the ones kidnapped by Trinity's father, then they had to heal and recover from Trinity's miscarriage. I

couldn't believe she had lost the baby. That was something else that made me glad that Carter was staying. People were dying and it was so hard for us all.

We had decided that while Trinity and Reece were away we would go visit my family for a while. Daddy would put Carter to work, or so he said. He wanted to train him how to be a man worthy of his daughter or something like that.

The others left at the beginning of April, and we left just two days later. The slight delay was so we could have one last dinner with Eve and Wesley before we left, with just the two of us. Eve was so sweet and kind, I was going to miss her.

But I was glad to be back home. I had missed my mom and dad. I had missed my little sister, and I had missed my brother even though he was a bother. I had missed being here and seeing everyone and everything.

I didn't think I would miss it all so much after less than a month away, but I guess I loved being with them more than I had thought. Mom and I were going to spend some quality time together while I finally decided on a major for school. And Dad was going to train Carter. What for, I didn't know. I just hoped we would get some time alone together once in a while.

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Carter

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When I was told that Bryce wanted to train me while we visited their pack I was nervous. He was a hardass when it came to being an Alpha and he was very protective of his daughters. Was he mad at me for having avoided my mate bond in the beginning. Judging by the hell he was going to put me through, I had a feeling he was.

The first thing that Bryce wanted to train me with was combat. I think he said that he wanted to make sure I was strong enough to protect his daughter. I think he just wanted a bunch of his pack mates to kick the shit out of me for taking off on his first daughter. I felt sorry for whoever mated with Katie, she was the youngest daughter after all, the true baby.

I was in the yard with Bryce watching over us. Eight of the Black Canyons warriors were surrounding me. They came at me all at once. It was supposed to teach me how to mob fight I guess. Well, they didn't know what I could do.

As they rushed toward me I masked myself, scent, sound, and sight. They couldn't detect me at all. I watched their stunned faces and I proceeded to fight them while invisible.

The fight morphed from me fighting them in a mob attack to them trying to defend themselves against an unseen opponent. I knocked the first one down, sent the second one flying into the third. I was stronger and faster thanks to my Goddess Guard mark and I was able to move like none of them could. This had actually started to be fun.

But I got cocky and wasn't paying attention. And the next thing that I knew, someone landed a well aimed kick in the middle of my back, sending me sprawling to the ground.

"What the hell do you think you're doing, boy?" Bryce was yelling at me while he loomed over me, I had become visible again the moment I fell.

"How the hell did you do that?" I asked him, surprised that he knew where I was.

"You think you're invincible because we couldn't see you? Look at the ground dumbass, you're leaving imprints. I could tell where you were. But I should thank you for showing me where this bunch of pathetic wimps need to be trained more."

"Glad I could be of some help." I groaned as I went to stand up. Damn, I think he might have cracked something with that kick. Old man is strong as hell.

"Get up, boy. We're not done here yet." Bryce ordered me to my feet and I followed his command.

I was on my feet and looking him in the eyes in just a few seconds, I moved quicker than I thought I would have after taking that blow.

"You want to be with my little girl? You want to be a part of my family? Well then you need to earn it."

"Yes, Sir." I answered him right away, my tone respectful.

"You can't have my daughter until the day you can beat me."

"What?" I was dumbfounded. Bryce was telling me he wouldn't give us his blessing until I could fight him and win. This wasn't good.

So, my days began to pass in a certain type of pattern. I would wake up and have breakfast with everyone, happy to see Emmalee. Then I would fight my way through his warriors until lunch time, which I was not given any but everyone else was. While they all ate I worked on masking my foot prints while I was invisible, at first it was hard but I was gradually managing to do it. After lunch, Bryce would come out and spar with me. I was not allowed to use my camouflage while we fought. He wanted me to be able to fight like a real man.

Bryce was strong and had been in a lot of fights. He managed to knock me on my ass several times. He would throw me across the yard in an over hand throw. He would sweep my feet out from under me in a beautiful and precise sweep of his legs. He would win every time. That's how it went for weeks.

I was getting better of course. I was watching his movements and learning what he was doing. I would pay close attention to what he did everytime he fought me, even though I lost. I walked away with a lot of bruises at the end of each day. And only after my sparring was I allowed to have dinner with the family. And after dinner, Bryce would drag me to his office to teach me the politics of a wolf pack. What was expected of anyone and everyone inside the pack. And how to run it in general. I didn't understand that part of my training but I'd take it. The more I knew the better.

I wasn't getting much time with Emmalee. We had separate rooms, of course. Bryce wouldn't let us share even if we had slept together already. But, I had been respectful of her and I hadn't pushed that envelope at all. But, I could tell she was ready, the looks in her eyes and the way she clung to me when I gave her her kisses goodnight.

It was almost the middle of May when I felt I was ready to make my move. I had learned everything that Bryce was showing me. He had begun to repeat his moves now so he must have run through them all.

When the sparring match started we faced each other, hands at the ready. I was feeling light on my feet and fully prepared with all the training I had been doing for the last month. When Bryce came at me, things didn't go like they used to.

I parried his hand away with my own, spinning around behind him. With a quick motion I managed to wrap my arm under his and in the same movement I rolled the top half of my body. I felt Bryce lift off the ground and onto me for just a moment, before I used the same move he had from before and sent him soaring across the yard to land in a heap.

Bryce sat up and glared at me, his light green eyes full of fire.

"Again." He growled at me as he rose to his feet.

We fought over and over again. I swept his feet out from under him and pinned him to the ground. I threw him in multiple different moves. I used every trick he had used on me and won every fight.

After the tenth fight in a row Bryce was once again sitting on the ground staring at me. I thought he would be upset. I figured he'd glare and growl at me again. But he surprised me when he looked up, grinning at me like he was proud.

"Now that's what I'm talking about." I was shocked.

"What?"

"You've definitely improved, boy." He said as he moved to stand up.

I watched on nervously as he dusted the dirt off his black pants and walked over to me.

"You've earned my respect boy." He clapped me on my shoulder, a grin on his face. "You're strong and you've proven that. I will admit you're worthy of my daughter." I was smiling as I heard his words.

"Thank you, Sir."

"Stop calling me Sir all the damn time. You're going to marry my daughter one day, aren't you?"

"If that's what you want, Alpha Bryce." I smiled at him.

"Shut it you little shit. Just call me Dad already." Bryce was laughing at me while I stood there shell shocked.

"Dad?" I asked apprehensively.

"Well, you'll be my son-in-law, right? It's only fitting, isn't it, Son?"

"Yeah, I guess it is, Dad." We grinned at each other.

"Your training is over for now. Enjoy your time to relax."

The first thing I did when my training was over was rush right to Emmalee's room. I wanted to see her. I wanted to tell her the good news. And I wanted to ask her something.

I ran to her room and knocked on the door frantically. When she opened it she looked surprised to see me, to see how excited I was.

"Carter? What-." She was in the middle of asking me something but I interrupted her by sweeping her into my arms and planting my lips on hers, cutting her off mid sentence. The feel of her lips on mine was like coming home after being away for a long time.

"What's going on?" Emmalee smiled at me when I pulled away from her.

"I love you." I sighed into her ear as I held her close. I had never actually said those words to her before and I heard the gasp when she heard them now.

"Carter?" She sounded happy. "I love you too." She sighed as she squeezed me back. "Did something happen?"

"I finally beat your dad and earned his approval." I had pulled away and was grinning at her like a fool.

"Really?" She seemed overjoyed.

"He told me to call him Dad."

"Oh my Goddess, Carter, that's amazing."

"Go out with me, please."

"What?"

"Go on a date with me. Just the two of us, please."

"Of course. You know I would go anywhere with you. I love you Carter."

"I love you, more than life itself."