

Chosen by Fate 71

Chapter 71 - Trinity-Christmas Part 2

Trinity

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Reece gave his mother a handful of presents, less than what she had given us, but still not small. I had only gotten Lila three things, but I didn't know what she would want. I felt embarrassed now. She proceeded to open the gifts, first Reece's and then mine. I had gotten her a lovely locket that was a perfect circle, it looked like a full moon, and on the back was a wolf paw print with the words, Thank you Lila, Love Trinity, engraved on the back. I had also gotten her a book, one I thought should be in the library but was missing. And the last present, was a collage of restored photos I found in storage after talking to her that day. I had them sent out and restored to their original beauty and arranged in a collage. The pictures had her, Reece, and the former Alpha at various stages.

"Oh, Collin." She sighed as she looked at the pictures. "Trinity, this is lovely, thank you so much."

"I'm glad you like it." I told her, smiling in relief.

"I love it. I have been missing his face so much." She was nearly in tears.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make you cry."

"They're happy tears." She told me. "Don't be sad."

Once she wiped away her tears, she said it was time for Reece and me to exchange our gifts. I turned to look at him, nervous and apprehensive. What would he think? What is he going to say about the gifts that I got him? Only time will tell. I took a deep breath to settle my nerves and got his gifts.

I gave him the gifts that I thought of after talking to his mom first. He opened the first of the two, it was the largest of his gifts. I noticed the shock on his face, and the heartache. It was a guitar. A classic. And it looked almost exactly like the one in the picture of him and his father. He didn't say anything, but he opened the other gift that went with it. I had also had the picture of him and his father restored. Their smiling faces looked as if the picture had been taken recently with a digital camera instead of over a decade ago. It was no longer creased, now it was set lovingly inside a beautiful frame so he could display how much he loved his father.

Reece looked at me in awe, his face not hiding how shocked he was for once.

"When did you do this?" He asked me.

"After I was done recovering, and we had our argument. I found this picture in the library and talked to your mom about you and your dad." I was scared to tell him, I thought he would be upset about it all. "I know you don't have reminders about your parents around the house. I thought it was hard with them both gone, but I thought, maybe, with your mom back you would be fine with having the pictures up again."

"Little Bunny." He sighed, the emotion in his voice clear. Before I knew it, he had hugged me, not tight, but gently. "Thank you." He whispered to me softly. I was glad I had done this for him.

After composing himself, Reece handed me my first gift.

"Alright, time for you to open one." He said. It was a thin box about the size of his hand. When I unwrapped it I found a jewelry set inside. There was a pendant in the shape of a wolf's paw, and it was covered in tiny diamonds. There were matching earrings, also in the shape of paws. And lastly there was a bracelet that looked like a path of walking paw prints, it would look like a wolf walked around my wrist when I wore it. They were all stunningly beautiful, and obviously expensive.

"They're gorgeous." I said honestly.

"Good, I'm glad you like them. Knowing your tendency to hate over the top things I thought you might not like them." He laughed nervously.

"I don't hate them, not really, I just think it gets to be a little too much sometimes." I smiled at him. "But I really do love them." I admitted.

"Here, your next one." I said, trying to hide my giggle. He noticed and raised his eyebrows.

"Why are you laughing?"

"I'm enjoying myself." I told him, trying to hide my true agenda for the day.

"Uh huh." He looked at the package nervously before he started to unwrap it.

He opened the watch set I had bought him. The platinum and black gold looked even better in person than it did when I ordered it online. The military style ID bracelet was masculine enough that he should be able to wear it no problem. He took the watch out and looked at it.

"This is really nice, Little Bunny." He commented. "This is actually perfect. I could use this all the time, since it would go with everything."

"That's great." I smirked. That's when he turned the watch over.

"Oh, it's engraved." He noted. "Alpha, that's simple." He commented as he picked up the bracelet. "Is this engraved too?" He asked looking over the bracelet. He didn't see anything on the top, but he flipped it over and I noticed his eyes go wide. I almost lost it then, my laughter was fighting to be let out.

"You think you're funny, don't you?" He asked me, a growl in his voice. I laughed, long and loud.

"Don't you like it?" I asked him. "I had your name put on it."

"That's not my name and you know it."

"Aww, but I went through the trouble of having it engraved just for you."

"I'm glad you did something like this though, it means I don't feel as bad about this." He said handing me another small box.

"What's this?"

"Open it." He demanded with an evil glint in his eyes.

I opened the long thin box. Inside was a beautiful charm bracelet with an engraved nameplate in the middle. I picked it up and looked at the charms. There was a carrot, a rabbit's foot, and a bunny. And on the nameplate were the words Little Bunny.

"You jerk." I laughed at him.

"Right back at you." He snapped playfully.

"I'm not a bunny."

"And I'm not Fido." We were laughing near hysterically after that, Lila watching us with a smile on her face.

"Fine, I got one more for you, big guy." I smiled at him playfully. "You're going to love it."

"Yeah, I have one more for you too, depending on what this last one is, I might just say you deserve it too." I growled playfully.

"Here." I was trying to keep my laughter from bursting out of me again as I handed him the last box. It was similar in size to the last one he had handed me. When he opened it, he yelled out.

"Oh, come on, you've got to be kidding me." He was laughing harder than before.

"Read it, read it." I insisted between laughs. He picked up the silver dog collar, it was a choke chain, and read the tag that was attached. It said "FIDO" in big bold letters.

"You're a brat."

"It's so I can yank your chain when you get out of hand." I laughed. Lila, who had been watching us in silence this whole time, finally laughed.

"That's perfect." She laughed. "Isn't she the greatest Reece?" She asked him.

"Oh, just the best. And now I don't feel so bad giving her the last gift I have either." He smirked.

"I don't see anything else for me to open." I told him, looking around.

"You need to follow me." He said grabbing me by the hand and pulling me behind him.

"Where are we going?"

"You'll see." He chuckled.

He dragged me through the house and out into the garage. There sat a car I had never seen there before. It was a brand-new Jeep Cherokee with red and gold ribbons on it. The vanity plate on the front read LTTL BNNY.

"That is so not funny." I snapped at him. "There was no need to get another car."

"This is the least conspicuous car we have now. And it's all for you, Little Bunny."

"That plate is coming off at least."

"Not a chance." He laughed.

"You're so mean." I growled at him.

"Takes one to know one." He laughed at me.

It was a fun day. I hadn't expected to enjoy my Christmas without my family this much, but it was great so far. After Reece showed me the car, we had our breakfast. Abigail went all out and prepared an amazing meal and was already preparing dinner.

Just after noon my family, all of them, came to celebrate with us. I was able to give the rest of them their gifts. From Noah and Nikki, to Aunt Eve and the others, even Grandfather came. They all enjoyed their gifts, and I was happy with what they gave me. And for once Grandfather was not being overly strict and cruel to me. He did disappear with Reece briefly but there was nothing that brought the mood down.

Juniper, Cedar, and Paul joined us shortly after my family got there. We exchanged our gifts. I was happier than I thought I had any right to be. Everyone decided to join us for dinner, which I think was planned long in advance. It was the perfect end to the day.

We were just seeing them all off as a group when Lila squealed.

"Ooooh, Finally."

"What?" I asked her, confused.

"I have been waiting for the two of you to end up under one of the mistletoe bunches for the last week at least, and it finally happened." She was smiling like a loon, but I just looked up at it like it was a bomb.

"Oooohhh." I heard Aunt Eve and Nikki coo.

"Go on then." Grandfather encouraged. Uncle Wesley smiled at me. Everyone else, just stared at me, trying to gage my reaction. I couldn't say no, not with my family here. Reece seemed uncertain about whether he should make his move as well, so I initiated.

I gripped Reece's jacket and pulled him toward me. He looked shocked, stunned into immobility. Even while standing on my tiptoes I was unable to reach him unless he bent down. I tugged him again, pulling him a little closer. Finally, with him close enough, I place my lips lightly onto his. This broke him out of his stupor, he put his hands on my hips and kissed me back.

The kiss was quick but heated. We broke apart after just a moment, but the heat from his lips remained on mine.

"Oh my." Aunt Eve gushed.

"Well." Nikki added.

Carter cleared his throat, drawing our attention back to the group.

"Sorry." I blushed.

"It was just a kiss, nothing to be sorry about." Lila said.

"Yeah, don't worry about it." Juniper was looking at me, her inquisitive eyes boring into me. I predict a barrage of messages soon.

"We'll be going now." Carter declared as he opened the door.

"Goodbye everyone, I love you." I heard a chorus of "love you too"s before they all left the house.

Chapter 72 - Trinity-The Last Full Moon Meeting Of The Year

9-12 minutes

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Trinity

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Things were slowly getting better with Reece. I didn't get to see him all the time, with his busy schedule, but with the holiday season he had a lot of free time. The day after Christmas I was called to his office to have a meeting with him and Michael, the elder. I knew it was for the upcoming full moon meeting. I would have thought they would have had this meeting already, since it was only three days away now.

When I walked in, the first thing I noticed was that my usual chair was gone. Well not gone really, just moved. It was sitting on the other side of Reece's desk, just a few feet away from his. I wonder if the Elders didn't like the distance that he was keeping between us.

"Trinity, my dear Luna, how are you child?" Michael asked me in his typical over the top condescending way. I know he didn't mean anything about it, but had I had a wolf my hackles would rise from hearing it every time.

"Hello Michael, I'm doing well, and how are you?" I asked him as he leaned in for a slight hug. When he pulled away, I noticed an angry look in Reece's eyes. I took my seat and sat quietly beside my mate.

"Now, we can discuss what will happen during the full moon this month." Michael smiled happily.

"Do I truly need to be here?" I asked him, a little miffed by the situation. "It's not like I can be there, anyway." My voice held an edge I had not intended it to, my anger was stronger than I thought. I didn't want to be cooped up anymore, but I knew why I was staying inside. I truly didn't want to have anything else happen to me.

"What do you mean you can't go?" Michael asked me, perplexed.

"With everything that has happened lately, we feel it is best for her to not go anywhere for the time being." Reece answered for me. I lowered my head in depression.

"Ahh, yes, I do understand that." Michael's voice gave off an understanding tone as he eyed me sadly. "I'm truly sorry my dear. Perhaps we should have left you out of the meeting." He added.

"It's fine. Eventually I would need to attend every meeting anyway, right?" I asked him, forcing a smile.

"Yes, that's right dear, you will."

"So, what is the plan for this month?" I asked them, trying to lighten the mood somewhat.

"Well, it is nearly the end of the month, so therefore the end of the year. We traditionally have a bonfire as the moon for December is called the cold moon, along with the oak moon and the long nights moon. We typically try to burn at least some oak during the bonfire, but it's mostly staving off the long and cold night with the fire. This year though, I would like to make it a bit of a pre New Year's party for the pack."

"This gathering is purely voluntary right? They're not required to attend."

"That's right, they will come if they choose to, which a lot decide to skip it because they're home with their family this time of year." Reece answered for me.

"Alright, so what kind of turnout will there be, do you think?"

"It's hard to know, but we will prepare for more than the usual, just to be safe. That has been the plan in the past." I nodded my head.

"Looks like you've got it all worked out." I told them, the regret at not being included seeping into my voice.

"Well, since we know what will be going on, I will relay the information." Michael said as he stood and left the room alone. I was about to follow him when Reece called out to me.

"Wait, Little Bunny." I sat back down and looked at him, confused.

"Yes?" I asked him.

"About the night of the full moon?" He started but seemed hesitant.

"What about it?"

"Will you have dinner with me?" He finally managed.

"Don't we always eat dinner together?" I asked him, confused.

"I mean, just the two of us." I noticed his embarrassment. He was trying to force himself here. Apparently between his mom, the elders, and possibly Noah, they were forcing him to be a better mate to me. Well, we could hope that it would get better during this time.

"Alright." I agreed, not sure what to expect.

"Really?" He sounded shocked at first, but then broke out into the biggest grin I've ever seen on his face before. "Wonderful. I will meet you after I greet the pack at the gathering."

"Wait, you're going to leave the gathering?" Shock filled my voice.

"It's not an important event, and you can't be there this year. I don't want you to be alone."

"I've never been to any of them before." I admitted.

"I guessed at much." He frowned. "I don't know why your Grandfather was so hard on you, but I'm sorry things were so tough for you."

"It's fine, aside from the pack related stuff, my life was great. My family was the best I could ask for. And I never knew my mother or father so I can't miss them." I tried to pretend like it didn't bother me, but I felt the stinging of tears in my eyes.

"Little Bunny?" He seemed to be asking me if I was alright with those words as he came closer and gently wrapped his arms around me. "We both have scars from our pasts. Let's help each other overcome them, eventually." He whispered so quietly that I barely heard him.

"Reece?" I asked him, confused. He shook his head as if to say no before kissing me softly on top of my head.

He pulled away from me after that. Sadness and regret filling his eyes. I was sure the regret had been for being so close to me, getting emotional with me.

"I have another meeting soon, Little Bunny, but I will see you at dinner." He smiled sadly before holding a hand out to help me to my feet. He kissed the back of my hand gently before letting me go. I left, confused and uncertain about what had just happened and my feelings.

Over the next three days I was needlessly nervous around Reece. I didn't know the real reason why he had asked me to have dinner with him. It surprised me when I found out that he was going to skip the gathering to come back and spend time with me. But he could just be bored with all the routine. Maybe he wasn't going to stop until he had conquered his conquest. I just didn't know what to think, but my body wanted to turn to a puddle whenever he was around.

On a positive note I was fully registered for my classes for the next semester now. I had passed all my classes with near perfect scores, thanks to my friends passing along the assignments. I was lucky to have them, and I couldn't wait to finally get to go to class with them again.

I had Juniper come over the day before my dinner with Reece. I wanted her to help me pick out something to wear.

"You're going on a date?" She asked me incredulously.

"We're having dinner, but I don't know where." I admitted.

"Is this your first date?" She was in super excited inquisitive mode now.

"No, we had one last weekend." I confessed to her.

"What?" She gasped. "Why am I just hearing about this now?" She demanded.

"Well, it was right before Christmas and the same day as my exams, so I kind of just forgot to mention it."

"You forgot? Oh, come on, this is major. Girl you need to tell me these things." I laughed at her intensity. "Tell me everything that happened." She insisted.

I obliged. I told her everything that had happened after I left the test room. From when Reece showed up to ask me to dinner, to getting my dress, and then the meal. I told her how, though awkward at times, we didn't argue at all. And how he finished the night with a kiss that I was not prepared for. When I was done, her mouth was hanging open in shock.

"Oh my Goddess." She breathed. "Girl, what are you going to do if he tries that again?"

"I don't know. Oh Goddess, why does he only want me for sex? Why can't he fall in love with me?" I asked of no one in particular and I grabbed my head in frustration.

"Do you love him?" Juniper seemed surprised by my question and already guessed my meaning.

"I can't help it. The bond made me like him already, and he's not a bad guy."

"Trinity! Look at what the asshole has said to you." She yelled at me.

"I know, but he's a great alpha to the pack, he's fair, and when he's not intentionally being a jerk to me, he can be really nice."

"You're making excuses for him." She accused.

"I can't help but notice it. I live with him. I see how he is with everyone. And, not to mention, he has saved my life multiple times."

"Hero syndrome or what do they call it." She put a finger to her chin as she thought. "Stockholm syndrome, that's what you've got."

"That's when you fall in love with your kidnapper." I laughed at her.

"Florence Nightingale Syndrome?" She asked.

"Nope, that's falling in love with your health care worker." I was laughing so hard at her trying to discredit my emotions that I was not feeling stressed anymore.

"Fine, if there is no syndrome where you fall in love with your rescuer simply because they saved you then I'm making one, you have Trinity Syndrome." She pointed at me when she declared this.

"Why name it after me? Shouldn't it be his fault?"

"Reece Syndrome?" She asked. "Doesn't have the same ring to it, besides anything with him is likely never to bring you peace."

"No peace?" I snickered. "No Reece Syndrome, then I get no peace, or pieces." I started laughing so hard I couldn't sit up.

"Oh Goddess, Trinity, never talk to me about Reece's pieces. No, wait, scratch that. Tell me everything about them. That man is hot." She was blushing and laughing so hard I could hardly understand a word she said.

"I haven't even seen Reece's pieces yet, so shut up." I blushed. I knew my face had to be crimson with how embarrassed I felt.

Chapter 73 - Trinity-Dinner With Reece

9-11 minutes

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Trinity

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Somehow, we managed to settle down long enough for me to pick an outfit for the night of the full moon. I didn't know what he had planned, but I didn't think it was going to be another fancy restaurant. Even he said that last week was kind of a special occasion because I was going to be trapped at home for a long time. So, I had a feeling we would be staying home, but Juniper didn't agree with me.

I had selected a pair of jeans that were so dark blue they almost looked black, but they were also low riders and showed an ample amount of my hips, this was Juniper's insistence. She had told me I needed to show some skin, never mind that it was the end of December. 'Not like you'll get cold anyway' she had played off the wintry weather.

I paired them with a sky-blue halter top that left everything from my belly button down bare. Over that I would wear a black denim jacket that was so dark the silver buttons seemed to shine. I thought the entire outfit was too flirty, but that was reining Juniper in a lot from what she had originally planned. I really did want to get to know Reece more before I slept with him, but Juniper seemed to be in a hurry for me to get him into my pants.

The long awaited (dreaded) night arrived. I took the time to do my hair a little different than usual. I did two small yet elaborate braids, one down each side of my head, then pulled the hair until the braid was loose and the twists looked bigger. I left a little of my bangs to hang in my face before pulling the braids and remaining hair back into a low ponytail. It wasn't super fancy, but I thought it would go well with what I was wearing tonight.

After my hair was done, I did my light make-up. Just a dusting up shadow on my eyes, mascara, and some lipstick. When I looked in the mirror, I didn't really recognize myself. I never dressed like this. Reece was going to think I was being stupid if I went out there like this. I looked at the clock, it was just after seven, if I hurried, I could pick something else.

That's when I heard the knock on my door.

"Little Bunny?" Reece called from the door. Crap, I had been too focused on getting ready. I hadn't been paying attention. I didn't notice his scent coming down the hall.

"Coming." I answered. Oh Goddess, I don't have time to change now. I opened the door slowly, nervously. I saw him standing there dressed in a pair of dark jeans and a light green t-shirt with a black leather jacket over it. We almost matched, and it made me want to laugh.

"You really do like the color green, don't you?" I asked him.

"I could say the same with you and blue." He commented as he tugged lightly on the lacey front of my halter top. The slight tug helped pull me toward him and made my breasts strain against the shirt, my eyes went wide.

"Well, blue is my favorite color. Just like I'm guessing green is yours."

"It used to be, but I'm really starting to like blue." He smirked at me causing me to look away as I blushed. He chuckled slightly before continuing. "Are you ready to go have dinner?" He asked me.

"Yeah, just let me grab my shoes." I said. I hadn't put them on yet when I opened the door for him.

I walked over to sit on the bed, my shoe choice for the night was sitting next to it on the floor. I had chosen boots, but not ones meant for warmth or hiking. These boots had a modest heel, at least compared to those stilettos, of only an inch and a half. I leaned forward and pulled them on, up and over the jeans, all the way to my knees. I could feel his eyes on me as I moved, but I didn't look at him, I didn't need that distraction.

When I stood and looked back at him, his honey golden eyes looked nearly amber now with whatever emotion he was hiding at the moment. Usually when his eyes darkened like that he was mad at me, but he's the one that asked me out, even though I know it was probably suggested by someone else.

"Ready?" He asked me again.

"Yup." I nodded my head. He held his hand out toward me like he had done before and this time I took it. He seemed satisfied, smiling as he wrapped his arm around my waist.

"Stairs or elevator?" He asked me as we walked out of my room.

"Stairs." I answered quickly, too quickly, he looked at me and laughed.

"I'm not going to attack you every time we're in the elevator." He smiled darkly. "I'm not an animal."

"Oh, you're not? And here I thought you were the puppy that I was trying to train." I giggled. He grinned even wider.

"Does that mean I get to act like a bad dog, so you have to train me more." I couldn't tell if he was joking or not and just looked at him. "Hmmm, that was an interesting response. Don't worry, I will behave myself." His evil smile turned into an angelic one. I didn't trust it one bit.

He didn't take me to the garage, so I was right that we weren't going out to dinner. Where he took me was the solarium.

"Dinner under the stars." He said smiling. I saw that there had been a small table brought into the room and covered with a white tablecloth. There was a delicious looking meal waiting for us that was clearly made by Abigail. Candles were lit on the table and around the room, the soft glowing light gave off a beautifully romantic atmosphere.

"This looks lovely." I smiled at him as he walked to the table and pulled out a chair for me.

"Won't you have a seat, mia amata?" His smile was radiant and charming, and almost enough to draw me in to get lost forever.

"Italian?" I looked at him quizzically.

"So, you speak it as well?" He smiled sheepishly.

"It was one of the many languages Grandfather insisted on me learning, so yes ragazzo amante, I speak it as well."

"Lover boy?" He grinned. "Is that how you see me?"

"Well, Fido is already Italian, I could have called you cucciolo, but I didn't think you'd like that."

"No, piccolo coniglietto, I wouldn't."

"Don't call me a bunny." He laughed at my pouty face.

"And remember that I am no puppy." He growled playfully.

I took the seat he offered me. His hands lingered momentarily on my shoulders after he helped push my chair in. He sat across from me, the candles flickering against his honeyed complexion made him look mysterious.

The dinner was delicious. Juicy steaks prepared so they had just the right amount of pink left. Roasted potatoes with parmesan and garlic. Grilled asparagus crisped and caramelized just slightly. There was a Caesar salad and breadsticks to go with it as well.

Reece poured us both a glass of red wine.

"What are you doing?" I asked him.

"Having dinner with you." He said sarcastically.

"I'm only eighteen, I'm not old enough to drink that." I reminded him.

"I won't tell if you don't." He joked.

"Honestly, you're such a bad influence." I joked with him as I took the glass of wine. I had tried some before, taste-testing with my cousin when we were growing up. Carter and I wanted to see what all the fuss was about it. It was alright, but not my favorite. Hopefully that changed sometime over the last eight years.

This wine was sweet, not too overpowering, which made it easy to drink.

"How is it?" He asked me.

"Better than the one I tried when I was eleven." I told him. He raised an eyebrow. "I was curious." I laughed.

"Looks like I need to keep an eye on you, if you do whatever makes you curious." His innuendo was not lost on me.

"Heel Fido." I snapped. "I don't 'do' whatever makes me curious." He laughed.

"Fine, but I am curious as to what does interest you."

"Why?" His curiosity confused me. Why was he so interested in me?

"You intrigue me. You never do what I expect you to do. Just when I think I have you figured out you do the opposite of what I expect you to do."

"So, I'm nothing more than a curiosity? Something for you to explore, figure out, play with for a bit then get bored with?"

"Why do you do that?" He asked me.

"Do what?"

"Assume the worst of everything I say."

"Maybe because I've been given plenty of reasons to think that way about you." I countered.

"But can't you see that I have been trying to apologize and make it up to you?" He almost seemed like he was pleading with me.

"Not really."

"What is it going to take to make you believe what I say?" He demanded.

"I don't know, Reece. I just don't know yet."

"I'm going to keep trying." His voice sounded sincere, and I truly hoped he was.

"I hope so." I said quietly.

We ate our dinner, and Reece brought out a small cake for dessert. It was a carrot cake, which was my favorite. I thought about asking how he knew, but I was certain Noah or Carter told him, or more likely Abigail, about my preferences. The meal was excellent, the conversation and atmosphere, not so much.

Chapter 74 - Trinity-Under The Stars

7-8 minutes

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Trinity

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I thought the night would be over once we were done eating, I didn't know what else Reece could have in mind. So, when he pulled my chair out for me and asked me to walk with him, I was skeptical at first but joined him.

Reece wrapped his arm around my waist like he usually did when we walked together. He led me outside and into the night. We walked silently through the trees. The stars were just bright enough to illuminate the path so we could see without having to use the sight granted to us by the Goddess.

It didn't take us long to reach the destination that Reece had in mind. It was not far from the house but was in the opposite direction of the gathering. There was a clearing in the trees that opened up into a small alcove in the rocky side of the mountain. It was crescent shaped faced out toward the edge of the cliffs and over the trees below. Reece had a blanket laid out in the middle of the alcove and a thermos sitting nearby.

"I thought we could watch the stars and see the full moon together." He smiled confidently as he pulled me into the center of the clearing.

"Why are you being so different? Why are you treating me like this? Did Noah say something to you?" I needed to know. I couldn't live with not understanding anymore. "Or did the Elders tell you not to have so much distance between us anymore?"

"What are you talking about?" He looked genuinely confused with his brows creased and his head turned to the side, I didn't want to tell him how puppy like it looked.

"Who made you change your mind?" I asked him.

"Would you believe me if I said you? And that I knew everything all along."

"Your hot and cold attitude is giving me a headache, and maybe even whiplash."

"Can we just start over Little Bunny?" He pleaded. "Let's start this all from the beginning. Tonight will be our new first, everything before today doesn't matter."

"Alright, let's try. It will be better than constantly fighting."

"Good." He smiled so brightly that it warmed me even from a distance. "Come on, watch the stars with me, please." His hand was held out toward me again, this time I took his hand willingly and let him pull me to him.

Reece pulled me down with him as he sat, setting me between his thighs and resting me against his chest and wrapping his arms around me.

"Is this alright, Little Bunny?" He asked me.

"For now." I told him, my voice betraying how nervous I was with a slight trembling and a squeak near the end. I heard him chuckle at the sound as he settled me more firmly against him.

We watched the stars, talking about nonsense things for so long that I lost track of the time. He asked me about my childhood and told me about his.

"So, you never went to school?" He asked me, shocked.

"Nope, Grandfather didn't want me to embarrass him, so I was homeschooled. Noah and Carter went to school like normal though."

"That had to suck. I knew Noah went to school, he was my best friend growing up, would be now too if he wasn't so mad at me."

"That's your own fault, not mine." I laughed. "I didn't tell him anything. I didn't say anything to any of my family."

"But you did tell your friends?" He questioned me.

"More like Juniper the super sleuth figured it out on her own."

"Vincent knows too, doesn't he?"

"He was there the day Juniper was asking me about everything, and while I was ordering ice cream, she told all three of the guys."

"So, you didn't tell them I was a jerk just to spite me?" He asked.

"No, and I told Juniper to not be mad at you. Even recently she was trying to convince me you're the bad guy but-." I stopped myself, thinking about what I was about to say.

"But what?" He asked me, I could hear the curiosity in his voice.

"No, it's nothing." I evaded.

"Don't think you can do that. You've got to tell me now." He implored me. "Come on." He squeezed me with his large, muscular arms.

"Nope, not saying." I refused firmly.

"Tease." He said as he buried his face into my neck, we were both laughing but the feel of him against my skin, his lips just inches away from where he marked me. I shivered.

"Cold?" He asked, tightening his hold once more but not moving his face. The feeling of his breath moving against my skin as he breathed just that one word made me squirm, my body was beyond shivering now.

"N-n-no." I stammered.

"Hmm." His humming sent a jolt vibrating through my whole body.

Reece took his right arm off of me, bringing it between us. He moved my hair out of the way, the little bit that had come loose to fall down onto my shoulder.

"You're unique, Trinity, you know that don't you?" He whispered into my ear. "You're beautiful, smart, funny, stubborn. You're my little bunny." His breath was getting closer and closer until finally I felt his lips touch gently against my mark. I shivered again and gasped at the feel of his tender kiss.

"You drive me wild, Little Bunny." His whispered voice was nearly a growl as said the words. I felt his tongue press against my mark then, the pressure against it, of my body knowing it was him pressing against it, made my mind go blank.

He lapped at the mark before biting it gently. I gasped at the feeling of it. He turned my head to the side, forcing me to face him. He pressed a gentle kiss to my lips and when I didn't pull away, he pressed it further, sliding his tongue into my mouth. His kiss grew more frantic, more hungry. His tongue probed and searched the inside of my mouth like he was discovering a new land. He turned me in his arm then, pulling me onto his lap and wrapping his arms around me and deepening the kiss. I felt his groan as he pushed me against him. He nipped at my bottom lip before pulling away.

He was about to bury his face in my neck again when I came to my senses.

"NO!" I cried. "We can't." I pushed away from him and got shakily to my feet. I could see the fire, the hunger in his eyes. But I could also see the pain of my rejection in his eyes.

"Why not?" He asked me. "I wouldn't have gone too far, not out here."

"I need to know that we feel the same way about each other first Reece, I don't want to just be another notch." I sobbed. I wanted him. I really did. My heart wanted him. My body needed him. But my mind would not let me be with him until I knew how he felt.

I ran. I couldn't help it. I turned around and ran back toward the house. I could hear him calling after me.

"Little Bunny?" His voice sounded hurt. "Trinity!" He called after me again and again, but I just ran back home, back to my room. I wanted him, and if I stayed, I would give in before knowing if he accepted me or not, before knowing if he loved me or not.

Chapter 75 - Reece-New Years Plans

6-7 minutes

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Reece

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I needed to find a way to change her mind. I needed to convince her that I was wrong when I said those things before. The look on my Little Bunny's face when she ran away crushed me. I never wanted to see that look again.

After she left me, sitting there in the clearing, I was at a loss. I didn't know what to do. What I did know, no what I needed, was a cold shower, or a dip in the river. I needed to cool my head, and other things.

I only have a few days of vacation left before life gets busy again, so I want to spend as much time with her as I can. But I was going to need to keep my hands to myself or I was likely to ruin things again. I wanted my Little Bunny to know that I was serious about her. That I didn't hate her. I never did. I never could.

I made my way home from the clearing alone, following her scent to make sure that she went straight home. I followed her scent all the way to her door. I heard her inside, that made me feel better. I knew she was safe.

"I'm sorry, Little Bunny." I whispered outside her door before turning to walk back to my room.

I was looking forward to seeing her at breakfast the next morning. I wanted to make things better between us. So, when I saw her sitting there talking with my mom when I walked in, I couldn't stop my wolf from jumping around happily at the sight of her. I smiled at his excitement and joy for our mate.

"Good morning, sweetie." Mom said as I sat across from her, putting myself next to my scrumptious little mate.

"Morning, Mom." I told her. "Good morning, Little Bunny." I smiled at my timid little mate.

"G-good morning, Reece." She stammered as she looked at me.

"Don't tell me you guys are fighting?" Mom asked me.

"Not at all." I denied with a smile. It was the truth, we hadn't fought at all, things were just weird between us still.

"Hmmm." Mom didn't seem convinced.

We ate our breakfast mostly in silence, only talking about random things when Mom got an interesting idea. Most didn't interest my Little Bunny too much, not until we were almost done eating.

"I was talking with Gwen the other day at the store. She was telling me how all the pack females are finding it hard to get things done anymore, there is no good place to take the kids now that there is no Phi in the pack." Mom just seemed to be rambling on, but it caught Bunny's attention.

"You know what would be a good idea." She said with a bright smile on her face. "We should have a pack daycare, at least a couple days a week, maybe not every day but enough that it gives the mothers in the pack time to do their stuff kid free."

"That is such a thoughtful idea." Mom was smiling brightly. It really was a good idea. There used to be people in the pack that took it upon themselves to watch the pack pups and cubs, but once they got too old, no one ever stepped up to take their place.

"We can hold it here, we would need to work things out, but I think most females would love it."

"I think they would too, what about you, Reece, do you like the idea?" Mom asked me.

"I think it would be a very popular idea among the pack females."

"So, you don't like the idea." My Little Bunny looked crushed.

"I never said that. I think it is a good idea, and that the pack mothers would like the idea." I backpedaled.

"Then you should have said you liked it the first time you were asked. I swear, men never know how to answer a single question." Mom reprimanded me.

"But I was giving my approval, I said it sounded like something the females would like. I didn't say it was a bad idea."

"But you didn't say it was a good idea, no one will understand you if you don't say it."

"Fine." Little Bunny chose that moment to laugh, her bright smile and crinkled eyes showed how funny she thought this situation was. "Are you laughing at me?" I asked her.

"N-no." She stammered as she tried to stifle the laughter, but it was no use, she laughed even harder.

"You are, you're laughing at me."

"I can't help it, you're being told off like a little kid. It's funny."

"I'll show you a little kid." I growled suggestively. She gasped and stopped laughing at once. The look of shock on her face made me laugh in her place. "I'm kidding."

"Jerk." She snapped at me, but I saw the smile on her face.

"Fine, I'll admit it, I'm a jerk. I just can't help playing with my Little Bunny." I wiggled my eyebrows at her, both her and mom laughed at that. It was a fun end to our breakfast.

Tomorrow was New Year's Eve, and there was only one place I wanted to spend it. Beside my mate. Wherever that might be. I was hoping she would agree to spending the evening with me, if I promised to be a good boy and keep my hands to myself. I could always fantasize and hope for later, I'd get no where if I didn't start getting her used to the idea of us being together. But just the sight of her, the smell of her, was enough to drive my wolf crazy with need. I had to keep him firmly under control for a little while longer. I could hear him whining at me when I thought those words.

I found my Little Bunny in the music room around lunch that day. I heard her playing the violin that Mom had given her for Christmas. The music was soft and sweet. She had been taught well, she played like a professional. I would expect nothing less of her with how her Grandfather had decided to raise her.

Chapter 76 - Reece-A Talk With Little Bunny's Grandfather

9-11 minutes

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Reece

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I had taken her Grandfather aside and talked to him on Christmas. I wanted to know why he had treated her the way he did. Why he seemed to hate his only granddaughter so much. What he told me had actually surprised me, but I thought what he had to say should come from him and not me. Little Bunny deserved that explanation too, but it wasn't mine to give.

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Little Bunny was lost in conversation with her friends and family, but for some reason her Grandfather was only watching from a distance.

"Mr. Whitton, can I have a word with you?" I seemed to have caught him off guard, he looked nervous momentarily before answering.

"Yes, I guess it is about time we have a conversation. You are mated to my only granddaughter after all." The man was acting as if he cared about her, as if he hadn't made her miserable her whole life.

The old man got to his feet quickly and easily, a movement I would have thought him incapable of at his advanced age. I never knew why my father's beta had been so much older than him, why he had chosen this man in particular. Mr. Whitton was in his mid-sixties, but my father, if he were alive, would only be as old as Little Bunny's uncle, maybe a little older, so why was his beta almost twenty years his senior.

I led the old man into a room down the hall, I didn't want to be overheard. He knew there was something I wanted to talk to him about, but I think his mind was heading in the wrong direction. As soon as the door was shut behind us, he started talking.

"I know that girl is a handful, and most likely difficult to deal with at times, but I have made certain she knows how to be a proper wife in a high-ranking family. I never dreamed she would mate with you, Alpha, but I assure you she will live up to your standards. Just let me know if she needs a reminder of the lessons she learned as a child." My blood boiled and my wolf snarled upon hearing his words.

"And what lessons might those be?" I asked him. He seemed shocked.

"Why, etiquette and proper behavior befitting a woman of her rank, and what is expected of her." He was perplexed by my intensity when I asked the question, that was clear, but what he didn't seem to grasp was that he was the cause for it. The old man simply put his head in his hand and shook it, clearly frustrated.

"She has been behaving improperly for a Luna, hasn't she? I assure you that is not how I raised her. She should know better. That stupid girl." I couldn't stop the growl then, my wolf and I both growled at the same time. This man was insulting my mate and I would not have it.

"I don't know why you think you can talk about my mate like that." I spoke through my clenched teeth.

"I don't follow you, young man. Aren't you upset because she has not been behaving as you expected?" He had the self-awareness to look nervous now.

"No, that is not why I am upset." I hissed. "I am upset because I want to know why you treated her so horribly. Why you acted like she was any different from your other grandchildren?" I glared at him.

"I did not treat her horribly. Is that what she told you?" He shouted.

"No, she has said little about her childhood, as of yet. But Noah and Carter have told me plenty. I have learned a few things from Trinity, but she never spoke of you negatively."

"The boys said I was cruel to her?" His eyes widened in shock, the sadness in his eyes was clear to see.

"They said you showed her no love and made up ridiculous excuses to not let her be seen by anyone for as long as you could."

"That is utterly ridiculous. I love my granddaughter very much. I was just intent on not repeating my mistakes." He fervently defended himself.

"Then why did you hide her away from everyone? Why did she not make a single friend outside of that family until she went to college?"

"I didn't want to repeat my mistakes." He bellowed, his face immediately turning red after he shouted the words.

"What mistakes?" He looked shocked, like he didn't know how to answer that at first. I watched as he paled then crumpled onto the couch behind him. This man that I had only ever seen standing tall and at full attention, or sitting up straight to look perfectly poised, was now huddled nearly in a ball as he held his face in his hands.

"I didn't want to lose her. I didn't want her to leave me the same way Lily left. I couldn't bear it if I had to live through that again."

"I don't follow you." The confusion was leaking into my voice as I watched this once tall and proud man nearly begin to weep before me.

"My daughter is gone forever. Lost to me. And she will never come back." He was looking at me now, his pitiful eyes filled with unshed tears. "I failed as a father. I didn't have my daughter ready for the world. Whatever happened to her that weekend, those two days she went missing, I know she wasn't at her friend's house, and she didn't remember it at all either. It was like the time didn't exist for her. It was just gone. But then, we found out she was pregnant. That was what broke her the most. People always thought it was the rumors, but it was the thought of being pregnant with no memory of how it happened."

"So, are you saying she was drugged and raped?" I asked him in disbelief.

"I don't know if it was drugs, but something was done to her, and she didn't get pregnant willingly. Everyone always assumed my anger at the time was directed at my daughter, specifically because she didn't tell me who the father was. No, it was directed at whoever hurt my baby girl, and that I would never get my chance at revenge." His anger and sorrow were mixing now, his face and eyes red but there was a determined set in his jaw and brows.

"So why treat Trinity so bad, why make her miserable?"

"I didn't know she was miserable. I just didn't want to chance that she would be taken from me as well. I don't know who her father is, but who's to say he won't come back for her some day? He knows what he did. He knows he made a child with my little girl. What was stopping him from snatching my granddaughter like he snatched my daughter?" He had been scared for her this whole time? It just didn't make sense.

I saw that the anger was winning out over the sadness in his eyes, his voice was growing stronger now.

"Maybe I should have done things a little different. Maybe I should have explained things to her. But I love my granddaughter, with every fiber of my being. And I will do whatever I can to make her life better. That's why I made sure she had the best education possible. That's why she had all the knowledge needed for being the perfect wife. But, unlike my daughter, Trinity knows how to defend herself."

"Carter says as soon as Trinity turned eighteen you cut her off, no more fighting instructors, no more tutors, you paid for her college education but that was it."

"Trinity was desperate to get out on her own, and the instructors I had teaching her to fight had nothing more to teach her. She had learned all she could from them. But I knew she would find someone else to train her, she's resourceful and determined."

"So, you risked her going to college at eighteen but not going to public school her whole life?"

"She would not have settled for staying home, I'm sure you've learned she is a stubborn girl. Did you know she even taught herself to play contemporary instruments when I only got her classical instructors?"

"Yeah, actually I did. She said she learned drums and guitar just to spite you." To my surprise the old man laughed, a hearty full belly laugh that looked strange on a man so tall and still athletic that he barely had a belly.

"You see, young man, she is stubborn. If I didn't agree to let her go, I am certain that she would have run away. I made sure that she went to a school with a heavy wolf influence though, so I could inquire about her. I was happy when I learned that she had made friends. And I laughed when I found out she daydreams in class, I'm afraid her education was of a higher standard than most high schools, so she is a bit advanced."

"Yeah, her guard told me she liked to zone out in classes she finds too easy." This conversation was definitely not going how I thought it was supposed to go. "You know, Mr. Whitton, there is someone who you should be telling all this to."

"You mean I should tell Trinity?" He asked me.

"Yes. If you truly did what you did out of love, and fear, then she deserves to know."

"Can't you tell her for me." He asked, nerves clear in his shaking voice and wavering eyes.

"No, this is something that will be best coming from you." The old man sighed before he looked at me, a pitiful look on his face.

"You're probably right." He smirked. "I will tell her, soon. Not today but soon." He smiled ruefully.

"I will hold you to it." I assured him.

We returned to the Christmas party after that conversation. Little Bunny seemed to have noticed our absence, but she never said anything. Thankfully, the rest of the evening went smoothly.

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Little Bunny needed to know what her Grandfather had said, but it wasn't my place to say anything. But I could try to make her future a happier one than she thought she was going to get. I could make up for my mistakes and be there for my mate, protect her the best that I could.

Chapter 77 - Reece-New Year's Date With Little Bunny

10-13 minutes

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Reece

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I wanted to stand there, enjoying the sound of the music, but I also wanted to go in there and see my Little Bunny. Would she be willing to play music with me sometime? I would love to produce beautiful music with her,

I pushed the door open, and my Little Bunny didn't even pause in her strokes when she spoke to me.

"I was wondering how long it would take you to come in, is there a problem Snoopy?"

"Snoopy? That's a new one." I told her, a smile on my face.

"Well, you're snooping on me aren't you." I laughed, she was funny and quick on the uptake.

"I'm not snooping, I wanted to talk to you." She stopped playing the music, the last notes of which reverberated solemnly in my ears before they died.

"What did you want to talk about?"

"Your playing was lovely."

"Thank you, but I'm pretty sure that's not what you came here to tell me." She grinned lopsidedly, the half-smile raising one cheek making her look sweeter than I had anticipated.

"No, but your playing distracted me. Can you really blame me?" I asked sheepishly, I was embarrassed and didn't know why. I could feel my palms sweating, my heart rate rising. I wanted this conversation to go right.

"I'm glad you liked it, now, what do you need Reece?" She looked at me full on, a look of skepticism in her eyes and a wary set to her shoulders and jaw. She was nervous too.

"Will you have dinner with me again tomorrow?" I saw the shock register on her face, chased by the embarrassment as her eyes widened and her cheeks flushed. Her mouth opened in an attempt to speak but nothing came out, she just stood there, rooted to the spot unable to say a word.

"I promise, I will be on my best behavior. My hands will be kept to myself. Nothing will happen unless it's mutual, right?" I reminded her of her words, her promised threat to me. "I will not do anything to make you uncomfortable." I added.

"Why?" She asked me. That one word felt like it could be the knife that finished me off.

"Because I have to return to my normal schedule soon. This holiday and the subsequent weekend are the end of my vacation."

"That's nice and all, but that doesn't answer my question. Why do you want to have dinner with me?" She still didn't trust me yet.

"I want us to get to know each other. I want us to learn to trust each other, to start over." She narrowed her eyes at me, like she thought I was plotting something. Her lack of trust and confidence in me was painful, but I only have myself to blame.

"Alright." She finally said. "We can have dinner." I smiled, grinned really. I couldn't help it. She was giving me another shot. Goddess knows I could have blown it completely long ago, and she didn't have to give me a chance at all.

"Good, that makes me so happy. Thank you, Little Bunny. I will see you for a late dinner tomorrow around nine, will that work for you?"

"Why so late?" She asked me warily.

"I have a few things to do tomorrow during the day, so we have to push things back until the evening. But I promise, I will make things perfect. Do you have a preference for dinner?"

"I'm assuming Abigail will be cooking?" She asked me.

"That or we can order out. Anything you want." She actually thought about it for a moment, lost in thought momentarily, before she answered me.

"No, it's fine. I don't need anything in particular." The smile she gave me then looked forced. She clearly wanted something specific, but she felt she shouldn't ask. "I'm going to get back to playing, I'm out of practice." She turned away and raised the instrument again.

I watched her for a moment as she rested the violin under her chin and placed the fingers of her left hand on the strings. The bow, held lightly in her right hand, gently began to move back and forth. She was playing Mozart's Violin Concerto NO. 3, and it sounded beautiful.

I left her then, the music following me out of the room. The notes chased me down the hall. I was happy, happier than I probably should have been. Given our track record, I knew something was bound to go wrong, but if I kept trying, things would get better. Right?

I went to her room to 'pick her up' just like I had done the other day. I knocked gently on the door and called out to her. I secretly hoped I would get to watch as she bent forward to put on her shoes again. The halter top she wore last time didn't leave much to the imagination, and the view was quite pleasant as she leaned forward. I remember having to tie my wolf up and gag him at the sight of her breasts straining against that top.

She opened the door quickly, and unfortunately, she was fully ready to go, shoes included. I couldn't help but feel a little disappointed at having missed out. Oh well, I got to see her still, and she hadn't disappointed me with her choice in clothes.

This time, instead of blue, she was wearing a deep wine-red colored dress. It was simple in its style, but it was beautiful and flattering on her. It stopped just above her knees, and it appeared to be made out of silk. The cut was low but not obscenely so. The straps went up and over her shoulders like a halter top, but there was also a set of thin straps criss-crossing three times across the back of the dress, which was cut very low.

I wanted her the moment I saw her. The color made her look like her skin was glowing. Her hair was done in beautiful cascading curls, for once she hadn't pulled it back at all. The amount of skin she was showing was so alluring and seductive that I needed to fight for control. I felt my palms itch, and a tightening in my jeans, when I could finally have her I would savor the moment.

I swallowed hard, fighting past the lump in my throat.

"Shall we go?" I asked her as I held my hand out toward her.

"Yes." She smiled at me sweetly, testing the tenuous control I had over my wolf. I took her hand and walked toward the stairs. She was wearing a pair of strappy heels, but these heels were far from excessive so she should manage them just fine.

I led her down just two flights of stairs to the second floor. She was not expecting this. She turned to look at me with a perplexed look, but she said nothing. We continued on in silence until we got to the library.

I pushed the door open, allowing her to see the inside and the changes that had been made for tonight. A candlelit table for two, a roaring fire in the hearth, a serving cart with the food covered. I heard her sharp intake of breath as she gasped, I didn't know if it was at the sight of the romantic scene I was trying to create or the smell of the special meal I had prepared.

"Reece, is that-?" She stopped, unable to finish. She could tell what I had prepared. I think that was probably the most surprising thing of the night for her. If what Noah told me was true, then I had gotten my Little Bunny's favorite of favorites. I grinned.

"How? How did you do this? How did you?" She was surprised, but I could see how happy she was.

"I asked Noah. I could tell you wanted to ask for something yesterday. I don't know if it was this or not. But I decided to ask what a good choice would be for tonight."

"Is it from where I think it is?" She was looking at me hopeful.

"See for yourself." I said as I led her over to the cart of food.

I took the lid off the tray and there was an array of white take-out containers bearing red Chinese lettering and playful looking panda bear.

"Lucky Panda's Garden?" She exclaimed happily. "Oh Goddess, I haven't had this in months."

"You can order take out still you know. You don't have to eat in every night. And it would be nice to give Abigail a night or two off from time to time." I smiled at how happy she looked.

"I just didn't know if it would really be acceptable to have this here."

"Why wouldn't it?" I asked her, confused.

"Well, think about it, we're always eating the food here but the one time you took me out it was to a super fancy restaurant. I just get the feeling that take out Chinese food would not be welcomed in a house like this."

"That's ridiculous. Yeah, we live in a big fancy house, but we're still just people."

"That's easy for you to say, but to me it feels like a completely different world." She was looking nervous now, that was not what I wanted.

"That was never my intention. I wanted you to be comfortable here from the start. I asked your cousin your preferences. I chose your room because he said you liked the color blue. I had the staff learn some of your food and drink choices, all so you would transition easier. I didn't want you to stress out."

"I think stressing was going to be inevitable. I was moving into a new home with no warning. It was a scary thought."

"Did you find me that scary?" I asked her, a hint of sadness in my voice.

"There were times I was afraid, but more so because I don't, or didn't, know much about you. But mostly, it was because I was afraid of the changes, and the choice being taken away from me."

"I'm sorry, but you know we don't get to choose our mates. The Goddess picks them for us, we simply need to accept that and let the bliss that follows be ours." I smiled seductively at her.

"Yeah, except my mate told me he didn't want me, that he rejected me, and that he hated me." I saw the pain in her eyes. It was raw and open. Even now she was hurting every time she thought about those words.

"I'm sorry Little Bunny, I never should have said any of that to you. I was wrong." I regretted those words, from day one I regretted them. I just needed to make her understand that. "That's why I want to start over. I want us to pretend that never happened."

"I'm willing to try, that's all I can promise you."

"That's all that I can hope for."

We sat down to dinner then. My Little Bunny looked elated to see the food I had in store for her. We had chicken chop suey, General Tso's chicken, Chinese rib tips, wonton soup, egg rolls, fried rice, and white rice. I got everything that Noah said she loved the most. I had never seen her eyes look as big as they did then.

We talked about different things, typical date topics and get to know you questions. We were enjoying ourselves. I couldn't be happier with how the dinner was going. I kept it calm and didn't try to rush anything. I was letting everything happen naturally tonight.

Chapter 78 - Reece-Ringing In The New Year

8-10 minutes

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Reece

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When we were done with dinner, sipping our drinks and laughing together, I asked her if she was willing to accompany me to the music room. She didn't seem nervous, and thankfully she agreed right away. Taking her hand like I was becoming accustomed to doing, I helped her to her feet before lightly placing my hand on her hip and escorting her down the hall.

We had spent an hour laughing, talking, and getting to know each other over dinner, so it was after ten when we got to the music room. I was hoping that she might play something for me, and I something for her. And I had a stereo system set up so we could choose to listen if we wanted to dance instead of play.

She didn't seem skeptical or nervous, scared or angry, when we got to our destination. I saw that as a plus. She was smiling happily as she looked around the room for something that might be different.

"I see there is a fire in here today as well." She noted when we entered the room.

"I felt it would be fitting, it is winter after all."

"Do you often get cold?" She asked me jokingly.

"No, but especially not when I'm with you." I grinned at her playfully.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Just that you're warm and by association I feel warmer as well."

"Hmmm." She looked at me in disbelief. "I think you should just stick with you don't get cold." I laughed.

"Would you like to play something with me?"

"Time for games now?" She asked.

"No. That's not. I didn't mean." I stammered until she started laughing.

"It's fine. I know what you meant, just calm down." She was giggling at me, at my embarrassment.

"You like playing these games with me, don't you?"

"You're fun to mess with, I can't help it. As long as we're not arguing, you're fun to be around." Those words made me happier than I could describe. I felt as if I had just floated off the floor and was bouncing off the ceiling, bobbing around like a buoy.

"I love being with you. You're fun, intriguing, interesting. I'm definitely never bored when I'm with you."

"Not to mention things are bound to be exciting around me." She joked.

"I could do without some of that excitement." I sighed.

"You and me both."

I left her where she stood and sat at the piano. I looked at her with what I hoped was a warm and loving gaze as I beckoned her over.

"Come on, choose an instrument and play with me." She grinned at my word choice, an eyebrow raised, and a laugh barely suppressed.

"What kind of music do you want to play?"

"Well, I guess that depends on you, and what instrument you choose."

"Do you only play the piano and guitar?"

"No, I can play others as well." I answered her with a confident smirk.

"So, we're not limited to just one choice here." I smiled at her words.

"No, we can mix it up."

She went to the violin first and began playing the opening bars of Melodie for violin and piano by Tchaikovsky. The notes were hauntingly beautiful. I started in with the piano part, not missing a beat. I saw the smile on her face when she saw I knew the song as well.

"Did you think I didn't know this one?" I asked her with a laugh in my voice.

"I didn't know, but I hoped you knew it." She laughed as well. We finished the song together grinning like kids.

"What next?" She asked, excitement bubbled within her making her glow. I looked around the room and thought of the instruments she had told me she could play. I went to the oboe, and after some mild prep work, and thanking myself for preparing the instruments all in advance, I started to play another song. The first two bars were all she needed before she had the flute ready to go. We played Echo Duet, it didn't have the same history, and it didn't sound nearly as romantic as Melodie, but it was fun and seeing the happiness on my mate's face was enough for me.

We continued this for over an hour. We would each choose an instrument and a song trying to stump the other. We played songs that were new and old, songs that were classical and contemporary. We even played songs we had heard on the radio, though without having learned them before, those didn't turn out so well on anything other than the piano and guitar.

Little Bunny's musical skill was amazing. She played each instrument with the same amount of passion. I was glad that music was something that we could share. And when we played "A Million Dreams" with her on the piano and me on the guitar, she sang the lyrics. The sound of her voice, singing the word to only me, my heart nearly stopped. It went beyond beautiful, I didn't know if it was just me and my mate bond or not, but I could listen to her sing for the rest of my life and be a happy man. The sound of it even helped to soothe my overeager wolf.

It was nearly midnight, somewhere around eleven-forty-five when I asked her if she would dance with me instead of playing more music. She agreed almost instantly. We put on a random playlist and let the music take us.

The first song was upbeat with a fast tempo. I cared less about the lyrics or the song itself than I did about the feel of her in my hands, in my arms, pressed against my chest. We smiled at each other as we danced, song after song.

I had nearly lost track of time when, during a slow song, I noticed it was just a minute or two until midnight. I danced her toward the balcony and grinned as I opened the door.

"What are you doing?" She asked, her smile didn't fade.

"You'll see." I teased.

We only had to wait another few seconds before she saw what I had planned for her. We were facing out toward the compound, down the mountain. Now, in the sky between us and the houses was a massive fireworks display. I had never done this before, I could play it off as wanting to celebrate the pack, but I just wanted to surprise my mate and see her smile. The fireworks started to explode just at the stroke of midnight.

"So beautiful." She sighed as I held her in my arms, our dance completely forgotten.

"Happy New Year, Little Bunny." I smiled at her sweetly. She looked up at with me those innocent eyes that had earned her that nickname.

"I've never seen the pack do fireworks before." She said excitedly.

"We've never done them before now." I told her.

"What makes this year special?" She wondered.

"You." I saw her blush. My answer had embarrassed her.

"This is too much." She tried to downplay her role in the pack, in my life.

"No, it's not enough, but it's what I can do." She looked a little uncomfortable with the attention but still smiled.

"Thank you, Reece."

"Can I ask for something, Little Bunny?"

"What?"

"Can I give you a New Year's kiss? I promise it will be a small one." I almost begged her. She looked down for just a moment before she shifted her head just a little, looking at me through her lashes again.

"Yes." She nodded as she spoke.

I lowered my head even as she raised up onto her toes. I steadied her with my hands on her hips. Gently, ever so gently, I pressed my lips to hers. The kiss was chaste and quick, but that didn't stop the desire from sparking in my wolf. He was now howling nearly nonstop inside my head, begging me to claim her. But I couldn't, not yet, now was not the time. I pulled away reluctantly, keeping to my promise to be on my best behavior.

"Happy New Year." I told her again, I noticed the darkening in her eyes, the hunger that was growing in her just the same as it was growing in me. If only I could get her to trust me.

"Happy New Year, Reece." She smiled sweetly as she said the words.

We finished watching the fireworks with her in my arms. She never once tried to pull away. When the display was over, I knew better than to push my luck and decided to walk her back to her room. I noticed she wore a contented smile the whole way there, that made both me and my wolf want to growl in satisfaction.

When we were outside her door, I kissed her hand gently but with a definite passion in my eyes. I know she saw that passion, but she also knows I did nothing inappropriate. If I was lucky, We would get over this hurdle soon.

"Good night, Little Bunny." I smiled at her.

"Good night." She disappeared into her room, as soon as she was out of sight I put on the biggest, most likely goofiest, grin I had ever worn. I couldn't have asked for this night to have gone any better. I sauntered back to my room, just barely managing to stop myself from whistling a jaunty tune as I went.

Chapter 79 - Trinity-Family Movie Time

6-7 minutes

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Trinity

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I was giddy for the next few days. I honestly didn't think that my New Year's date with Reece would go so well. Maybe it's true what they say, third time's the charm. But we didn't argue, fight, or end on an awkward note at all. And the only kiss I got was a quick, though still not entirely innocent, New Year's kiss.

All Reece did was press his lips to mine gently, and oh so briefly, but I felt like my entire body had caught on fire the moment his hands touched my hips to hold me steady. I let him hold me in his arms that night while we watched the fireworks. It was simple, but deeply romantic.

And I saw the passionate fire in his eyes when he said goodnight. I know exactly what he was trying to tell me. He wanted me. I don't know if it was just once or forever as he has yet to tell me how he feels about me. Does he still hate me? Does he still reject me? Has he moved beyond that so he can approve of me now? Will he ever love me? These are things I need to know before I can give into the desire that has been building inside of me. That has been building between us.

I know he said he regretted telling me he rejects me and hates me, but he might just regret saying it. He didn't say anything about it not being true. And if it was, and still is, true, then I don't know if I could ever bring myself to be with him. It would be next to crazy to have sex with a man who hates you, wouldn't it?

On Friday night Lila wanted to watch a movie together, as a family. The three of us gathered in the first floor living room with bowls of popcorn and our drinks as we settled in to watch the romcom she had picked out.

"Movies sure have changed a lot over the last seven years, but a romantic comedy will always be just that underneath." She was smiling happily as she settled herself more comfortably into the sofa. She had her feet tucked up underneath her with a pillow lying on the arm next to her as she rested her head.

I was sitting between Lila and Reece, and even though the sofa was very large, I was somehow sitting very close to Reece. We had decided on the same kind of popcorn, or make that a lack of decision, we both wanted butter, cheese, and caramel corn. I hadn't known about Reece, but I liked to eat a piece of each all at once, the mix of flavors was scrumptious.

Reece ate it the same way, sort of. Where I took one piece of each methodically, he took a handful of everything and popped it all into his mouth at once. Men truly did behave differently than us women. Such animals. I giggled at the thought as I watched him eat his popcorn.

"Is something funny, Little Bunny." He had been using that name constantly, he rarely ever said my name. But where he used to say the name to sound mocking and annoy me, he now sounded like he

was just saying my name but that my name was really Little Bunny. I was growing used to it, but I couldn't let him know that. I had to argue every now and then, it wouldn't change anything, anyway.

"Don't call me Bunny, Fido." I snapped at him playfully, a joyous smirk on my face.

"You know I hate that name." He said, but he didn't look upset at all. It had been a long time since he had actually gotten upset when I called him Fido. We giggled at each other for a minute before he asked his question again. "But seriously Little Bunny, is something funny?"

"I was just thinking about the difference in the way we eat our popcorn. We may eat the same kind, but we are definitely different creatures." I smiled at him.

"Of course, we are, I'm a man and you're a sweet little rabbit."

"You mean I'm a bunny and you're a dog?" I asked him playfully.

"Woof, woof." He pretended to bark, and I nearly lost it, I had to fight back my laughter.

"Shhhhh!" Lila vehemently shushed us, and I really did laugh when I saw her face.

Reece and I behaved ourselves after that, we watched the movie in silence, except I missed the end of it. I think I was just so tired from my exciting week that I had that I lacked sleep. The next thing I knew I woke up in my bed. I could only guess that Reece had carried me there, and the thought made me blush, just thinking about him holding me in his arms.

That got me thinking. This wasn't the first time that Reece had carried me. He carried me back to Riley's pack house when I was unconscious, and back to our house when I was unconscious. He threw me over his shoulder and carried me back to my room, and then there was the time I was in the library reading, then I dreamt Reece had hugged me before I woke up in my bed. I'm pretty sure he carried me then too.

And, Oh Goddess, when he carried when at Riley's and here when I was unconscious, he had been in his wolf form just before them. That means he had to change to carry me. That meant he must have been... he must have been... he must have been naked when he carried me. Oh Goddess, why was it taking me until right now to realize that?

I could feel that my face was bright red, the heat coming off my face could probably rival the sun. I was mortified. I had even looked at him in the forest when he was naked, but I was disoriented from what he had said and my head injury, so I don't remember a single thing. And here I had told Juniper I never saw Reece's pieces, maybe I did and just don't remember. I do vaguely remember his chest though, smooth, tan, and muscular. He was like the perfect man, when it came to his body, anyway. I almost became a drooling mess just thinking about it.

Chapter 80 - Trinity-An Existential Crisis

12-15 minutes

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Trinity

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I thought with Reece going back to his usual schedule on Monday, that I should do something too. Yeah, I would be starting classes soon, but they were all online and from what I had been told about them, I could study on my schedule most of the time. So, that left me with plenty of time to still do some Luna work.

I wanted to go see Lila so we could discuss the pack daycare idea I had. She seemed to love it when we talked about it last week. She hadn't been at breakfast today, which was a rushed one with Reece needing to leave early. But thankfully, it wasn't awkward, unless you counted the fact that when I looked at him, I subconsciously tried to see through his clothes so I could see his chest underneath. He had been curious as to why I blushed randomly, but I think I played it off pretty well.

Lila was in her room when I knocked on her door.

"Come in." She invited me. I pushed the door open and remembered the first time I had come here, when I had found her sitting in the chair near the window. The sun shining on her making her glow like an angel, or a ghost.

"Hi Trinity, how is your morning?" She asked me. It was closer to noon, so the morning was almost over now. I saw that Lila was once again sitting in the chair she had been in last time, the curtains open, sun shining just like last time. The only difference was that she was awake. But I had such a strong memory of when I had seen her last time, the emotions I had felt that day. I remember how I was pleading for her to be able to see Reece, and to be there for him in the ways that I couldn't be.

"Is everything alright?" She worried.

"Yeah, I was just remembering the last time I was here." I smiled at her sadly.

"What do you mean?"

"When you were still, you know?" I replied sheepishly.

"I didn't know you came to visit me when I was lost." She smiled happily. "You should have told me, that makes me happy."

"It was only once. I had only been here for a short time when you woke up. I'm glad you did too, Reece needed you."

"I think Reece needs you more than me." She offered, but I just shook my head in refusal of her words.

"He would much rather have you or someone else there to help him." I denied sadly.

"Why do you think that?" Lila seemed upset.

"It's what I told you when I came to see you that day too." I looked at her and tried to smile, but I couldn't force the motion to make it happen.

"When I came here, while you were 'lost' I said that I wished you were here to support him, to give him whatever it was he needed that I lacked. And that I wished you could see the wonderful man he had become."

"I remember that." Her voice was full of awe, shock covered her face.

"What? How do you remember that?"

"I don't know. I remember that I was lost in the dark somewhere. I had gotten lost the night my husband died. I remember that night clearly. I remember going with him, his beta, my husband's brother and his mate, and my cousin Steven, and some other pack members. It wasn't supposed to be a fight. We had been planning to sign a treaty between our packs, but when we got there, it was an ambush. I remember watching my husband die in front of me, then getting hit in the head by something really hard. The next thing I knew I was walking in the darkness. There was never any relief from that darkness."

"So, you weren't really catatonic?" I was shocked, what had really happened to her?

"I don't know what to call what happened to me. I know that once in a while I would hear things. I heard Reece's voice. Only his voice for so long. He would tell me what was going on in his life. Sometimes he would talk about things that were good with a voice full of pride. Other times he might vent angrily. Often, he would tell me what he couldn't tell others, his voice full of the tears he probably never shed."

"I'm sure you were his solace in this crazy life he leads." I gave her a comforting smile as I walked closer to her and took her hand.

"I hope I was." She smiled as she looked at my hand. "But you know, I remember your touch as well. I remember when I heard your voice, I felt someone touch my hand. I looked down toward my hand, or where I knew it would be in the darkness, and what I saw then was a thin white line attached to my palm. It was the first thing I had seen in that darkness, ever."

"What was it?" I wondered.

"It was you, Trinity. It was you guiding me back. You wanted me to come save my son. You begged me to come back, you took my hand and guided me home." Lila was crying now, tears silently flowed down her cheeks.

"I don't understand, Lila. How could I do that? How could I guide you back?"

"You're our Luna." She told me as if that explained it all.

"That doesn't mean I should be able to do something like that."

"But you're special. Reece has told me so as well. He has said how you're not like the others."

"Yeah, because I don't have a wolf, not because I'm someone that can do something like that." I vehemently denied.

"Are you sure about that?" She asked me with a confident smile. "I told you when I first woke, I knew your voice. That's because I kept hearing your words the entire time that I followed that light back to my consciousness. I followed you, Trinity. You brought me home because you're special."

Lila's words shocked me to my core. I stood there frozen while her hand slipped from mine and I stared at nothing. A buzzing sound started in the back of my head, drowning out all other sounds. I vaguely registered Lila standing in a rush with a worried look.

"Tri..ty" I heard her words, but they were chopped. "Are.....k?" I still couldn't make out what she was saying to me. I felt her hands on my shoulders before I fell into a chair.

Everything that she was saying. Everything that had happened to me. The time in the woods when I could smell the warlocks and Reece couldn't. When I could see them somehow and he couldn't. How I never got a wolf like everyone else. All the things that marked me as different from everyone else, it was all coming back to me at once.

If I didn't have the clear indicators of being part of the pack. Part wolf at least. The hearing and the extra senses. The strength and speed. Having to obey the alpha's commands. Then there's being mated to a wolf. If it wasn't for all of these, I would think I wasn't part of the pack at all, that I should be exiled, that I didn't belong here.

But what exactly am I? Where exactly do I belong? Who am I really? These are things I wanted answered but was never likely to find out.

"Trinity, are you ok?" I heard Lila this time, she was holding my hands and looking at me with fear in her eyes.

"I-I-I'm f-fine." I stuttered.

"What happened?" She asked me, not convinced by my attempt to reassure her.

"I think I just had a bit of an existential crisis, that's all." I tried to smile at her.

"Trinity, sweetie, what is going on with you?"

"I don't think I belong here. I don't belong with Reece, and he knows it. The whole pack knows it, that's why so many people still don't accept me."

"That's crap." She snapped at me. "You're his mate. You belong wherever he is."

"But I don't. I don't have a wolf. I'm not strong enough for him or the pack. I'm not good enough for him."

"Where is this coming from, Trinity? Why are you saying this?"

"He's said it himself, Lila. He has told me I'm not allowed to fight because I don't have a wolf and therefore, I'm not strong enough, even though I have been trained to fight for years. He has told me he doesn't want me as a mate, that I was a weak little girl with no wolf, and I would just drag him down. He told me he hates me."

I was hyperventilating by the time I was done. Remembering the two different nights that Reece told me these words was like tearing my heart out of my chest. I was so in love with him now that I knew there was no chance for my heart to be spared. I now understood though. I knew why he rejected me, why he didn't want me. And I don't even blame him now. I wasn't one of them, and I never would be. I couldn't stop the tears from falling. They fell, unhindered, down my cheeks.

"Oh, sweetheart." Lila soothed as she hugged me tight to her chest. I tried to stop crying, but the silent tears turned into sobbing. I had not cried over his words since the day I told Juniper about what had happened. Not like this anyway, not since I cried in the bathroom.

"Shh." Lila shushed me. "It's alright Trinity. You have it all wrong."

"No, I don't. He told me all this himself, didn't you hear me?" I implored her.

"I know sweetie. I heard you. But there is something you don't know."

"It doesn't matter. He doesn't love me, and he never will." I wiped the tears from my face as I spoke. "I can't be with someone who doesn't love me."

"Honey, can I tell you something?" Lila asked me as she pulled a chair closer so she could sit next to me. I nodded. "Reece told me something, something that you need to know. I probably should have told you sooner, but I wanted you to put him in his place a few more times before I told you."

"What are you talking about?" I asked her as I tilted my head in confusion. Lila sighed as if she was about to say something that was difficult.

"Do you remember when we talked about all of this before. After you got hurt?" I nodded to answer her. "Well, the first thing I did after that was go and yell at my son. I couldn't believe what an idiot he had been, and how cruel he had been to you."

"You didn't need to say anything to him, Lila. Things are fine the way they are."

"No, I had to say something. And I am glad I did." She smiled at me as she sat up straight in her chair. "You see, Reece explained a few things to me, and I was able to clear a few things up for him."

"What do you mean?" I was more confused now than when she started.

"Reece had a terrible misconception about the past. And he also told me why he wanted to keep you at bay."

"I don't think it matters anymore." I sighed. "We will never be true mates."

"Please, listen to me." She begged me. "He thought that you would never be able to truly bond with him, being that you have no wolf. He thought that he would end up loving you so much more than you could ever love him because he didn't think you could truly feel the mate bond."

"That's insane, if I can form the mate bond, then I can feel it. I don't know how it feels for him, but for me, for me it's like being near the other half of my soul, my heart. I love him more every day whether I want to or not. I want to be near him all the time, to know that he is safe and happy, but I know that I can't have that. I know that if I were to be near him, he would not be happy, and potentially he wouldn't be safe with the people trying to get to me. I am nothing but poison to him."

"Wait, wait and listen, please." She pleaded. "Reece thought that a man he once knew, Steven, my cousin, had mated with a human woman born into a wolf pack. She was human yes, but he was not truly mated. She tricked him, made him fall in love with her. He got so deep into it that he said he didn't care that there was no mate bond, and he was going to be with her forever. But she was not in love with him."

She betrayed him. She was the reason my husband and brother-in-law died. She was the reason I was lost to Reece for all those years." I was in shock upon hearing all this.

"He thought that they had mated, but that she was incapable of feeling the bond like a wolf. He didn't know the truth. Steven hadn't told many people the truth, after all."

"So, he thought I was going to betray him too?" I cried. "He thought that little of me?"

"He was broken, Trinity, you have to understand that. He didn't know the truth and was hurting." Her words broke my heart, but not for what Reece had thought of me, for what he must have been feeling.

"There was something else he told me as well. After he became Alpha, there were people who tried to manipulate him to use his power. They sent women to use him. He learned to not trust women at all. He built walls around his heart to protect himself. He was afraid to let you in. He would never tell you this himself, but he was scared."

"I understand." I told her as I got to my feet. I had a lot to think about now. "I can understand why he said what he did. Why he has never trusted me and why he rejects me."

"But sweetheart, he doesn't reject you." She tried to convince me.

"I will believe that when he tells me that himself." I smiled at her sadly before I left the room. I never got the chance to talk about the daycare like I wanted. I would try again later.