

## 54 Wolfless

Eve~ 1

I woke to a stabbing pain coursing through my body, my back aching as though I had been run over by a truck. My head throbbed violently, and when I tried to lift it, a sharp sting reminded me of the bandage wrapped around my forehead. Groaning, I slowly opened my eyes, my vision swimming in and out of focus.

The room was unfamiliar, dimly lit with cold, harsh light filtering in through thick black curtains. The walls were an oppressive shade of black, and navy-blue accents threaded through the space like veins. The air was thick, suffocating, as if the room itself was closing in on me. It wasn't my room.

I pushed myself up slightly, the weight of my limbs feeling unnatural, as if my body wasn't my own. My breath hitched when I caught sight of my reflection in a nearby mirror—my skin pale, my hair tangled and damp with sweat. I was a mess.

Then I sensed him.

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Before I could react, Hades emerged from the shadows, his silver eyes piercing through the dimness. He was always there, lingering like a storm cloud ready to burst. He moved with quiet, calculated steps, his hands in his pockets, and his expression unreadable as he came closer. I wanted to look away, our last encounter still fresh in my mind.

"You're awake," he said, his voice low and calm, as if this was just any ordinary day. He stood over me, eyes scanning my face, taking in the bandages and bruises. I shifted uncomfortably under his gaze, my body screaming at me to stay still, but my mind too restless to obey.

"What... happened?" I asked, my voice hoarse, the memory of the explosion and Elliot's small form flashing in my mind like lightning.

He remained silent for a moment, his gaze unreadable. "You sustained multiple injuries from the blast," he began, his tone clinical. "A concussion, three broken ribs, a fractured shoulder blade, and lacerations from the debris. You were lucky."

Lucky? I clenched my jaw, the word stinging.

"Elliot—" I croaked, fear rising in my chest.

"He's alive," Hades interrupted, his voice steady.

"He's alive," Hades interrupted, his voice steady. "You managed to shield him. He's resting now." There was not an ounce of warmth in his voice, and I didn't know why my mind chose to notice that insignificant detail when I was in pain.

A wave of relief washed over me, but it was short-lived. My body tensed as the reality of what had just happened sank in. The bomb. The attack. Someone had tried to kill Elliot—no, both of us. They put it around a little boy's neck.

I stared up at him, trying to gauge his reaction, to see if he felt anything about what had happened. But his face remained a mask of indifference. It made my skin crawl.

"You saved him," Hades added, softer this time, his eyes flickering with something unreadable. "But you nearly got yourself killed in the process." His voice was monotone, as if reading from a paper.

My mind raced, the pain of my injuries momentarily drowned out by confusion and fear. The explosion... it was no accident. Someone had planted that device around his neck.

"Who... who did this?" I forced the words out, my chest tightening with rage and fear.

His expression darkened. "We're looking into it. But this was no random attack. Whoever it was, they wanted to send a message." He paused, his gaze hardening. "To me." At least there was some emotion.

To him. Of course. This was about power, control, revenge. And we had been caught in the crossfire. My heart sank as I realized just how deeply I was entangled in his world—a world I should have kept at arm's length. Yet, here I was.

I closed my eyes, letting the weight of everything settle over me. The ache in my body was nothing compared to the heavy realization that I was more trapped than ever before.

"You need to rest," Hades said quietly, stepping back into the shadows. "All your things will be moved here."

For a moment, I didn't react, then my eyes widened, too fast. My head throbbed harder.

"What do you mean?"

"You will be sleeping in my room."

I blinked. "You are joking."

A smile—an imperceptible twitch of his lip. "I thought you said I wasn't the one to joke?"

I shut off the message my heart had to that

I shut off the response my heart had to that singular action. "I cannot sleep in the same room as you."

His expression hardened in less than a second. "You have no choice."

"I should."

"Well, you don't."

"So we're going back to the status quo, and you'll start controlling me again. Of course, I knew it wouldn't last."

His eyes narrowed. "This is not oppression. This is for your protection."

"I can take care of myself," I lied, my frustration forcing words out of my mouth that I didn't mean. Some part of me already missed our bickering. I just wanted him not to look at me with that indifferent expression.

"You didn't even shift when you realized you were in danger. How can I trust you to protect yourself?"

Immediately, I was tongue-tied and averted my eyes. He noticed. I could feel his burning gaze on me as it dawned on him.

"You can't shift. You haven't found your wolf," he

Cold, unpleasant shame crawled up my spine. I said nothing. 3

The oppressive weight of the room pressed in on me, matching the suffocating feeling in my chest. I wanted to speak and explain, but the pain in my body tethered me to the bed. There was no running from this.

"So you're not only vulnerable," his voice was low and sharp. "You're a liability, too." 3

I snapped my head to his, my vision swimming, but I ignored it. His words slashed through me, and I looked up at him. I couldn't even tell him the truth. The numerous doses of wolfsbane that had ripped my wolf, Rhea, from me. It brought back the truth to the forefront of my mind.

He scoffed, his jaw working, a vein bulging in his neck. "This is fucking unbelievable," the disgust and disappointment in his voice a harsh slap. 1

He looked away from me, like he couldn't bear the sight of me, and walked off, leaving me alone as tears slid down my cheeks.