

Denied 401

Chapter 401

- Josie -

Nothing prepares you for this.

You know it is coming but yet...I'm not ready for this. I'm not ready to lose him. It's too soon.

"Dad?" I scream out as I push through the double doors into the emergency room ward of the hospital, my first instinct was just to come here. To assess his injuries for myself. As I enter the ward, complete mayhem has landed upon the hospital.

We've trained for this, it's been the entire reason for our weekly repetitive and, even at times, boring drills.

But this is why, this is why we have those drills.

Flustered faces of hospital staff and pack members watch me as I hurry over to Dad, Mum clinging on to him as the Head of Emergency prepares to take him in to surgery. "Alpha Kaia, I must insist!" He orders at Mum to step aside. Only for his eyes to roll as I and Jaxon join Mum and Jace already at Dad's side. "Dad?"

"No...no surgery!" Dad orders out with this alpha command behind it.

"Hector!" Kaia shouts back at him, only for Dad to place a hand upon her cheek.

She's holding him, lying next to him in his own hospital bed. The surgical team standing over him, waiting for the order.

They are both covered in blood, that fear that had been with me as I raced here, only tightening its grip on me.

"Dad, you need surgery.." I gasp out, my eyes soaking up his deteriorating condition, his paling skin.

"I'm going to be fine, they just need to stop the bleeding..."

"And surgery will do that!" The Head of Emergency seethes out against Dad's alpha command.

"Bleeding, what bleeding?" Surely they've already stemmed the flow of blood already.

"He was stabbed with a silver blade." Jaxon growls almost in my ear.

"No!" I felt it myself, the moment he fell. But with the hunter holding a gun to me, I didn't stop to think it was silver. But how could it be anything else.

"We must go, the staff are ready!" The head of emergency tries to pry Mum away from Dad but she wasn't having any of it either.

"Your alpha has given you an order!" She growls at the surgery staff, pure fear radiating through them as she applies her Luna command onto them also. "Dad?"

"I just want to be with you all, no surgery."

"But!"

"No Josephina, that is my wish." He firmly states to me but his eyes are on Mum, they refuse to leave her. As she starts to silently sob, she places her hand upon his face.

"I can take it away. Let me take it away?" She pleads, my ears pinned to their private conversation. Their goodbyes.

"No my love, never. I would never let you trade, not in a million years."

"Then tell me what to do."

"Will you marry me now?"

"Hector!" She chuckles sadly through her sobs, my own tears starting to free fall as a supportive hand wraps around my lower back.

No this can't be it.

"Will you marry me?" He's asking her one last time, that hope still burning within him even until now.

"Yes, I'll marry you." She places a lingering kiss upon Dad's lips only for him to wince in pain from the movement.

"You can't leave me now, see...you are finally getting your own way." Mum gentle laughs out, only for Dad's head to roll back slightly as he bites back on the pain.

"If I had known this is what it took..." He laughs out through the pain, his teeth clenching.

"Stop laughing, you are tearing the wound."

"Alpha Kaia, it's now or never." The doctor impatiently warns Mum, her eyes holding the weight of the world in them.

She can't help him, he won't let her. Maybe he has commanded her not to, maybe they have a pack. A life for a life..maybe they made that vow to one another years ago.

She can't break it, she can't help him.

But I can...I can help him. I've made no pack, I've made no oath. I won't be breaking any promise to him.

"Step aside." I order out, all eyes turning to look at me as if I had lost my mind.

"Josie..." I hear Knox's dissatisfied growl next to me, he knows me too well.

"Josie, no..." Dad starts to protest but it is too much for him, as he starts to cough up blood. We didn't have time for this, he didn't have time. I wasn't going to lose him and on turn, then lose Mum. To lose a mate once marked...even the strongest never come back from

that.

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"Don't you fucking dare!" Knox's vicious growl would perhaps stop me any other time, when it wasn't a life or death situation.

But there's nothing he can do or say to stop me from doing this.

As I take a step closer, Knox firmly grips my wrist and pulls me, making me collide with his firm chest. He's scared, I know he is...I am too. I'm scared of losing my Dad, scared that if I don't at least try...I'll regret it for eternity. "I'm doing it. I know you would too." I whisper under my breath, my eyes searching his for the truth.

I know he would, if he could he would. So why would it be any different.

I have some kind of gift, I don't know its full extent yet, but I just know I can do this.

Like I know tomorrow the sun will rise again...it's so engrained into me, part of my make up, that I have no fear of the unknown part of it.

"I can't let you do it, you don't know the after effects. The cost. There's always a balance Red, a price to pay." His voice is a low warning, a prayer for me to stop. But I can't. I would never forgive myself for not trying. "I don't care, he is my father."

"And you are mine, my mate. I will not let you do it."

"You can't stop me Knox." I yank my wrist out of his hold, taking a silent yet deafening step away from him. His head shaking in protest as he reaches out to me once again.

"I'll be fine..." I mouth to him as I turn to face Dad, his eyes heavy and his skin grey. He was dying. The silver has almost won.

I search inside myself, search for that feeling that overwhelmed me when I was treating Kieran. That urge to heal.

I clear my mind, letting my wolf step forward as she gives me her full support. She has no doubt that I can do this, that we can do this.

With a deep breath in, a warm red light appears in my inner mind. I welcome it, letting it spread into my chest and throughout my entire body, until I feel the tingles of it running from my heart into my arms. I call upon that glow to spread outwards, to leave my body.

I open my eyes to a surrounding gasp, a warm ethereal red glow emits from both my hands. I take a step closer to Dad ignoring the voices around me, I don't want to lose this energy, this power.

It was stronger than when I used it for Kieran, this was the next level up.

I let the light scan Dad's body, let it find the source that is killing him. The red light finds the bullets, they weren't silver...he can survive those.

The doctors will need to take them out in surgery but there is another pressing wound. The wound from the silver blade.

I find it, the poison of the silver seeping out into his blood stream. Anger washes over me, anger at the bastard that has done this to him.

Concentrating further I push the glow deeper making it call out to the poison already working its way into his body.

I pull it back, almost sucking it back out like a vampire.

As the poison is drawn out I can feel it, feel it now eating away at me. It has to go somewhere, and now I am understanding the price to pay for saving a life. A dislocated shoulder is different to this, different to silver. "Josie, STOP!" I hear Knox's voice warn out, calling out to me. But it sounds miles away, it's not close enough.

"Just a little further." My wolf's voice enters my mind, she's on the cusp, readying to take control if I can't stop, if I refuse to stop.

"Josie, enough." I hear Knox's voice louder this time, as tingles erupt over my body from his touch. He was calling me back to him.

I feel the silver leave Dad's body, feel his heart now beating with a new strength...feel his body healing. It's difficult to stop once I've started, stop this level of power that continues to overwhelm me.

But between my wolf and Knox's touch I manage to let it go. I manage to cut it myself.

What I didn't expect was as soon as I cut that link...for darkness to take over me.

For my legs to give way and the distant sound of Knox screaming my name, as my legs collapse from under me.

Chapter 403

- Knox ~

"Josie STOP!" I growl out in warning as her skin colour starts to pale, her energy levels draining before my very eyes.

She was taking too much. As Hector's skin colour was returning back to normal, albeit slightly pale... hers was deteriorating.

"Just a little further..." She gasps out but I've had enough, I can't watch any more of this. Take any more of this.

She was going too far, and she needed to stop now.

"Josie enough!" I wrap my arms around her, pulling her into my frame as I let my hands snake up her body, letting the bond reach out to her.

"It's too much, stop her!" My wolf roars in my mind, he was right. But how do I stop her.

Just as I prepare to rip her away she lets go of the power, that red glow no longer emitting from her hands. Silence settles around us, as eyes flicker between Josie and Hector. She's just revealed her gift to her entire pack. Fine, not all pack members are here but word spreads, she's just stepped out of the shadows and into the light.

She remains standing only for a moment before her legs collapse under her, my arms supporting her completely.

I pick her up, cradling her in my arms...her skin now the same colour Hector's was when the silver took its hold.

"Josie!" Kaia comes running to my side, her hands touching the forehead of her daughter.

"What did you do?" She leans in, whispering against her Josie's forehead as she places a kiss upon it.

Kaia's eyes start to glow a brilliant bright blue before me. The blue inner circle that is usually out shadowed by her green colour, completely bleeds out. Her eyes taking on a spectre type appearance as she seems to take the energy off Josie, absorbing it for herself. It's like a chain reaction, as she deteriorates, Josie's plush skin colour starts to return. Only for Kaia to wobble before me.

"Kaia?" I reach out, gripping on to her upper arm to support her, only for Jaxon and Jace to move with great speed to her side. "Please tell me I didn't just imagine what I just saw?" Jace barks out as he moves his mother slowly to a chair to sit down.

"What was the red light?" Jaxon turns to me, his eyes falling upon Josie in my arms, a frown entering onto his face.

"Here Knox, bring her over here." Doctor Abel gestures for me to move Josie to a spare hospital bed.

"Knox?" Jaxon growls by my side as I move, placing Josie gently on to the bed. As soon as my hands are off her, Jaxon's hands are around my neck, demanding an answer.

My eyes remain upon Josie as Doctor Abel jumps into action, checking her heart and lungs.

"We aren't sure yet."

"We? You mean this has happened before?"

"Yes..." I try to answer but his grip is so tight around my throat that it's becoming difficult to even breathe.

"Let go!" I order at him, my aura rolling off me and on to him. A challenging smirk enters onto his face until he turns to find Josie being placed upon a monitor. His grip around my neck weakens enough for me to push him away. "Fuck man." I growl at him as I rub on my neck, soothing my throat.

"Start talking!" He stalks towards me again, only stopping when I throw my arm out.

"Look, we don't know a lot, and there isn't a lot I can say without..."

"Without?"

"Without outing me." Kaia responds as she now stands next to Josie's bed, Jace closely standing behind her.

"Mum?"

"It would appear that whilst we all thought Josie's wolf had abandoned her, she in fact was just waiting for the right time."

"What do you mean?" Jace presses, only for Kaia to turn around and defiant look in her eyes.

"Josie is moon blessed Jace, she always has been. Her wolf laid dormant until she was needed. She came to Josie when she was on the brink of death."

"Moon blessed? How?" Jaxon moves away from me, his eyes falling to Hector as he lay also unconscious in the bed next to Josie.

"I am the White Wolf, I am moon-blessed."

Chapter 404

- Josie -

My eyes open to find myself in a hospital bed, this wasn't part of the plan.

Scanning my surroundings, the chaos that had ensued after the attack seems to have died down. But when I realise it is only because I am in a private room, that's why I can't hear anything...I've been moved away.

It pains me to think our pack members were still suffering, and I wasn't helping them.

As my eyes focus more, I can see a small rectangle shaped window that looks out into the corridor outside. My entire family stand there, watching me through the glass window.

He kicks in to action trying to get through the door, only for Jaxon and Jace to pull him back. A roar follows, a roar only Knox would make.

"I wanted to talk to you alone." I gasp out as Dad's voice calls out to me from the corner of the room. I hadn't even noticed him there, my senses all over the place.

He looks grey, in pain still, but he is alive...he is out of the hospital bed.

"Dad!" I cry out trying to sit up as he moves towards me. I thought I had lost him, so to see him moving towards me is a miracle.

A miracle I will need time to understand. I had pushed myself too far, taken on too much but I couldn't let him leave us. Not when I had the ability to stop it.

"Josie..." A frown enters into his face, sadness edged in his eyes.

"What's going on? Are you..."

"I'm going to be fine. I still have some healing to do but the doctor says I will make a full recover." Complete relief washes over me, removing that panic at seeing his sadness. Just having him here before me shows it had been worth it. His eyes glance to the window, where Knox is still trying to push past both of my brothers.

"I've asked Jaxon and Jace to keep Knox away until I've spoken to you alone." His voice has little energy to it, I can tell he is torn between an alpha and a father.

"Okay.." I exhale uncertain of where Dad was going with this.

"What do you think you were doing?"

"I was saving you." I sigh out, the father part of him had won his inner battle.

"No.."

"No? What I was meant to just let you die, in front of me."

"Yes... Josie.." He reaches for me as he sits on the edge of the hospital bed, but I needed to get my point across. I refused to be commanded and overpowered on this.

"No Dad, how can you even say that."

"Because there's always a price to pay, there always has to be a balance. Never would I want you to trade your life for mine. In what world do you think our lives even compare. Not only did you put your life in danger, you've completely outed yourself to the pack..." Petra's words return to me. How she had been there at the Nightshade Reformed pack, how she would never betray Mum or me.

Dad says I've outed myself to the pack but maybe it was time for him to start telling me some home truths of his own.

"What is the Nightshade Reformed pack?" I ask out, my change in topic completely taking him off guard.

"Where did you hear that name?"

"Does it matter? Why have I not heard of it before?"

"It was a pack your Mum lived in for a short while. It doesn't exist anymore, we moved the pack members to Clear Waters."

Which would include Petra.

"The Clear Waters...they know about Mum?" I ask, my voice low. My brothers were still holding Knox back outside, and making quite a bit of noise between them, but I still didn't know if they could hear us.

"Yes, the elders do." Dad answers as he turns to check the noise coming from the corridor outside. His lips almost tugging into a smile.

"The younger generation?"

"No, we decided the past was best left in the past." I let his words sink in before asking another question.

"You made Mum promise not to help you didn't you?"

"Yes. I am foremost her mate, I made a vow to protect her."

"But she had the power to save you."

"No, Mum has the power to take or give. If she took, she would have to give it to somebody else. We would never endanger members of this family or our pack members. Which is why..." I remember Mum saying something similar now, before I used my ability on Dad.

Chapter 405

"It's fine Dad, I'm fine. Mine seems to work differently to Mum's power." I try to reassure him.

"It doesn't matter, you should never do that again. You shall never put yourself in danger like that. Not for me, not for any body."

I don't answer because I don't want to make promises I can't keep. This ability was new to me. I didn't understand it either, but I didn't fear it.

It was a gift, a blessing and I would use it as I see fit. I'm not going to purposefully put myself on the brink of death, but I also won't see the people I love die unnecessarily. "What did they want...the hunters?"

"He isn't talking." Dad grunts out, his head shaking with annoyance.

"He?"

"We captured one. Jaxon has been questioning him, but he's not saying a word."

A loud bang on the window steals our attention away, both of us now staring at my mate who continues to fight his way in.

"Let him in. Don't be cruel." I sigh out, not liking the fact that Knox was being punished for my decision.

"I'm not being cruel, he will want to mark you more than ever now. I should know."

"I would like that too."

"Then I will arrange it, but first I'm holding Mum good to her word and marrying her as soon as possible. Before she changes her mind."

I had been discharged out of the hospital later that day, keen to sit in on the trial of the captured hunter.

It was taking place behind closed doors, shielding the pack members from any more heartache. We had lost people in this attack, they had lost their family. I couldn't help them, I couldn't get to them all. Uncle Jude and Uncle Orpheus are both in attendance, having sent us additional warriors to scale through the surrounding lands.

Nobody could answer where these hunters came from and how easily they were able to breach our borders a second time.

Nobody but the young male sat before me.

As I sat in a make-shift court-room in the pack house, I can't help but take him in. I can't see his face but just looking at his figure, he wasn't much older than me.

Mum had refused for Auntie Alora to attend, she said that the borders, even at the Clear Waters needed full attention right now. She can't be there, therefore she needs her beta to stay on top of things.

I still can't believe there is a secret group of hunters that have managed to recruit such a high number of soldiers to launch an aggressive attack on us. But why, and why did they hold off from using silver bullets...

"You appear here on trial for being part of the attack that has led to deaths of our pack members." Dad roars out as he sits next to Mum alone on a table. The Dark Phantom Alpha and Luna clearly in charge and clearly a formidable couple. I was sat in-between Knox and Jace, Jaxon standing to the side of Dad.

It wasn't lost on me that only Uncle Jude, Uncle Orpheus and Beta Riley were the others in attendance. Dad clearly didn't want word to get out what was shared here today. Not even to pack members.

Meaning he has already signed the hunter's death sentence, he just wants to extract as much information out of him before he cuts his life.

He has a black bag over his head, his hands tied behind him and his legs cuffed to the leg of the chairs. As Jaxon removes the bag it exposes his face...judging by his cuts and bruises, the torture side of extracting information didn't work. "You refuse to share information in exchange for your life..."

"My life? I wouldn't trust my life in the hands of animals." His eyes scan the room, the hatred burning out of him was evident. His anger wasn't of a young man but of someone who has lived a hard full life. A sign he was carrying somebody else's anger. "Watch your tongue before I cut it out for you!" Mum's eyes glow a dangerous blue, her wolf coming forward.

Chapter 406

- Josie -

"You're an abomination! We won't stop until we've wiped each one of you off the face of this planet!" This bastard hunter seethes out trying to fight against his restraints.

His eyes solely focused on Mum, something that doesn't sit well with me. Or Jaxon for that matter.

He moves, taking a threatening step closer to the human hunter, his aura rolling off him and turning the room even more oppressive.

I was the only non alpha in this room, except for the human, the atmosphere was already too close. I hadn't broached the subject with Knox yet, but there was no doubt in my mind now that he had alpha blood in his system.

That he had a story to tell me, something that I would need to know before I mark him. I want to know each and every part of him, the good, the bad...and the incomprehensible.

When he was ready to tell me, I would be all ears.

"Careful, you don't want to see a bad side to me." Jaxon warns, a smirk tugging in the corner of his mouth. He wanted to release his bad side, he might even wait for the trial to finish. I can feel the anger bubbling up within him, feel it through the triplet bond. Something that was also happening the other male next to me, Jace was shifting in his seat, trying to control his wolf.

There's nothing more disrespectful to an alpha male than someone going for their mother. If his fated hadn't already have been decided, then he had just signed his own death warrant.

"Why did you come here?" Mum demands, her eyes continuing to glow that haunting ethereal blue.

"I was following orders."

"What orders? What do human hunters know about us?" Dad demands, his hands lacing tightly around Mum's waist. I wasn't even marked to Knox yet, but the thought of someone threatening him, wanting to harm him makes me nauseous. I can only imagine what Dad is feeling right now.

"More than you think, what do they say if you can't beat them...join them!" He was smug that someone that was about to die.

"What the fuck does that mean?"

"Jaxon!" Dad roars out in warning as Jaxon's hand grips tightly around the hunter's throat, cutting off his air supply.

"It isn't just hunters that want to destroy this pack, they will come...they will come when they are ready." The hunter manages to spit out as Jaxon lets go of his throat, his hoarse voice clearly affected by the pressure applied to his vocal cords. "Who will come?"

"The White Moon pack..."

"The White Moon pack? Never heard of them."

"Oh but you will. Too long you've been keeping the moon blessed wolf underwraps, too long you've kept her abilities a secret. It's time to pay the piper."

"And are you the piper?" Jaxon lowers down, his face inches away from the hunter's.

"No, I'm not the piper. Just his soldier."

"Read my lips very carefully boy, the white wolf will never return to the White Moon pack. They can bring whatever army they think will break us, but the white wolf will never return." Dad growls out, his hands continuing to grip onto Mum. "I'm not talking about the white wolf. There's another now..."

"What does that mean.." Jaxon growls out, but I can't avoid that sickening feeling rising within me. That sense of foreboding washing over me, like impending danger.

My wolf feels it too, her stance already a defensive one. Shes ready to fight.

"If they can' have the white wolf, they will want the next best thing....her daughter." His eyes turn to me, pure hatred exuding out of him towards me.

I feel movement on either side of me, before coldness seeps over me. My eyes remain holding his, until his eyes hold no more life within them anymore, and he dies before me. I watch the light exit from his eyes as Knox's hands wring at his neck. "What have you done? We needed more answers!" Complete chaos ensues as Jaxon pushes Knox away, the hunter now dead, chained still to the chair.

"He threatened my mate..."

"He was talking, for the first time..." Jace argues back, trying to separate Jaxon and Knox.

"I don't care, I've got to get Josie out of here..."

"Not a chance." Dad's fist hits across the desk, the loud bang resonating across the room.

"You said she was safe here, you said the borders couldn't be penetrated." Knox points a finger at Dad, only for it to be pushed aside by Jaxon.

"And they can't" Dad stands, his hands pressed on the table as he leaves forward yelling at my mate.

Complete pandemonium has erupted in this trial. I can hear them, I can see them in my peripheral vision....but all I am looking at is the dead body before me. They had come for me. Innocent pack members had died because of me.

"Bullshit!" Knox roars back out to Dad, all the alpha's now arguing amongst themselves....except for Mum.

I turn to find her gaze set on me, only on me.

"We won't let them get you." Her voice enters into my mind, it was calm, it was soothing.

No...whoever they are, they won't come for me because I won't let them.

Chapter 407

- Knox ~

"I'm taking her!" I defiantly growl out, not up for discussion.

"No you're not, she's my daughter." Hector growls back, his aura had been swirling around the room for the past ten minutes. Trying to suppress me...but I wasn't going to back down. He might be one of the most powerful alphas in existence but my fury was a raging volcano within me, making my aura just as strong.

"And she's my mate." I seethe out.

"Not yet she isn't." He bites back which forces a demonic smirk to enter onto my lips.

"Is that a challenge because I don't think even the Dark Phantom alpha can stop me from marking my own mate."

"Enough both of you, this isn't helping." Kaia roars out, her hands flinging in the air from frustration. The pack was on high alert, Jaxon and Jace demanding answers and Josie was on some kind of personal journey to heal the world.

I had to walk away from the hospital in the end as she treated the injured, before I flung her over my shoulder and marched her out. I left her under the watchful eye of Alpha Jude and Alpha Orpheus.

"I'm taking her out, end of!" I've had enough of this place, enough of this pack and being told what to do. What to do about my own life and my own mate.

"Taking her where Kit? To the training camp...it's not exactly girlfriend worthy is it."

"She's not my girlfriend, she's my mate Jaxon. The sooner you all see that the easier it will be for you when she leaves."

"She's not leaving." Hector growls out.

"To hell she isn't."

"You don't make choices for her, she can do that herself." Jace growls at me, the entire alpha family, except for one, eyeing me with hatred right now.

All because I am threatening to take away their beloved Josie. It's not like I'm taking her away forever, she'll come and visit but I can't be away from her and run the next alpha training programme. So something has to change. There has to be a compromise somewhere. "You've been lying to them all their lives, rewriting history. Are you surprised when the enemy comes knocking, trying to change history back?" This is what pissed me off even more. They've created this mess by not being honest from the start...by hiding the past. "I don't think you should be lecturing me on lies." Hector continues to seethe out at me. I can see his wolf on the verge of shifting, something that is only spurring my wolf on further. I've fought his sons before, I think I'd like to fight him too. "Meaning?"

"No prior address before the training site, no record of your past..."

"It sounds like I fit right in then. Because this White Moon pack..." I start but am cut off fiercely.

"The White Moon pack is a direct threat to this family, to both packs. We made decisions to protect our young at the time.."

"And have become lazy since then." I retort.

"Lazy?"

"You've become complacent, why wait for them to attack, why didn't you go after them." My hands are becoming more animated as this argument continues, I wasn't willing to back down and it seems he wasn't either.

"Because Knox, it just isn't that simple. There are other things to take in to consideration..." Kaia holds her hand out to me, trying to control the narrative.

"Like what Mum?" I'm stunned to turn to find Josie standing by the office door, which had been closed. Both her uncles flanking either side of her.

"What isn't so simple?" She asks again, her forehead creased with concern.

"Darling..."

"Who are the Nightshade Reformed and the White Moon pack, and what do they have to do with us?" She demands to know, her posture at full height. She had come for each and every detail, no more lies, no more half truths.

Kaia considers her daughter for a moment, before she sighs out...her demeanour becoming less argumentative.

"The Nightshade Reformed pack is what my father created after going on the run from the Clear Waters pack."

"On the run...what for?"

"Clear Waters was attacked, which is why I left at sixteen years old. However, that wasn't the truth...we found out years later that it had been....that it was actually..." Kaia seems to have difficulty finishing her sentence, Hector's hand reaching out for hers in a supportive gesture of togetherness.

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"It had been the alpha that attacked the pack. Kaia's own father killed each pack member to retain power." Hector finishes what Kaia couldn't. "What?" Both Josie and Jace gasp out at the same time.

"He wanted to utilise the power of the white wolf for himself. After his death...the Nightshade Reformed pack was inundated with attacks by a neighbouring pack. A pack that had be in cahoots with the White Moon pack. A pack that claimed ownership of the white wolf. A pack that has now set its sights on you, Josie."

"Well I'm not a white wolf."

"No...you have the potential to be of even more use to them. If captured and corrupted for their gain, your healing powers could make their fighters unstoppable."

An invincible army that would spread across this planet, and not just in the werewolf world."

"I would never help them!" Josie says with unbreakable determination.

"Can you say that darling, when you aren't pushed to the extreme, to breaking point. Everyone has a weakness, you just have to find it.

What if they have something of yours, something you want more than anything to protect...a sibling...a child...a mate?" Josie's terrified eyes cast upon me, an ominous feel taking over the incomplete mate bond. "Don't do that, don't fucking scare her like that!" I warn out, my fists clenching as tiny balls by my sides.

"But it's the truth Knox. You talk about taking our daughter away, that you can keep her safe.

Where really, it's here she is the safest, here we can protect her from within."

"But she was attacked, in your own home."

"After nineteen years of no attacks, of wiping out the enemy at the time..."

"Oh come on Hector. You didn't wipe out the enemy. You've given them the advantage...you've allowed them to bide their time. Restore their resources, gain manpower.

I can see now that you haven't been in control. You've just been biding your time, grateful every night that the borders have remained secure. They've been a ticking time bomb." "And what would you do, what would you have done instead?"

"I would have faced them, I would have destroyed them."

"You don't think I didn't try, you don't think that's what I wanted to do. To wipe out each and every one of them for daring to think they could take my mate off me.

I made a choice Knox, a choice to build a life with Kaia, to not have children raised in conflict. Especially after what the pack members of the Nightshade Reformed had been through.

You don't have to win the battle to win the war Knox. Something that I would have expected you to know...perhaps you aren't the right mate for my daughter after all."

My eyes burn at his words.

"Dad!" Josie growls out only for me to cut her off. I'm not standing for that. He's angry, angry for a number of reasons but he has no right in questioning my bond with Josie.

"Josie is mine Hector! I am her only mate...I am the one she will be with for the rest of her life. She is mine and mine alone." I would never, ever, think about claiming another mate over Josie.

I don't care what past love triangle he found himself in, but he dare not question what we have.

"Careful Knox!" Kaia warns me with a low rumble, her eyes vicious as I continue to stare out her mate.

"Stop it all of you. This is what they want. They want inner fighting, they want to create disruption within the pack. Pick us apart to pick us off. I say we attend to the injured, we bury the dead, we help the bereaved and we show them that we are united, that we are together." Josie states, her chin tilting upwards as she steps further into the office.

"I agree with Josie, it's time to be truthful and come together." Jace confirms as he takes a step closer to his sister, standing by her side.

"I'm in agreement to. Let's carry on as we were, and when they come for us again...we will be ready!" Jaxon nods in agreement, moving to stand united with his siblings.

Why do I have a feeling my past is about to repeat itself.

Chapter 409

- Josie -

"What's going on?"

Knox approaches me as I step out of the front door with Lobo, he has his spare motorcycle helmet in his hand.

"Let's go for a ride!" A charming smile lands across his face, his brown eyes the strongest they've looked in days.

"A ride, right now? Dad would have a fit!" I laugh out only to stop myself when I realise he is being completely serious. "Knox, the borders aren't safe."

"Then it's a good thing I want to take you out of the borders." He places the helmet in my hands before heading back towards his bike.

The engine roaring to life under his touch.

I start shaking my head at him, only to see that determined look in his eyes return and the alpha office door open hastily from behind. If I was to go, it would be now.

Chewing on my bottom lip, I place the helmet over my head and follow in his footsteps, placing my leg over the back of the motorcycle and adjusting my hands around his waist. Tightly.

"That's my girl!" He turns his head to wink at me before placing his own helmet on.

The bike kicks into life, I don't dare look behind but judging by the way Dad is pushing on my mind-link, he just missed us. I push back, I knew I shouldn't be leaving, but I knew I would be safe with Knox. I let him unwind, let the tension in his back and shoulders release as he drives us through the open road.

We haven't gone far, I can still feel the pull to the pack link, if I needed to, I could mind-link still...a fact I'm sure Knox was fully aware of.

He takes us off the main roads and onto the country lanes where we are surrounded with woodlands...trees that go on for miles.

The bike pulls up in a layby where his hands move on to me, his fingers snaking around my hips as I find myself lifted and placed in front of him...now straddling him on the front of his bike.

He removes his helmet, his dark brown eyes brooding with unsaid emotion. Air chokes at the back of my throat.

"Do you know how much I love you?" His words knock the wind out of me.

Speech failing me his fingers move from my hips up to my neck where he untightens the strap to my helmet, before removing it completely.

My hands automatically feed through my hair, his eyes watching me with sultry desire.

"I never wanted a mate..." The contradiction to his last sentence forces a scoff out of me.

"Charming.."

"Hear me out. I never wanted a mate, I never wanted to feel a connection to someone that was so strong. That I would spend the rest of my life living in fear of something happening to them, and then trying to survive after losing the mate bond." "You won't lose me."

"But I nearly did Red, you died in my arms. I can't even tell you how that felt, to be completely useless. To not be able to help the woman that I loved. I've mourned an entire pack Red, my entire family were killed before my very eyes...I don't think I can survive that again." I'm frozen, both through choice and involuntarily. If I made any sound I would scare him off, he would close down on me. He was opening up his soul to me, letting me see inside of him, letting me know all of him.

"I was around ten years old, my pack, my family wiped out in a day. I witnessed it all, I was useless, I couldn't help which is why I help others."

Which is why he has the alpha training programme. To prevent other packs falling for the same fate.

I knew he had been hiding things, but I had no idea it was this. An entire pack gone, his entire family. My heart was shattering for him.

I wanted to hold him, protect him from what he must have witnessed, what as a child, must have been seen by those innocent eyes.

My hands move to his chest, I need to touch him but not scare him away.

"I didn't want the same fate for my mate. But you are different, you are strong...a little irresponsible with your own welfare..." He playfully rolls his eyes at me.

"...but I know now why I have been mated to you. It's to protect you."

Chapter 410

I let his words sink in, my mind thinking on what he has just said.

"I don't need protecting Knox, I can protect myself. I want to build a life with you, share memories with you....not for you to only be with me to protect me. You're my mate, not my bodyguard."

"I'm both. This is your pack, this is your home. As much as it pains me, I know being without you will pain me more. I don't want to stop the alpha training program, but..."

"I don't want you to give up that up." My hands cup across his jaw line. A day old stubble tickling under my touch. The alpha training program is his pride and joy, something he has created himself, with no help, he made it happen himself. I could never expect him to give that up, not for me, not for anyone.

He takes my hands off his face, placing them down by my lap, holding them within his.

"I can't offer you a pack, my pack was destroyed. Any claim to being alpha died when the pack died. I've thought about starting a pack, starting again..."

"So you are from alpha blood? I thought you might have been...you heal like an alpha." My mind casts back to when Jaxon's wolf has torn into Knox's, the damage on a non alpha blood would have led to death.

"Yes, I was the alpha's son. All my family..."

"Not..."

"Yes, I had a younger sister."

"Oh Knox....I'm so sorry."

"It was a lifetime ago." Sadness falls upon his face until he starts to mask it again, that barrier was going back up. I didn't have much longer

"Healing has no time frame, I of all people am starting to understand that."

"Once I mark you, and believe me when I say I can't hold on much longer, I will move here. I would become a member of the Dark Phantom pack, with your family's approval." His tone was steadfast, not up for negotiation. But he had already lost too much in life, gone through more than anyone should have...and at such a young age. Could I expect him to give up on his passion for me?

"Dad has asked that we wait until after the wedding, give him a chance to lock Mum down until we start our own forever."

"I can wait." He smiles out, that sultry glint returning to the corner of his eyes.

"Really? Because I'm not sure I can.." My stomach flutters just at the thought of it, of completing the mate bond.

"You are the pack princess Red, it is only fitting that the pack celebrate with you."

"Celebrating seems like the last thing the pack needs right now." My chin sinks down slightly as I think about the attack, of how many lives we have lost. The true reason for the attack something I'm trying to not let my mind spiral into.

Sensing my guilt, his thumb hooks under my chin, tilting it back up to look him in the eyes.

"Life comes with the good and the bad, we celebrate the good, and we mourn the bad. I can't ever lose you Red, that is one thing I would never come back from." His thumb pulls my face closer to his, where his lips gently press against mine. Fragility is within this kiss, all of his layers are

stripped back, his emotions seeping through the mate bond. I've never felt this side to him, to the mate bond.

"Can I ask a question?" I pull back from his kiss, my hands lacing around the back of his neck.

"Ask me anything."

"Your pack...what happened?"

"Honestly...I'm not entirely sure. I've tried to research what has happened, but it had been cleverly covered up." He shrugs out.

"Covered up?"

"Oh yes, that's why I've covered my own tracks...as far as whoever did the attack...all died that day. All members of the alpha family perished."

"Kit..." His eyes return to mine, I'm now understanding the gravity of why he asked me to call him Kit. He has no family left to call him that name and just that thought alone makes my heart tang with pain.

"Do you have any idea how much I love you? I can't make up for your past, but I promise to love you with the same fierceness, the same strength of an entire pack, an entire family...I will never leave you."