

Denied 471

Chapter 471

- Cleo ~

Jace has found his mate?

The words that leave Mum's lips are like a thousand knives being stabbed into my heart.

My heart...not bleeding out, no that would be far too easy.

Instead it feels as if my heart has been torn into a million tiny pieces...then set on fire...just to really make sure I was feeling the pain of those words.

He has a mate...and it is not me.

My wolf seems to retreat even more, her lack of energy from the pregnancy making her tired...but I could feel her slipping into a state of depression. She loved Jace, just as much as I did...do.

I keep reliving the same pain again and again. Just when I think the pain is just manageable, that I can live with it...it grows out of control again... taking my breath away with it.

Questioning whether I can survive it.

It must be the woman that was in his room, of course it was. She was in nothing but lingerie...of course that was his mate.

She was stunning, how could it not be his mate.

My hand automatically moves to my lower belly, a protective stroke of my thumb; wanting to reassure my unborn child.

Daddy had already moved on...his mate wouldn't

want a child around that wasn't hers.

She would want to have their own children.

I couldn't do that to him. Not when he has just found his fated mate...could I destroy his happiness.

The Varon's finally had him back. I couldn't do that to them, to Josie or Jaxon.

I can't stop my mind from spiralling into a never-ending abyss of overthinking and mixed emotions. I needed to be strong, if I ever had any chance of enduring this.

I needed to think, to be smart about this.

Lost in my own thoughts I forget where I am, Mum talking to me as if I was listening...but I'm not. I'm in my own world.

I'm thrown out of my emotional deteriorating state when Ares walks into the office, his hand tapping me on the tip of my shoulder.

"Hey, are you okay? You look pale." I was extremely close to my brother, and can sense his concern radiating off him.

I've never, ever, given him cause for concern...until now.

"Cleo?" He presses.

"Yeah, I erm..." I try to find the words to respond to him.

"Cleo has some important news, close the door Ares."

"What's going on?" My brother looks to me after closing the door and moving back to my side. Being the first born I had always been taller than him, stronger than him...but not anymore.

He towers over me, his alpha frame growing by the day.

Not one tattoo was present on his skin, he is exactly how I expect Dad to have looked in his youth. Dark brown hair and sharp blue eyes that were a shade darker than mine.

In two years he will be ready to take on the alpha title, he will be a great alpha...like Dad.

I'll be here to support Ares for as long as he needs me but I can't put him in a position that would tarnish his alpha-ship...he deserves to have our friends by his side.

I won't have his name forced into pack gossip, and the news of a human baby will be gossip for some time.

Until the real truth comes out, by which point, I might have to be miles away. It would sadden me to put distance between my brother and I, but it would be a necessary measure to protect him.

I can't stay here and raise a child of an alpha, without the truth coming out.

If the baby really was half human, then things would be a whole lot easier, we could stay...I know Ares will support me in raising the child.

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But as soon as Jace finds out he is the father, then all hell will break loose. The relationship between the Varon's and us will become strained. Which will isolate my brother as alpha.

That is a risk I cannot take.

"Cleo?" Concern is edged upon my brother's face, his brows furrowing as he moves closer to me once again.

"I'm..." As soon as I tell him, it will change the motions of his future. I will put him in a position that he wouldn't have asked to be put in...yet he wouldn't complain. That's how close we are.

"Your sister is having a baby." I inhale sharply as the words leave Mum's lips on my behalf.

"What? Really?" Ares beams out, complete happiness at the news, as he wraps his arms around me.

"Yep.."

"Wow that's great news, I'm going to be an Uncle. Who's the Dad?" As soon as he pulls away from me, his intrigue begins.

"He's Human." I hold his eyes, knowing that I had to start practicing these words more.

I had to sound convincing because everybody will ask this.

I wasn't the type to go sleeping around with strangers...everyone will expect me to have found my mate by the pregnancy news.

I was going to have to get used to their responses because it certainly wasn't usual for an alpha born daughter to have a human hybrid pregnancy.

"You have a human mate?" He looks at me in surprise, his eyes darting behind to Dad.

"No...It was just a one time thing."

"So the baby is half human?"

"Yes." I swallow a lump that has formed in the back of my throat, my body trying to reject my own lie.

I had his inquisitive stare, even as he sniffs the air around me...I hold my poker face even as a smirk forms upon the corner of his lips.

Perhaps convincing my own brother will be a lot harder than my parents.

"Is that so?" He quirks an eyebrow at me. Shit, he isn't buying this. I need to do better.

"Also, Jace is back...with his mate. They've invited us to meet her." Mum's words give me a moment's respite from Ares' intense stare, his eyes turning to our parents.

"Great, when?"

"Tonight."

"No Mum." I panic, my voice sounding too shrill for me. I need to remember to keep my emotions in check.

"I mean, can't we wait a little longer?" I clear my throat, trying to sound more convincing. Ares' eyes back on me, his arms folding across his chest. "Whatever for?" Mum stands up from her desk chair.

"I'm not ready for my own news to be public yet. I need more time...please don't make me go. Just give me some more time before we tell people. You can go.." I'm talking to Mum but my eyes do not dare to leave Ares'.

He may have two years yet until he can take on the alpha title but his alpha aura was already strong, one that is giving him red flags about my story. Mum considers me for a moment, her eyes scanning the length of me before she sighs out and sits back down at her desk.

The Dark Phantom pack is her home pack, her own brother... my uncle Riley being the beta to Hector.

I can't believe I've been so foolish, so selfish to give into my desires.

My lust.

Mum will never forgive me if she is banished from her own family pack, from her parents and brother.

What have I done...

"No, either we all go, or none of us go." Mum states out as I start reaching for the door handle, desperate for some fresh air to help me breathe through my rising anxiety.

Chapter 473

- Jace -

It felt good to be in wolf form, liberating.

Not having to watch my back, be mindful of being seen...here, I could be free to roam the fields and woodlands of the Dark Phantom pack lands. I could shift as many times I want without fear of being seen by a human.

I had been on border patrol until the middle of the night. Letting the pull of the pack bond hum throughout me all night, my wolf purring in response.

I had missed it more than I thought I would. I had been away for too long, and not being a rogue, meant that the call to return home had tortured me every day since leaving.

But it was my choice and I knew why I was doing it.

At least I thought I did.

Had I of known that a deadly attack would unfold after I had left, then I would have stayed. I would have fought by my family. But I didn't and now I was working on operation re-earn their trust.

Callie's deep brown wolf runs ahead of me, her own need to let her wolf loose perhaps even greater than mine.

When the need to shift got too much for any of us, we would drive inland to nature reserves at the dead of night. Knowing they were closed to humans at night...it was the only way we could satiate our wolves.

We had become a bit of a dream team, along with Colt, the three of us creating a new life for ourselves.

I don't hold my wolf back, he's been running for at least an hour now. The sensation of the grass beneath his paws relaxing him in a way the coast never could.

Callie's wolf slows down her pace just as we reach a pack border, her body shifting into her human form as she looks up at the fence.

It was new, or new to me. This must have been one of the borders that was infiltrated by the hunters.

A wave of heaviness hits my chest, my wolf internally moaning. Not only did I need to make amends to my family, but also to my wolf.

I was denying him things that no wolf should be denied.

Callie downs to look at me, I follow suit, shifting knowing that she wanted to talk.

"I can't believe you left here... Why would you leave here?" She shakes her head at me, looking back at the pack lands.

"You know why." If she already felt like this about the Dark Phantom pack, then wait until she sees the Clear Waters for the first time.

"I think you and I have a different understanding of parental pressure."

"If you don't want to do this, you can walk away." I offer, she still had time to walk away from this.

"When did I say I don't want to do this? I'm just trying to understand why an alpha who has a pack lined up for him, a close family bond...would walk away from it, that's all."

"I have my reasons..." I sigh out. I know I was being cryptic, but she was strong...strong enough to handle the threat that comes with being a mate of a Varon.

She would be my Luna, a position, that is hazardous to anybody else.

"So you keep saying."

"Callie."

"Jace, I'm here...I'm with you, you don't need to worry about me."

She was right, she is the right choice.

I finish giving Callie a tour of the pack in wolf form, her curiosity piqued throughout. When I had told her what pack I was from she kept her distance for a few days. The rumours of the notorious Dark Phantom pack still lingering today.

Our wolves finally satisfied, we return to the alpha house where we both freshen up and join everyone

downstairs.

My family has congregated in the kitchen, Josie stands by the kitchen island as she makes hot drinks. Mum joins her, standing beside her as they both giggle at something.

I pause, my eyes watching the pair of them...they both have a target on their backs...just the idea of anything happening to either of them makes me sick to my stomach.

Like I said, being part of this family, being mated to this family comes with risks. That we have all learned to live with every day. It's what we train for. As Callie walks past them, they both turn to me...their eyes watching me with a small level of suspicion.

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I move towards Callie wrapping my arms around her shoulders and placing a kiss on the top of her head.

She was mine, I had to act like she was mine.

The distant ringing of the telephone from the Alpha office is heard, Mum leaving the kitchen to answer it. Her soft joyful tones at the caller no longer audible as she closes the door.

"Drink?" Josie asks me, gaining my full attention...a soft smile entering on to her lips.

"I.." I take a step towards her but she places her hand out, stopping me.

"Jace, it's fine."

"No, it's not fine Josie. None of it was fine."

"No, but I'm alright. Auntie Rosa got to me in time."

"Rosa?"

"Yes, she and..." She pauses her eyes changing suddenly sad. Knox is by her side within seconds, his hand wrapped around her waist, his nose pressed into the nook of her neck.

"Red?"

"I'm fine.." She whispers back, turning into his hold as she inhales his scent. The mate bond of theirs getting to work as he soothes her, her body yet again melting into his.

I hadn't had the chance to find out how Knox was an alpha, how he kept that from us. But when the dust from my return has settled, I plan to find out. "I'm sorry Josie, I'm sorry I left you like that."

"You're back, that's what matters...." She turns to me, her hand reaching out for mine. There's a moment between us, a silent understanding that she didn't want to dwell on the past. That she was willing to move on.

"...and with your Luna...so when are we expecting you to mark one another?"

"Well that would depend on a few factors." I respond, passing a hot drink to Callie.

"Such as?" Dad asks out as he turns a page of his morning pack report from Riley. I may have been gone for a year but something's never change. "Whether my parents want to be present." Callie sighs out before taking a seat at the kitchen table.

"Why wouldn't they?" Josie presses as she also sits at the table.

"I didn't exactly leave on good terms." Callie answers, only for Mum to walk into the kitchen...flipping the telephone in her hand.

"Well that was odd." Mum states out gaining all of our attention.

"What was odd?" Dad looks up from his report, his eyes glued onto Mum.

"That was Rosa..."

"Rosa?" Callie asks out.

"The Luna of the Red Thorn pack, we are Rosa's family pack. They are close allies of ours." Jaxon responds on my behalf. "Everything okay?" Josie turns in her chair, her hot drink clasped within her hands. As if her hands were cold, again something's never change. She may have her wolf now, but some habits were hard to shake.

"I'm not sure. I told her the news of your return and she accepted our invite to celebrate with us...but she's just called to say they can't make it now." "Why is that weird, perhaps something has come up within the pack and they just need to cancel." Josie shrugs out.

"That's the thing, they never cancel." Mum shakes her head, placing the telephone down in the kitchen side.

"Well Cleo already knew Jace was home." Jaxon states out...my breath catching in the back of my throat. For a number of reasons...the mention of her name and that she already knew.

How is it possible that Jaxon knows that she knew.

"What do you mean?" I try to sound uninterested but the slight rumble in my chest isn't missed by my brother.

"She was here." Jaxon's eyes are on me, watching me intensely

"When?"

"Yesterday afternoon...you didn't see her?" Jaxon raises an eyebrow at me.

"No, I didn't know she was here." I respond, I had told her to come but she never showed up.

"I missed Cleo?" Josie moans out as she sips back on her hot drink, her attention also landing on me as if I knew more than I was letting on. "Excuse me." I hear Jaxon excuse himself from the kitchen table, my eyes burning into the back of his head as he discreetly moves into the hallway.

I take careful steps to follow him out into the hallway, watching his hands take a set of car keys off the sideboard...before he leaves through the front door.

Chapter 476

- Cleo-

I needed to work out the tension building in my shoulders and upper back.

I hadn't attended training this morning, going straight to the hospital instead and now I was paying the price.

I also needed to keep my body moving to stop my brain thinking, I just needed silence.

The pack gym being the obvious place for me to loosen up the tightness in my body.

However, it wasn't the quietest of places...which turned out to be a good thing.

I may not be able to shift right now but that doesn't mean I still can't train, that I can't still work on my strength.

I was a fast shifter, a fighter...being pregnant isn't an excuse to not be able to defend myself in the event of a pack attack.

We, the Red Thorn pack, have no quarrel with other packs...but being connected closely to the Dark Phantom and Clear Waters does put us potentially in the firing line for this White Moon pack and the hunters to take revenge.

I saw on a first hand account how easily a well guarded pack can turn into complete mayhem in a matter of moments, how evil can penetrate the defences and murder innocent lives.

We know how quickly things can change and pregnant or not, I promised myself I would be ready...I would be ready to fight.

This is my family pack, my brother's future pack and I will help him to protect his legacy.

I'm not alone, pack warriors are making general conversation with me, spotting me with the weights...watching me work out. I'm not blind to how their eyes roam over my body, I was sweating more than usual...and I was only in a sports bra and leggings.

It was odd to have them around me, I usually worked out alone.

Every single one of them is attractive, in a typical werewolf warrior kind of way.

I suppose I've never taken time to look at males from within this pack...a mistake on my part.

Maybe that is something I should do once everything goes back to normal.

If things ever go back to normal...

"Out!" Their eyes snap to the door, an alpha's aura suddenly entering into the room.

At first I think it is Dad, but when the males around me start to depart...leaving a gap, I start to see it is in fact Ares.

I was so lost in trying to fight back my own thoughts whilst working out, that only when they depart do really take in just how closely they had

been around me. The air around me was slightly lighter now.

These were my pack members, people I grew up with. None of them would harm me, but Mum has always been slightly overbearing when I have been around the opposite sex. "Alpha!" They tilt their necks in submission before moving out, many glancing back as I continue to work out on the leg press.

"What are you doing?" Ares moves closer towards me, his head shaking in disagreement.

"What does it look like?"

"It looks like you are working out...pushing your body when you should be resting."

"Really?" I sigh out, not him...I would expect this talk from Mum, even Dad, but not Ares.

"Yes really Cleo. Stop!" He puts his hands out, taking the weight off my legs.

"Ares, I can't shift..." I keep my voice low making sure no one was in ear shot before continuing.

"So this is helping me with clarity, helping me remain positive."

"Why do you need clarity? If this is about the baby being human, it doesn't matter. I'll stand by your side. You don't need to give the child up, I wouldn't turn my back on my own nephew." He means it, he means every word of what he just

said.

"I know you wouldn't, but it's not that simple. It could damage your status with other packs when alpha."

"I don't care about other packs. All that matters is this pack, and the people within it." My heart melts at his words, if only it was that simple. If only this baby was half

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"You say that now..."

human.

"I'll say that always. If you want to train, you train with me. Where I can keep an eye on you." He firmly states.

"Ares, I'm pregnant not broken."

"You are pregnant and unmated..."

"So?"

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"Really?" He rolls his eyes up at me as he lets go of the leg press, giving me back full control. He moves to a bench by my side, sitting down on the edge of it. "What?"

"Did you see the way the males were huddled around you."

They were rather close to me, which thinking on it is something that never happens. Mum has always made it clear as their Luna that I wasn't to be around males, alone.

If I walk into a room alone, the males have to leave...it's something that I have grown up with.

It's like second nature to me now...so for them to have closed in on me just now...

"Their wolves will scent the change in your hormones, they will offer themselves up to mate with the daughter of the alpha. They will want to protect a future potential heir..." "Ares." I tut out his name, what a thing to say.

"Nature Cleo, you can't fight it. You will send their wolves crazy to the point they might mark you without permission." He takes my hand as I stop the leg press, guiding me to sit back up. I didn't want to listen to his words, they were scare mongering tactics. "Are you trying to scare me?"

"It is working?"

"A little."

"Good, I want to scare you. No more working out in here, no more being alone."

"Ares..." I try to tell him he is being silly, that he is talking nonsense but his words have left a chill across my body.

"I mean it.." His eyes turn stern, like Dad's.

"Okay, fine."

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Ares' words were meant to frighten me...and they have.

Do I really believe a male wolf will mark me without permission just because I am the daughter of the alpha?

No...but perhaps it isn't a theory that I want to test out.

It's ridiculous, I'm older than him...but slowly he was gaining more power every day, gaining my influence amongst the pack.

Nature playing out.

Between Mum and Doctor Sophia trying to mind link me for the rest of the morning, it is early afternoon before I know it...having missed lunch.

I finally return home raiding the kitchen cupboards, my stomach growling with hunger for having dared to skip a meal.

I guess I was eating for two now.

I was hungry for everything, placing

a pizza in the oven whilst eating on a peanut butter sandwich and a pack

of tortilla chips. I couldn't even wait

for the pizza to cook.

I try to convince myself that I didn't really have craving for ice cream, because that would be disgusting to eat at the same time as the pizza.

But as I pull the ice cream out of the

Pel

freezer and place the tub on the kitchen top, attacking it with a spoon and placing it to my lips without hesitation, I realise it was thebest taste in the world.

"Cleo?" Mum's voice calls out to me as the alpha office door opens.

I can hear Dad talking, I didn't realise with had a guest.

"In the kitchen." I call out, my mouth full of ice cream.

"Can you come here?"

"I'm just having some food." I try to hide the anger in my tone, I just wanted to sit down and eat something. For once to not be on the go...I wanted to enjoy this feeling.

"Cleo?" A male's voice calls out to me, his voice completely distinguishable to others. What was he doing here.

I move, placing the spoon down on the kitchen work top, leaving my odd feast at his voice.

"Jaxon?" I push open on the office door, his intense eyes not missing a moment.

"What are you doing here?" My eyes scan the room for any clues of his announced arrival.

"I wanted to check everything was okay?" He stands up from the leather Sherlock style chair, his eyes narrowing as he stares into mine.

"Why wouldn't it be?" I ask back, taken by surprise by his question...and his arrival.

"Apparently you went to the Dark Phantom pack yesterday?" My eyes open wide at Mum's accusation, something I failed to mention. Something I had hoped would go unknown.

"I, erm...yes, only on the way back from seeing Maya. I thought it would be rude to not stop and

say hello whilst being so close." I think of my excuse, once again dragging poor Maya in to them.

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"So you knew Jace was back?" Dad's voice sounds differently, it has a sterner tone to it. Something I wasn't used to being on the receiving end of. "I...no, I didn't see him."

"Oh good, I would have hoped you would have told us. Especially when we have been just as worried about his safety."

That hot sticky sensation of guilt starts to spread up my spine. I could feel my cheeks already starting to burn under her scrutinising glare.

I hate lying, I never lie.

But I seem to be doing it time and time again recently. But technically yesterday I didn't see Jace, but I knew he had returned

"Of course Mum." I can feel his eyes on me, Jaxon never misses a trick. There's a reason his reputation is more fierce than his own father's.

He has a darkness to him, something I wouldn't

want our family to be on the receiving end of. Which is why I need to remember my child is half human.

"We need to be somewhere, thank you for dropping by Jaxon. Of course, you are welcome to stay..." Dad's eyes remain on me as he places his hand on Mum's lower back and escorts her out of their office. "Oh yes, stay for dinner if you can." Mum calls out over her shoulder.

"I'll give it some thought thank you Auntie Rosa." Jaxon nods out.

Mum and Dad both move out of their office, instinct telling me to follow them.

That I shouldn't be alone with Jace's identical brother right now.

I move quickly, but not quickly enough.

"Not so fast." His hand reaches out in front of me, closing the door. I turn, his arm holding the door shut above my shoulder...my eyes trying hard to maintain his inquisitive stare.

"You seem different." He tilts his head, his eyes holding a crease at the outer corners as he tries to think what it could be. "Do I?"

"Something...you smell different."

"I didn't realise I had a smell?" I try to laugh it off but find myself to be the only one chuckling. His heated gaze was intense...ironically, how Jace looked at me at the hotel. But a different meaning behind it. "You don't..not like that...but.." He clears his throat, suddenly sounded awkward at his own words.

I can hear the beeping of the oven from the kitchen.

I breathe a sigh of relief when the alarm goes off to tell me my pizza is ready and I can excuse myself.

"Excuse me." I dive out of his

enclosing stance and pull the door open just wide enough to fit through. All but sprinting into the kitchen and

pulling my pizza out of the oven. en

I can feel his gaze upon my back, my shoulders sinking knowing that he has followed me. I don't turn but I just know he is looking at the melting ice cream tub left on the side the half bitten peanut butter sandwich and now a pizza being pulled out of the oven.

"Hungry?" He chuckles out, I turn with relief to find him quirking an eyebrow at me.

"Yes, I erm...I had been at the gym."

Calm, just stay calm Cleo. He will go home soon, just keep playing along.

"Is there something you need to tell me?" His words make me jump, my arm slipping by the oven.

"Ouch." I catch my arm on the tray as I pull the pizza out, his hands are there instantly taking the pizza tray off me.

His eyes stare with confusion at the red burn forming on my inner wrist.

Normally this wouldn't have hurt but with my wolf being on a hiatus....Ares was right, perhaps I need to be more careful.

"Cleo...what the fuck.." He growls out at me.

"It's nothing, I'm fine.."

He pulls me towards the kitchen sink, placing my wrist under cold running water, his other hand now placing the pizza down on the kitchen top.

With the pizza down, he now leans

over, increasing the flow of cold

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water. His nose right by my new ne

freeze at his closeness, as he smells me again.

A rumble leaves his chest as he takes a step back, leaving me to address my own wound.

"What's going on?" He demands.

"Nothing."

"Oh yeah, then explain to me why you smell like my brother."

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- Cleo -

"Oh yeah, then explain to me why you smell like my brother." He snarls at me, his nose sniffing again at the crease of my neck.

My body goes into panic mode, an instant threat nearby that needed to be avoided. Jaxon isn't a threat but him finding out the truth is. "What? No I don't." I take a sidestep, moving myself away from him...trying to laugh off his claim. Making him think he was barking up the wrong tree. "Yes you do...in fact...you reek of him. You saw him..."

"That's not possible. No, I haven't even seen him, she was there...." Bitterness takes over me as the image of her in her lingerie flashes through my mind.

I catch myself as soon as the words leave my lips, slamming my eyes shut. I shouldn't have just said that. I allowed my emotions to get the better of me.

"Who was there...Callie?" He shakes his head in confusion.

"Callie..." I repeat her name on my lips, swallowing hard as hot bile rises up to the back of my throat.

I feel sick just saying her name.

But she hasn't done anything wrong, I am the one in the wrong. She is his fated mate after all.

She's the one that should hate me, not the other way around.

She is the innocent party in all of this. A one night stand I shared with her own mate before she found him.

I've tarnished their mate bond before they have even marked one another. I'll be forever seen by her as his dirty little secret.

"You saw her, why were you even there?"

"It doesn't matter."

"Clearly it does."

"Jaxon, drop it." I seethe out, a warning in my voice.

"Cleo!" He ignores my warning, taking a step closer again as he releases his alpha aura into the room. He can't command me, I'm not a pack member but that doesn't make the air around me any easier to breathe, the oppressive sensation he was causing with the atmosphere any more bearable.

"He texted me, saying he was back...that I should come over." I sigh out, wanting this nightmare to be over with. I need him to leave, before I say something that can't take back. en

"He texted you? Why?" Dark burning eyes lock on to mine, mine unable to tear themselves away.

"It was just in response to my text. It's really no issue, I was passing anyway..."

"The two of you have been speaking, whilst he's been away?" He asks, his brows furrowing. My heart breaks as a hurt expression forms upon his face.

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He was hurt at the possibility that not only had I known of Jace's whereabouts, but that I hadn't told him about it.

"No...I've tried him, like everyone...but he only replied to say he was back."

"Back from where?"

I was losing control of my words, the truth threatening to come out. He may be a friend but

above all Jaxon was an alpha wolf, a

predator...the proof of this as his eyes burn with a need to find

truth.

A truth he must know I am hiding from him. The coldness now oozing out of him is telling me so.

"Have you known where he has been this entire time?"

"No." I turn my back on him, not wanting to continue this conversation. I just wanted to be left alone right now.

I needed him to leave me alone, I couldn't trust myself right now.

Without my wolf on full alert, his aura was overpowering me.

"Cleo? Have you known where he has been?"

He seethes out, his hands gripping my upper arms

as he spins me around.

"Leave me alone." I growl out at him, my response resulting in him snatching his hands back as if my skin was hot to touch.

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I move away from him, heading upstairs into my bedroom, slamming the door shut to lock it.

I just needed to be left alone.

But he was fast following me up the stairs...his hand blocking the doorway, preventing me from closing it fully to apply the lock.

"Get out." I roar out, trying to force the door shut but he pushes back. His entire alpha body taking over the frame of the doorway as he uses his shoulder to barge the door open...my body jumping back. "Get out or I'll mind link for help." I threaten.

"Cleo... I'm not going to hurt you, I'd never hurt you. I just need to know...did you know where he was?"

"No, I wouldn't do that. I swear...but when I saw him."

"Saw him?"

"I knew he was safe, if I shared where he was, he would have run again."

"You knew?" His hands start to dart through his hair only to remain on top of his head as he moans out to me. I've hurt him, in keeping Jace's location a secret...I've hurt him, and also his family.

"If he was in danger, I would have said something, but he wasn't." I try to explain myself, try to make him see. I step closer, my hands gripping at my chest but he places his hand out, wanting distance from me. "How long, how long have you known?"

"Jaxon, believe me..."

"How long?" He roars out, my entire body shaking under his fury.

"A few weeks."

"I can't believe this, you knew. You lied?"

"I promised I wouldn't tell. If I had, he would have left again, you know this. I just..."

"What?"

"I didn't know he had found his mate. When you saw me leaving, I was just surprised. But I'm glad...I'm glad he has found someone to make him happy." My words sound convincing, almost convincing myself. "You keep lying to me." But failing to convince Jaxon.

"No." I shake my head, he needs to understand that in telling them, Jace would have left. He never would have forgiven me. "The child..."

I feel as if I have been slapped around the face, my entire body running cold. As if somebody has stood over my grave.

"What child?" My voice is higher than normal, my own ears not recognising my own voice.

"The child you are carrying....the extra heartbeat I've been hearing since you walked into your Dad's office. Is it his?" "I'm not..."

"Stop lying to me." He roars out, his fist punching through my wall. I watch on, stunned, as he removes his fist, inspecting his

l.ne

knuckles....before looking back up at me. A fist sized hole now in my bedroom wall.

"Cleo, is it his?" His voice has no anger now, no emotion... in fact it's too void of emotion. It's terrifying.

"No, my baby is human."

"Cleo, come on.."

"My baby is human." I repeat, robotically. Only for Jaxon to close the gap between us, for his hands to cup my face in his.

"He loves you, I know he does. He just won't admit it, I don't know why...but don't give up on him."

"He has a mate."

"He loves you, he always has. You and his baby will..."

"My baby is human." I gasp out, trying to hold back the tears threatening to spill from my eyes. Biting back in the sob that so desperately wants to escape me, to

breakdown in Jaxon's arms.

"Cleo.."

"My baby....is human."

"Tell him, you need to tell him." He shakes me slightly, maybe he was trying to shake some sense into me, but it doesn't work.

This is why I can never admit it, this is why I will ruin

everything.

"Or I will." His words hold no malice,

just the truth. He will protect his brother above all, I know he will.

They are triplets, all three of them.

They come first above anybody else.