

Denied 491

Chapter 491

"Together." I repeat his words, that's all I have ever wanted...to be together.

"Together." His hand raises up and cups the side of my cheek before it falls back down. I take a step forward, needing to touch him, to feel him.

He was rigid, more muscular than the last time I

saw him. He was still in shock because his hands don't hold me like they did at the beach club, no...they wrap around my upper back...not around my lower back or waist like he did then.

But he has another now, he was a man of honour. He needed to break it off with Callie first, he needed to be respectable to her.

That feeling of sadness, of knowing I would have to do this alone was being replaced with happiness, with excitement.

I wouldn't be alone, he will be with me every step of the way.

He is picking me, picking us.

"Jace, I..." I want to tell him how much this means to me, how sorry I am that I didn't trust him. I should have trusted him, trusted us. I wasn't just some girl with a crush, he was going to pick me. It wasn't one sided, he loved me too. "My mobile isn't safe right now, so wait for me to come back." He commands out.

""What, why?"

"I'll explain another time. I just needed to see you. Now go inside, I'll see you in a few days." His lips press against mine, his kiss not lasting long enough. I needed more, but he had to get away.

I take a step back, turning to move...my hand moving to my lips.

His kiss...his kiss was too soft. Before, at the beach club, he kissed me like he owned me, like he possessed me.

Like I would be the only one he would kiss for the rest of his life.

The kiss just now was different...

I turn, looking at him...he was covered in complete black. Covering his entire body...every part that is tattooed...even his neck.

No wonder I couldn't smell his trademark coconut scent...it wasn't even him.

"Jaxon!" I growl out, my jaw stiffening as my fists move to my sides, both becoming small tight clenched balls.

He just stares at me, astounded perhaps that I had figured it out. Lost for a response.

"Cleo.." He tries to calm me as he rips the balaclava off, no sign of a tattoo. Not that I needed it for confirmation, I knew exactly who it was. He had played on my hormones, played on my love need to be with Jace.

"You shouldn't have kissed me, you shouldn't have just done that." I coldly state.

"You need to give him time."

"You've made it very clear how far you will go to protect your brother." I turn my back on him, preparing to head inside. "Cleo?" He pulls me back to him by my elbow but I brush off his touch, trying to push him away from me.

I fail, it was like pushing away an immovable mountain. I should have known it was Jaxon, Jace wasn't as built as him. The months of rejecting his alpha title has made him need to work more for his frame, whereas Jaxon has only ever accepted his destiny.

He has muscles in abundance. He's never had any waiving thought of what role he has to play.

"You've just made an enemy of me Jaxon. I was on the fence, but now I see that need to act and I won't apologise for what I need to do.

From now on this is about my net'

child my child Jaxon...and me. No one else."

"Cleo?" I can hear panic in his voice. The future alpha of the Dark Phantom pack was panicking, a mistake he has made that will affect his brother in the long run.

"Get off my pack grounds before I force the warriors to do it for me." I seethe, I can't even look at him.

I'm so angry I don't even wait to watch him leave pack grounds all I know is that I need to remove myself before I say or do something that would be crossing a line between us. But hasn't he just crossed that line.

He has just proven to me the lengths he will go to protect his brother. I didn't have time, I need to think of my next move. But one thing is for certain, if I ever see Jaxon again, it will be too soon.

Chapter 492

-Jace-

"You need to control your temper more." Josie unfairly reprimands me as she circles around me in the courtyard outside the alpha house, her wolf shining out through her eyes.

Fuck, she looks like Dad except for her red hair. Those eyes are haunting to look at just like his; grey ash turning to an orange flame every time her wolf comes forward. She was angry at me, but for once I wasn't the asshole...he was. "He jumped me!" Her accusation was unjust, she wasn't even in the Alpha office when Jaxon jumped me...pushing me up against the wall.

I had been all but removed from the alpha office by Knox, even though I was not the one in the wrong.

"Why are you not yelling at him?" I point my fingers back towards the house, full well knowing Knox was now having to deal with Jaxon's temperamental beast.

"Oh, I will believe me. You need to be mindful that your absence hasn't been easy for Jaxon, nor me. Where I use words, Jaxon likes to use his fists."

"Don't I know it." My hand inadvertently rubs against my neck where he had applied most of his body weight.

I was ready to take him on, to give him that fight he was so desperately craving...and I would have done, if Knox hadn't pulled him off me.

"If it wasn't for your mate..."

"My mate is perfect thank you, remember that next time he is saving your ass." Josie retorts, her eyes darting to the front door as Jaxon exits, followed closely by Knox.

Jaxon's eyes are once again burning with anger, a step made towards me...only for him to stop when Knox places a hand upon his shoulder... pulling him back.

I shouldn't be jealous but I had always been the one to cool Jaxon's fiery temper, now it seemed to be Knox...they seemed to be close, like brothers.

There was a time I was the one that could second guess my brother's actions before he even knew them himself, it would seem I had been replaced. What did I expect though, that my family would press the pause button in my absence...I had brought this on myself.

Yet I couldn't ignore the pang of jealousy as Knox instinctively takes a step forward to block the three of us from Jaxon's glare...before giving my own identical brother an encouraging nod to leave.

As he moves to a pack SUV, my eyes burning into the back of his head, I couldn't shake this feeling that my return wasn't the only thing that had rattled Jaxon.

Something was on the tip of his tongue as he held me against the wall by my throat. But Knox pulled him off me, Jaxon failing to finish his threat.

"Where is he going?" My lips murmur out to Josie, my eyes watching the SUV speed off towards the location of the pack gates.

"I don't know, cooling off somewhere." She shrugs, turning back to me...her mate heading towards us.

"Off pack grounds? I thought everyone needed an escort now."

"Who told you that?" Josie's voice is low, I don't know why, judging by

Knork he isn't shy about

being caught eavesdropping

"That's what Dad said." I shrug out, just as Knox joins us.

"What else did he say?" Her eyes turn to look up at her mate's, the energy between them tangible.

"Nice try." Knox smiles out at her lovingly.

Josie would just love to be in on the alpha meetings and for the most part she is, but not the type reserved only between Dad and Jaxon, and previously me.

Not even Mum, which never went down well.

Jaxon was so angry at me, so much masked hatred being sent my way.

But I know he was masking how he

I

really felt...and that was hurt and abandoned. I had always promised him that no matter what I would be by his side. A pact we made as young men...still children really.

We thought we knew it all, but what did we actually really know...not a damn thing.

"You can't react to him, you know that." Josie sighs out, tearing her eyes off Knox and back to me and Callie.

"Josie's right Jace, you need to learn to control yourself around him. This dominant alpha male thing..." Callie chips in.

"What alpha male thing?" I look at her, perplexed by her comment.

"You know, my dick is bigger than yours." That's what I admire about Callie, she doesn't dance around the facts She says it as it is, no sugar coating from her.

"Ew, please don't ever say that in my presence again." Josie's face distorts before fake dry heaving.

"Sorry." Callie apologizes, moving closer towards me. She places her hand to my face...her touch putting me on edge.

She rarely touched me, it wasn't a thing for her.

I try not to act surprised especially around my sister who was watching Callie's affectionate display with keen interest.

"Keep the focus, remember." Callie's eyes burn into mine.

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"Yes, of course." She was right, I had to keep on the path that we had chosen for ourselves. To take on the Clear Waters pack...and Callie to be my Luna. As Josie and Knox head back towards the

house, my eyes turn back towards the pack gates. I've never seen Jaxon bail out of the pack grounds so

quickly.

Wherever he was going, clearly hadn't been approved by Dad.

Whether he likes it or not, I was back...for good. So, he better get used to me being on pack grounds, being in my family home.

I was the future alpha of the Clear Waters pack and it's time I took ahold of my destiny with both hands.

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"Ugh!" Josie slams her phone down on the kitchen island work top.

"What?" Knox moves over to her, like they can't be apart for more than a few seconds.

Already touching her, all they ever do is touch.

His hands lock onto her hips, pulling her back into him...once again I need to avert my eyes.

This is my sister man, come on.

"Maya was meant to come over but she's cancelled." Josie responds exasperated.

"Does that mean I have you all to myself." Knox's nose dives into the nook of her neck, placing a kiss upon his mate mark.

"Behave. Are they always like this?" My eyes roll as I turn my back on them. This was ridiculous.

"Yes, life was a lot simpler when Josie was a child." Dad muses out.

"Mum, Dad mentioned that Auntie Alora and Ezra should be here soon." I call out to Mum as she walks through the kitchen towards the office, coming to a halt at my question. "Most likely tomorrow." I don't miss the way her eyes flicker between Dad and mine.

"Good. I wanted to start the handover process."

"You do?"

"Yes, I meant what I said Callie and I are here to take on the Clear Waters pack. Perhaps the two

of us can return back with Auntie Alora and Ezra, stay for a few days. I can give you the grand tour." I turn to Callie, excited to show her where she will become luna. "Sounds great." Callie beams at me, her smile extending to Mum who is also the picture of excitement.

Josie not so much; she's got a Jaxon look about her. A judgmental gaze.

"What?" I turn to her, wanting to know what was on her mind. I could feel distrust through the sibling bond, like Jaxon...she wasn't falling for it.

"Nothing."

"You had a look."

"No I didn't."

"Yes you did, just now...what is it..."

"I just think you might be rushing into things that's all." She shrugs out, not really saying what she wants.

"Is this not what you all wanted. For me to take on the role as Alpha?" I look at them all, checking I was on the same wave length.

"Of course darling...but only if you

want it." Mum gently responds as she moves over to Dad. He hands stroking through the back of his hair. What was it with these mated couples. en

"Yes, I told you this...I want it." I determinedly answer.

"Excellent...I would advise you spend some days at the Clear Waters by yourself. We can look after Callie, drive her down once you have settled in. The pack has changed since you were last there." Dad recommends, his voice steady.

"Changed, how?" I press, intrigued to know more.

Both Mum and Dad share a glance towards one another.

"Josie?" Rolling my eyes from their lack of response, I next ask my sister.

"Don't look at me, I've been at the training head quarters for the past year." She half heartedly responded, her fingers typing away on her mobile phone.

"It's nothing to be alarmed with, we just had to make some

adjustments...security changes. It's just so open out there and isolated from allied packs..." Mum starts but trails off towards the end.

I didn't like the way those words sounded on her lips. Reading between the lines it sounded as if

excessive fencing had been installed. Which, would go against the aesthetic culture of the pack.

Blue lagoons pools didn't really suit ironed fencing.

"We had no choice, the pack member's safety comes first." A rumble comes from Dad, as he pulls Mum closer to him.

"Of course Alpha, Jace and I understand." Callie politically responds, as I remain speechless.

"So it's settled, Jace you will visit first and we will follow in a few days later with Callie. Gives Knox time to give Callie a training run through."

"Oh that's not necessary Alpha. I'm trained in the arts of defence." Callie proudly declares.

"Is that so?" Dad's eyebrow rises, challengingly.

"Unrivalled..." She smirks out, meeting his gaze.

"Perhaps we can put your confidence to the test?" Knox takes a step forward, his arms crossing over his chest.

Callie turns to me, confused...but I knew exactly what he meant. He wanted to test out her sparring skills....wanted to see what my future Luna was made of.

Chapter 494

- Jace -

"Nothing like throwing her in the deep end eh? Josie moves towards me, just as Callie and Knox enter onto the training field.

"She can handle it Josie, you just watch." I smirk out as Callie gives me a wink of confidence.

Knox was itching to spar against Callie, to get an idea of her fighting skills. If I didn't know him well enough from training with him myself, then the cracking of his knuckles was the key signal. "He's an alpha trainer Jace.." Josie whispers out, trying to make me change my mind about this.

"Yes and she was raised and trained by an alpha. Give her some credit...and trust me Josie."

"What does that mean?" She frowns at my words, her arms crossing in front of her chest as she becomes defensive.

"I wouldn't choose a Luna who couldn't defend themselves, I know what I am walking into. I wouldn't let my mate enter our lives without being prepared."

"No, the moon chooses your mate Jace. You've been paired with Callie for a reason...that's why she is your destined mate." Her voice is dragged out as she tries to emphasise her point. ""Right, that's what I said."

"Is it." Her eyebrows knit together with confusion. It feels like I am being x-rayed by her under a scrutinising glare, even as I turn to watch Knox and Josie start sparring.

I can feel her continuing to watch me, my wolf sending me warning signals to be on my guard.

"You know...we are fated for a reason." She takes a step closer, her voice trying to sound ingenuous this time.

"He's holding back on her..." I take a step forward, knowingly ignoring her statement.

"Don't hold back Knox." I shout out as I watch Callie swipe her leg out, trying to take him out. He looks at me with a "Shut the fuck up" stare, only for Callie to use his lack of concentration to her potential, jumping on his back and pinning him to the ground. She was strong, she was an alpha born female...just like Josie.

"I thought you trained alphas?" Callie chides, purposefully trying to aggravate him as she leans into his ear from behind.

"Maybe I'm going easy on you?" He grunts back at her with a smirk.

"Why because I'm a woman? Would you expect your mate to go easy on an attacker..." I hear her gasp as she is thrown from Knox, an almighty roar escaping him. He wouldn't even let her finish her sentence. But she's found his weakness, his own mate.

I can feel Josie's eyes carefully watching me again, to the point it is start to irritate me.

""What?" I call her out on it.

"How are you fighting it?"

"Fighting what?"

"The urge to protect her."

"She can protect herself."

"Yes, we know that...I can see that for myself. But your wolf's instinct is to protect what is his...unless..." She seems to ponder for a moment not finishing her sentence.

"Unless what Josie?" I lowly rumble.

She was pressing me and I was now starting to get irritated. She doesn't back away even at my warning growl, if anything she takes @step closer.

"I think you are lying to us." Her eyes hold an accusing stare.

"Think all you will...I'm not lying!" I hold her gaze, needing her to back down.

"I'm not buying it."

"Yeah, well I'm not selling anything." I turn to her, taking a deep breath in to steady the growing irritation she was causing within me.

"Hmm, we shall see. Have you told Cleo you are back?" The mention of Cleo's name, from out of nowhere, almost topples me. "Now why would you mention her?" I try to keep my voice even but I can already feel myself wanting to seethe the words out.

"Because, the last time you saw her

you embarrassed her in front of the entire wedding party. You owe her an apology." She watches me carefully for a reaction, one I am not willing to give.

"I'm sure she wouldn't remember that."

"Then you don't know Cleo!"

Bang...like a punch to the gut. Of course I know Cleo, of course I remember how cruel I was to her. I think of Cleo every waking minute of my day. Even in my dreams, even still...even with another...she creeps into my dreams.

"I mean it Jace, you apologise next time you see her." Josie gives me a pointed look, that look similar to what mum used to give Jaxon and I as children when we were upto no good.

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"Jace.." She growls out at me.

"Okay okay." I playfully back away, placing my hands out in defeat.

The sparing match has gone into its second hour, not one of them showing signs of defeat. They were as stubborn as each other.

They were also gaining an audience, warriors and pack members coming over to inspect the small commotion on the training fields, when no pack exercises have been scheduled. Callie was losing, it was clear Knox was holding back. He was an alpha by birth right and also spent years honing in on his training skills.

But Callie was fierce, she didn't play by the rules. One wrong turn from Knox and she will turn the fight around.

"Aren't you getting tired yet?" Knox grits out as she pulls him head back by his hair.

"Nope, I could do this all day handsome." She mocks out, her tongue coming out too closely to his ear. She means it teasingly but my sister takes it as a sexual threat.

Callie's eyes flash in my direction as Josie growls out warningly.

"It's between them, back down." I warn at Josie as she starts to move towards the fringe of the training ground, her body rocking forward on the balls of her feet.

Preparing to protect her mate, preparing to take out a sexual threat. Even though there isn't one. There's a reason mated wolves aren't meant to be touched by others that are not their mates.

It's a territorial thing especially for male wolves. But judging by Josie, she felt just as territorial.

Just watching her chemical reaction, I think of only one person, as Josie tries to fight her wolf's demands to protect her mate.

Her wolf was fighting her for control, trying to over throw her.

"Josie." I let my alpha aura wash over her, trying to calm her wolf.

"Mine." She roars out, her eyes on fire as they stupidly continue to fight in front of her.

"Josie?" I call out to her, trying to shake her out of it but she pushes me back, with enough force to knock me back onto the ground. "Stop the fight, stop it." I yell out only for Knox's eyes to dart in our direction just as Callie lands an elbow to his temple.

With his mate on the brink of

attacking his sparring partner, hez pushes Callie back, his eyes on his mate. He's done it to protect Callie but inadvertently pushes her down with too much force.

I hear a painful gasp as Callie lands awkwardly on her arm. The bone snapping as soon as she hits the ground.

The curse of the mate bond, the uncontrollable need to protect making you act senselessly. You lose all control of your sense. I didn't want that for me.

Josie's instinctive need to heal the wounded takes charge, overpowering her wolf's anger as she is at Callie's side in seconds.

"I'm sorry, I didn't expect her to react like that. Usually it's males Kit fights. Here let me look at it."

"It's not my first injury...ah." Callie winces out trying to back away from Josie as a red light starts to glow from her hands.

"What the f..." She cries out, trying to fight off Josie's hands in fear, but my sister was trying to heal her.

"It's okay Callie, she's trying to heal you." I try to calm Callie, try to make her stay still.

"Heal me?" She looks down, a mixture of astonishment and fear as Josie's power resets her bone.

Her eyes are like saucers as she becomes speechless, trying to understand what is going on.

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"There, as good as new." Josie smiles out, removing her hands of a sceptical Callie who was just staring at my sister as if she was having a raving mad moment.

"What did you do?" Callie moves her arm hesitantly.

"I healed you."

"How?"

Josie glances up at me, no I hadn't told anybody of her abilities. She was my sister, I would never tell a soul.

"Perhaps we should go inside. If you

are to become a member of this family, you need to know what you are getting yourself in to." Josie stands up, placing a hand out for Callie to take.

Chapter 496

-Josie -

I'm quiet as I move out of my bedroom not wanting to alert the household that I was heading out.

It was still early and being a Sunday, no training was scheduled.

There was no reason for anyone to be up early on a pack-wide rest day. Unless you were on border patrol.

As long as I tip toe down the stairs, avoiding the creaking steps...I should make it out without being heard.

But as I make it half way down the stairs, a sigh escapes me...both Mum and Dad are at the bottom waiting for me. "Can we come?"

"How did you find out?" I stop a few steps from them, unable to hide the bite in my tone. They didn't deserve it, but I was irritated that they had found out.

"I told you, the hospital has policies to follow." Which is code for, Sophia told Dad.

I sigh internally, there was no point hiding any of my prenatal appointments with them, Sophia was going to tell them each time now anyway.

"It's just a check up, just to get me on the system as it were. Not a lot will happen." I try to brush it off.

"We don't care, we want to be there to support you."

"Really?"

"Yes, of course."

Warmth spreads throughout my chest, yes...yes I would like that. I want them to be with me. This is their first grandchild after all.

"Okay." I smile out, my emotions once again flipping over. I was like a yoyo at the moment, still reeling from Jaxon's intrusion, from the hole in my wall. But I needed to push my anger with him aside, this was a special moment, one my parents want to be included on. "You mean that?" Mum takes a step towards me, her hand placing out to help me down the stairs. I was pregnant not incapable of walking the last few steps but her gesture is sweet and I make no comment.

"Yes, I would like you both to be there with me."

It feels peculiar, to be sitting in the doctor's office with my parents. I wasn't a child anymore, I was an adult growing my own child. Yet, I needed them...I didn't want to be alone. No matter what I might say, no matter how strong I try to play...I was scared.

I was worried about the unknown path I had now entered on...scared about my future as a single mother.

I don't know why, many women rock it and this isn't the Middle Ages. I can do this I know I can, so what is holding me back. Mum and Dad sit in silence, behaving as they just watch Sophia take the typical readings of blood pressure and temperature.

She hands me a bottle of pregnancy vitamins that I need to take daily as well as ask questions about my wolf's energy levels.

There's a slight growl from Dad, which causes a bead of sweat to form upon her brow...she was more nervous than me as she draws blood out of

my arm.

She doesn't need to use silver, which I think she was more grateful for than me, Dad was already almost lunging out of his chair.

Sophia works quietly, not giving anything away as she continues to give me a full health check and write down the results on a document.

She calls my parents over when I am finally laying back on the bed, my relatively flat stomach covered in some kind of jelly substance prior to the ultrasound.

Nerves creep back in...self doubt, I don't think I am actually ready for this.

He should be here, he should be a part of this.

Guilt of keeping him out of this washes over me, it's harshness not lost on me.

I have a sneaky suspicion that it is my wolf sending me these emotions, her constant pining for me to tell him, when I was trying to protect her, protect me from his rejection. He has another.

Deep down I know I will regret this that I I

differwish I had handled things

differently but my wolf is so weak as it is growing this baby, I can't give her a broken heart as well.

At least I can carry that burden for her.

She had hope, whereas I had to be realistic now.

So what if we were a fluid family, so what if I was in love with him...it didn't mean he was in love with me.

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It doesn't mean that he would leave his mate for me, and I wouldn't want him to be with me just because of the baby.

To spend my life loving someone who felt trapped by my side? No thank you, I would rather do this alone.

As Sophia places the monitor on, my chest becomes constricted, the sudden realisation dawning upon me that I am going to be a single mother.

An overwhelming impending sense of fear that clouds my mind.

In all honesty, I felt like a fraud. A bad mum before even having the baby. As soon as the baby appears on the screen it will be all too real, and I'm not ready. I'm not prepared.

"Can we stop." I shout out, unable to breathe. My chest continuing to tighten as the air I inhale doesn't seem to have any oxygen in it. I was suffocating from the inside out, it's the only way to explain it. "What's going on?" Dad's asks as Sophia helps me to sit up, her eyes watching me carefully.

"Cleo?"

"I can't...I'm sorry I thought I was ready for this but I'm not." I pant out, pain now registering in my heart.

In truth I'm not ready to ask myself if what I am doing is the right thing for the baby, or for me.

"We can take a break, you can come back in a few times. I know this is all very overwhelming." Sophia tries to calm me as she rubs my back...encouraging me to take small deep breaths.

That was an understatement. It was one thing to think I can do this alone, without him...but to then actually do something without him, without giving him a choice.

To face my baby knowing full well of the choice I was taking away...

No this wasn't right, he should be here.

I need to get out of here, I can feel the walls closing in.

"Yes, I'll come back in a few days." I hurry to wipe the gel off my stomach, placing my hoodie back on and excusing myself from Sophia's doctor office.

I needed space, I needed time to think.

I head home, not waiting for Mum and Dad. They will have questions and I need to give myself that breathing space to think on suitable answers.

I keep lying to them, I know I do.

But I'm too in-deep now, and I have to remain on this runaway speeding train I have created.

Until it crashes around me.

In the comfort of my room, I rest my body on the bed. Wrapping the bedspread across me for comfort. I suddenly felt cold.

Did I just have a panic attack? I've

never experienced one before but the struggling to breathe, the

tightening of my chest, the way my vision started to pound as if it was mimicking the beats of my heart. He had to be one... surely.

I just needed to lay here, seeking comfort in familiarity of my bedroom. Take slow deep breaths.

I reach for my phone when it vibrates on my bed stand, thinking it would be Dad trying to get a hold of me because I have closed off my mind link.

But I'm surprised to see it is an unsaved number.

I click on it, knowing immediately who the sender is. Alpha Than.

Morning Cleo, just wanted to check you are okay? T

I suppress a moan, why does he keep texting me. I told him I was safely home last night but only because he claimed he would phone the alpha office if I didn't.

I didn't want Mum and Dad to know I had met with Maya, and I certainly didn't want it to be known that he caught me being sick by the side of the road.

They wouldn't let me off pack grounds ever again.

Hey, all good thanks. C

I keep it short, not leaving it open for more conversation. I'm confirming that I am fine and that he doesn't need to take it any further.

But my eyes widen when another message comes through.

Can we meet? I want to discuss something with you. T

I reread his message a number of times, my thumbs hovering over my phone wondering how to respond. What could he have to discuss with me, he doesn't even know me.

Please...I can explain in person.

Another message comes through, followed by another.

I can help...just hear me out.

Chapter 498

I'm well and fully the conductor of my runaway train, the train that best describes not only my continuing untruths to my family, to those that care about me the most, but the fast paced out of control journey I am taking myself on...no doubt on a path for collision. I had the front row seat to my own destruction. Especially as I am waiting inside the small vintage styled tearooms, a thirty minute drive from my pack grounds.

- Cleo ~

My head rests in my hands as I listen to the other patrons as they go about their business, chatting about their own lives.

Their noise giving me peace in my ever chaotic mind.

I had bolted out of my own first scan, what sort of a mother does that.

I need to do better, I need to be better for this little bump of mine.

I have to tell him, no matter what. I have to do this for the baby, my child deserves the best life possible and if that is with a modern step family, then so be it.

He or she will just have extra people to love them, to protect and guide them in life. What could be wrong about that.

I don't hear him enter, it is only when a clearing of the throat in the seat opposite to me draws my attention that I even look up. A small smile spreads out on to his face as he picks up a menu, seemingly deciding what to order.

When he places the menu back down he looks at my order, the half eaten tea cake and cup of tea, alongside a half empty glass of apple juice.

I was hungry, until nerves and nausea took over.

One of the servers comes over to take his order, he orders politely, even cracking a joke which makes the young female giggle.

I watch her walk away, even glancing back over at him...she was half his age yet he seemed to have charm.

"Thank you for meeting me." His attention returns back on to me, his eyes moving around the tearoom to check he didn't recognise anyone I presume.

I think that, because I did the same, especially not being too far from pack grounds.

"Well, you were rather keen in your text messages.." I quirk my eyebrow at him, relaxing back into my chair trying to come across as indifferent.

I was quite the opposite, I was intrigued as to why he was so keen on meeting me again.

"I mean what I said Cleo, I can help you." He leans forward, his arms resting on the table as he intertwines his fingers.

"How's that?"

"I have a position available within my pack, within my household actually."

"Your household?"

"Yes, a role that I have been needing filling for quite some time." He removes his hands off the table in a polite move when the waitress comes back, placing cutlery out for him.

He silently watches her, our conversation on a pause until she smiles out at him and moves back to behind the counter.

"I'm not looking for work." I'm keen to carry on the conversation, I didn't want to stay here for longer than I had to.

"No of course I didn't mean that... I meant within my household, a member of my household."

"I don't understand." Isn't that what someone working in the household is, he was confusing me.

"Luna, I'm looking for a luna."

My lungs eject a sharp puff of air, the sound coming out as a scoff but it's more a gasp from being completely flabbergasted. Did he just offer me what I think he did...

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"You want me to be your Luna? But we are related?" I have to dull down my high pitched voice as a few of

swnovel?

the patrons turn to look at me.

"Not like that...purely contractual. Nothing physical, like you say we are related."

He's very cool, calm...maybe he's practiced this.

"Then why?"

"To help you. To help me...to help my pack."

The waitress comes over, placing a coffee out for Alpha Than followed by extra milk and a small pot of sugar. He's watching her again but I'm watching him.

I'm unable to take my eyes off him, looking for anyway I may be misinterpreting this.

"Why do you think I need help." I watch him place two brown sugar cubes into his coffee just as the server moves to clean a table.

"A young female she-wolf being sick on the side of the highway says a lot Cleo. How far gone are you?"

The hairs on the back of my neck stand up as an icy coolness runs through my blood.

How did he know.

He was right though, it's not every day a she-wolf is ill, unless in the early stages of pregnancy.

What would be the point in denying it, soon enough the entire shifter community would have access to the information when Dad announces it.

At least for now I was in control of deciding who knew.

"Two months."

"Is your mate dead? A warrior injured in battle or something?"

His words yet again take me by surprise, my head shaking as I try to think on how to respond.

Chapter 499

"No, I have no mate." For once, the truth.

"I see."

"No you don't actually...the father is a human."

A moment is shared between us where he is considering me, and I him.

He seems to be contemplating something, his eyes pulling away first as he exhales loudly, casting his eyes back over the patrons.

He was a difficult male to read, to figure out. Each movement, each word of his is premeditated, pre-planned. Why was he worried about speaking out of term?

"I'm looking for a luna and an heir. My pack's future relies on me providing them we an heir."

"But the child wouldn't be yours, the heir would be half human."

"That doesn't matter to me."

"It doesn't matter that the child not only won't be yours, but would be half human?" I need to hear him say it again, because he was an alpha male and I'm struggling to think he would adopt not only a child that wasn't a pack member, but a child that was half human...or so I have to make him believe.

"I don't think you understand the severity of my situation. I have no heir, my father is already dead...I would like my mother to see the pack is secure before she dies." His tone is more clipped this time.

"Your mother is sick?" I ask, thinking maybe he was up against time.

"No, just growing old."

I nod out, he must be what in his mid forties, if she was a younger mother she would only be in her mid sixties.

He still had plenty of time to find his mate and produce an heir.

"You still have time to produce an heir of your own, to find your mate." I offer out to him, trying to be encouraging.

"No, my mate is dead."

"Oh I'm so sorry to hear that."

"It was a long time ago. Just think of it, you...a luna...your child being raised by an alpha to protect a pack that will be theirs. That won't be taken away from them."

"It won't?"

"No, I would make the contract unbreakable by me Cleo, you would give your child the opportunity to be more than nephew or niece to your brother, they would be alpha themselves." "Boy or girl." My eyes narrow at him, was this offer depending on me having a male over a female.

"Yes, it's time the shifter community recognised female alphas. You yourself are first born are you not? Why shouldn't you be luna of your own pack, why shouldn't you have a say in the future of a pack." Leading a pack has never been a dream of mine, I've never felt I possessed leadership skills not even to be a luna.

But I can't deny his proposition is intriguing.

I would be offering my child a different future, a future where they would be an heir...when they

should be anyway.

But this title wouldn't be taken from them. It would be theirs, legally confirmed, legally upheld.

But I have this nagging feeling within me, why did he not speak to Dad if he was related.

"My Dad...why don't you speak to him?" My tone isn't polite, in fact it's accusational.

"Sometimes you can be related to people but have different views in life, different opinions. Just because you share a percentage of blood doesn't mean you have to be in each other's lives. Sometimes it's family that hurt us the most." He shrugs out, his eyes moving to the window where he suddenly becomes pensive.

"This is a lot to take in." I break his personal thoughts.

"Just think about it, before you say no...give it some thought. Ask

yourself, why would you say no to a title of Luna and an Alpha for your child. Your child will be
vel.

protected by myself and my pack...few babies can boast of such

protection even before the

born."

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"I'm not..."

"Come visit my pack, come see where you would be living...any time. Just send me word by text and I'll make it happen."

He stands up, taking money out of his wallet and placing it down on the table.

"I have to go, please give it some thought. I will make contact with you in a few days...give you some time to think. All I will ask Cleo, is find a reason why this isn't a good idea, why we couldn't make this work."

He takes my hand and places a kiss on the back of it before heading out of the door.

I sit there for a further ten minutes just letting his words sink in, trying to remember everything he had said.

Did I have this right. He was offering me the position of luna within his pack, and my unborn child the position of heir.

Of being the next alpha.

My spiralling mind just keeps getting

more and more confused. I

shouldn't even consider entertaining his offer of visiting his pack, but to have a pre-made pack for my child..my child that was an alpha born would be a dream come true.

I wouldn't get it any other way.

Chapter 500

- Jace -

I'm sitting on the edge of the bed watching Callie put make up on in front of my mirror.

She's not spoken to me all day, not since Josie healed her arm and willingly informed her of her special abilities.

She asked to go to the hospital, to have her arm checked out even though Josie kept insisting there was no need, that any X-ray would show the bone completely healed.

As werewolves we get used to injuries in training, even for our bodies to heal fast, but I get it...it's a tad freaky to have another wolf heal you with red light coming from their hands.

But what blew my own mind was that apparently Mum has similar powers, something that I didn't know.

Something about being the White Wolf from the fairy tales and Josie had abilities as well because she was her daughter... it passes on through the female gene.

Mind blown.

Mind blown even further when I challenged Mum to test her abilities on me, soon feeling as if energy was being forcibly drained from my body. Only for a surge of recharged power to be channelled back into me. How long, how long have they known about this and not told us.

Our entire lives apparently. Shit, I mean of course I knew Mum was a white wolf, but not the White Wolf.

"I understand if you want an out?" I offer to Callie, things had already changed since our original plan. ""An out?"

"Of all of this. Believe me, if I had known about my own mother and the pending threat of this White Moon pack..." Who launched the attack on the wedding night, trying to get access to Mum but also Josie.

"Are you joking? This is wild, the White Wolf actually exists? No...why would I want an out?" Callie's fingers move into quotation marks at the mention of the White Wolf.

"Being my luna puts you automatically in the firing line."

"I've been in the firing line myself for some time Jace. It's not every day an alpha born rejects their pack, their parents."

"This is different, you know this. This is unprecedented. I won't hold it against you if you

want out. I'll sign my side of the hotel over to you for ownership, you get to walk away." She ponders my offer, her eyes catching mine in the mirror's reflection. It was unfair of me to expect her to be a part of this, especially when the levels of danger had quadrupled.

"I made a promise to you, and I plan on keeping it Besides, I couldn't cope with Colt by myself, he'd drive me up the wall." She chuckles out moving to place mascara on her eyes watch her intently as her mouth opens slightly to somehow gain better access to her eyelashes.

"If you are sure?" I sigh out leaning forward, my elbows resting on my knees. I want her to understand just how dangerous this is, but I know she can handle it. I've chosen her well.

She turns to me, no longer responding to me in the mirror but complete eye to eye contact... ""Yes."

His return is like a nuclear explosion within the pack bond, complete anger resonating through the link as he doesn't even try to suppress it. He wants every single person to feel his anger.

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"What is it? What's wrong?" Her eyes widen as a growl escapes me.

"Just stay here, promise me."

"What's going on?"

"Jaxon is back, just stay up here."

"Okay."

I move downstairs, my wolf pressing forward demanding to know what was going on.

I don't push him back, Jaxon can't keep acting like this, he needs to learn to control his wolf.

I thought he had learned to control his wolf, perhaps my absence contributing to his decreasing ability to dominate his fur side.

"I want the Arancea's here tomorrow."

My body stills when I walk in on him demanding Orpheus' attendance.

"Rosa and Orpheus? Why...what's going on? Mum tries to sedate him, tries to keep him under control. But I can tell even by his darkening green

eyes, he was close to demonic right now.

A sign his wolf was in control. His aura was also incredibly thick, making the kitchen area deeply atmospheric.

"I want them here, they need to be here." He mutters to himself as he bypasses Mum, squaring up to Dad.