

Denied 521

Chapter 521

- Jace -

"So this is where you are hiding?" An overly aggressive kick to the stomach wakes me with a start.

Josie...

"What do you want?" I growl out, my eyes reluctantly opening to the bright morning sunshine.

A pain in my neck informing me that I hadn't slept on a bed.

I hadn't made it back to the alpha house last night, instead finally succumbing to the need to sleep after downing a. entire bottle of whiskey I had taken from the kitchen.

The cold hard ground by the far border the only place I wanted to be for the night.

Once the Arancea's had left, everybody knew something was wrong...there was no point dancing around the issue.

I just didn't want to address it.

So I walked into the house, swiped a bottle and stormed back out...earning a growl from Jaxon as I barged back past him.

There was nothing going on between him and Cleo but why had he given her his car, why had he been all weird around her at the dinner table.

But then what does it matter to me, after what happened I might as well have verbally rejected her, reject the mate bond once and for all.

"Cleo's parents wanted you to give them a tour of the pack.."

"You are joking right?"

"No, Jace, I'm not joking. What a surprise...your own mate's parents wanting a tour of the pack you grew up in. What a pair of monsters they are..." I don't appreciate her sarcasm when my heading is pounding. "Can you not shout." I grunt out reaching out for the whiskey bottle in the hope there was some

left, only for Josie to kick it out of my reach, the bottle now rolling down a slight slope before hitting

the iron cladded fence.

With a throbbing head I manage to sit up slowly, my head resting in my hands...without their support I don't think I will be able to keep it upright.

Between the pain in my neck, the heavy head...and everything that had transpired between Callie and I, I was a fucking mess.

I couldn't even think about Cleo, I was too wracked with guilt.

"You love her." Josie sighs out as she takes a seat next to me on the cold ground, her demeanour changing from anger to empathy.

Her words weren't exactly a question, more a statement.

"Well...she is my mate."

"Not Callie you idiot, Cleo."

"What you saw..." I start before Josie cuts me off.

"What I say was two people who have known each other all their lives finally admit, that perhaps there is a love greater than a mate bond. Are you sure...are you certain Callie is your mate and not Cleo?"

There was something different about Josie since returning.

Yes she now had her wolf, yes she had an ability like Mum...but there was something else, something regal.

Her words cut through my masked expression...trying to reach out to me to learn the truth. If I lie to Josie, would be lying to the Moon Goddess herself...who seems to be linked to Mum and Josie.

But then the Moon Goddess would already know that I am lying, she just doesn't know why.

"Yes, Callie is my mate." The words are difficult to say, my tongue feeling as if it was being butchered by a blunt chainsaw with every syllable.

"Then what was that with Cleo?"

"A moment of weakness.."

"Like the beach club?" Pain radiates through my neck as I twist my head to face her.

"How do you know about that?"

"I don't but low and behold, Maya disappeared back to her pack in the night. She's holding out on me, they both have been.

Which explains why she and Cleo have been quiet towards me recently. After last night, it's pretty obvious something else happened." Cleo told Maya...shit.

"It's nothing.." I exhale, my heart beating too fast.

"Nothing, Cleo means nothing to you?"

"You're twisting my words."

"Cleo has loved you from the moment she opened her eyes. Don't fuck about with her Jace. Don't use her.." She warns out.

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"I'm not using her."

"Then what are you doing, because you can't have them both."

"I don't expect to have them both, she left last night, I didn't go after her." My lack of action in chasing after Cleo has sealed our fate. With that and ghosting her after the hotel night, I'll be the last person she'll ever want to see.

"Then you leave her alone, because I'm telling you this now. That girl won't survive you Jace, if

you have no intentions in rejecting Callie for her, then you need to leave her alone.

Now come on...you need a shower before the house wakes up."

"How did you where I was?"

"I knew you didn't come back last night, I checked the alpha office...so I knew you must be outside. You have some crawling to do with Callie, and her parents...that's one thing I can tell you for certain." She stands back up, dusting at the back of her legs before placing her hand out, extending it to me to help me get up.

I grab it, leaning on her strength until I am back at my full height.

The world spins slightly, the consumption of alcohol last night now a regretful decision of mine.

I just needed to feel numb, I needed to take the pain away. The wolfsbane hadn't worked as well as I thought it would, after Cleo left... alcohol at the time seemed like the better option.

"Come on, if we make it back now, Callie won't know you spent the night passed out on the ground."

....

Josie was right, the entire alpha household was still asleep...well except for Knox.

He was standing by the front door, arms crossed with a grumpy scowl upon his face, practically ripping Josie away from me.

The mate bond is a funny thing at times.

"Where have you been?"

"Someone had to send out the search party." She melts into him, her fingers dancing upon his neck as she lets him inhale her hair.

"Party is usually plural, more than one...when woke I up alone I was worried."

"Well, I'm here now." She coos back at him, his hands roaming over her body and I have to walk away as the taste of whiskey starts to repeat on the back of my throat.

I'm beyond happy that their mate bond is a source of happiness for them, but it doesn't mean I can watch someone be hands-on with my sister.

I creep up the staircase, heading towards my bedroom slight disorientation washing over me at

times.

I needed an ice-cold shower to wake me up.

As I open the bedroom door, I find Callie sitting up on bed, her eyes snapping directly to me.

"Where have snarls

g her phone dowlly

been?" She l

the bedside table before

moving to the end of the bed.

"I've been calling you all night."

"You have? More guilt washes over me as kreach into my trouser pocket to pull out my phone, to

find forty missed calls.

Forty!

"Callie, I'm.."

"I don't want to hear it. Were you with Cleo?"

"What, no...I was at the border."

"Okay...good. Because my parents are growing suspicious Jace, you haven't been exactly the

most welcoming mate to them."

"You are kidding me? After what they did to you, what mate would be welcoming to them."

"They seem sorry." She shrugs out, placing a pillow on her lap.

"Do they? Have they actually apologised?"

"Well...no."

"Then they aren't sorry Callie, they

are

face in front of parents." I bite back before

correcting myself.

"Our union will soar their pack's reputation..." I adopt a calmer tone.

"Cocky much." She quirks an eyebrow as a smirk curls at the corner of her lip.

"It's true though Callie."

"Are you sure about this?" She asks after studying me for a moment.

""About what?"

"About you and me...and not Cleo."

"Yes...in fact, I think we should get to the Clear Waters as soon as possible."

"You don't want to wait.."

"No, Callie. That's the whole point, the sooner the better."

Chapter 523

-Jace-

I let the icy cold stream of water wake me back to my senses.

With the smell of alcohol being washed out of my pores I feel fully awake again.

I would leave immediately, with Callie and head on to the Clear Waters pack. She will need to spend time getting to know the pack, getting used to the grounds and what I imagine is now fortress of steel borders.

Mum indicated that she had no choice but to implement tougher visible borders since the attack by the White Moon pack, which does contradict the culture of the Clear Waters pack.

Once I take on the pack, take full control of the safety, I will do what is needed to ensure not only the safety, but the pack thrives as I take it into its new alpha-ship.

Shutting the water off, I step out of the shower, wrapping a towel around my waist as I glance at myself in the bathroom mirror.

My wolf finally seemed to understand what was at stake, he wasn't fighting me for once. Whether he was pissed at me for the wolfsbane or licking his wounds from the excessive alcohol... but I was keen to hit the road before he came too. I didn't have a lot to pack, most of my things were now at the beach club hotel which I can have sent to the Clear Waters pack in a couple of days' time.

I hadn't been here in this house for a year, most of the things in my bedroom I no longer need.

Once dressed, I carry Callie's and my bag downstairs, the one we brought with us from the beach club, placing it by the front door.

My eyes inadvertently roam the hallway side table... sets of car keys scattered on top...all but one noticeably absent.

Jaxon's, which meant his car wasn't back yet.

"Callie?" I hear Luna Louise's voice coming from the kitchen, not missing the way Callie's body instantly turns tense.

"Morning Luna Louise, Alpha Bill.." I try to keep my voice a polite greeting as I head into the kitchen to find them both sitting on the kitchen island stools, helping themselves to my family's coffee and coffee mugs. Just another thing for me not to like about them.

"Where is everyone?" Luna Louise glances behind me, expecting the rest of my family to appear out of thin air.

"Sundays are a rest day, not training..."

"I see.." Her lips purse, judgement clear in her tone.

Just the way her lips twist, as her eyes scan the kitchen...this woman was winding me up.

From her judgmental snide remarks to her behaviour towards Callie, what I really want to do is kick her off these lands and completely destroy their reputation as an alpha and luna.

But it was important to Callie to

reconnect, for her to have the one

family she has back in her life.

Especially after losing her brother.

"I guess we do things a little differently around here." I firmly state out.

She doesn't respond, her lips pulling into a straight line before she moves the coffee cup to her mouth and takes a sip.

I needed to put distance between this woman and I before some home truths were said.

"So..Callie and I are off."

"What?"

"I'm going to take her to Clear Waters, get her used to the pack before she becomes Luna."

"So soon? I thought.." Callie's mother gasps out.

"Once I am settled we will send for you both, I just want to get to know the members of the pack, bond with them before we invite guests." Callie takes a step closer towards her parents, her hand reaching out and her father surprisingly taking it in his.

"We look forward to the invite." Alpha Bill squeezes Callie's hand in a gesture of affection. Better late than never I suppose. "But.."

"We look forward to their invite, don't we Louise." Alpha Bill pins his wife with a look.

Just as her body starts to submit to his silent command I hear footsteps coming down the stairs, a groan coming out of me. Mum and Dad.

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I had hoped to leave whilst they were still asleep

"Jace?" Mum pauses in the hallway, her eyes looking towards the bags at the front door before looking up at me.

"Callie and I are heading to the Clear Waters pack." I smile out.

"So soon?" Mum's eyes look between Callie and I, before looking to Dad.

"Yes, we are packed ready to go. I will send for things if needed, but most of my belongings are now at the beach club." I move back out into the hallway, where I reach down lifting the holdalls

easily in my hands. "Thank you so much for having us, and my parents. It's been lovely to meet you all." Callie politely thanks for my parents as she moves to my side.

"...yes, you too Callie. You are welcome any time, you know that. But.."

"It's fine Mum, Callie is keen to meet the pack members. We will then send word for when we have selected a date for the ceremony. All I ask is that we keep it a small affair, especially with the extra security detail." "Of course, I'm sure we can arrange that." Dad nods out, placing a reassuring arm around Mum's back.

"Perfect..."

I bid farewell to my parents, not missing their side eyes towards one another. Yes I was rushing things, and for good reason.

Last night was a wake up call for me.

"I love you." Mum places her hands to my face, her shorter height meaning she has to tiptoe slightly to reach up to me.

"I love you too. I'll let you know when we are safely there."

I close the front door, tension instantly rolling off me. This was my home, this was where I grew up...I would always love this place. But I needed to face facts now...needed to accept my future. Callie would be my Luna and the sooner I marked her, the sooner the bond between Cleo and I would start to fade.

Completely dying the moment she accepts another for herself.

With Callie moving to the front passenger seat, I toss the bags into the boot of the car, before moving to the front and starting the engine.

"Ready?" I turn to Callie, she had one last time to bail out of this, one last chance to pick a different life for herself.

She had the beach club, she didn't need to do this. Not for me, not for them...

"Are you certain?" She looks at me, softens in her glance. I suppose I was hiding things too.

"Yes, I am certain." I nod out to her, before putting my foot down on the gas pedal.

As I do, a hand thuds on the driver's window forcing me to slam the breaks.

"What are you doing?" I roar out to Jaxon, the fucking idiot almost getting himself run over.

"What am doing, what are you doing?" He pushes against my chest as I step out of the car, my back being pressed against the side of the

car.

"What is your problem." I growl out at him, pushing him away from me, anger boiling within me.

"Where are you going?"

"To the Clear Waters pack." His eyes

dart

Of Over to Callie as she steps

Sout

and rests her hands on

f of the vehicle.

"You're running away." Hurt registers upon his face.

"I am not running,"

"Bullshit, things get a little difficult again and you can't handle it."

"I'm not running away." I take a step closer him, growling out my

as Callie tries to calm me

by

my name.

"Jace!"

"You can't go, not like this...there are things you need to know.."

"Yeah like what?"

His eyes glance back to Callie again, before a pained sigh escapes him.

"I can't say...not here. Come back inside..." He takes a step towards me, too close.

"I don't have time for this." I push him away, trying to put space between us.

"Jace, don't make a mistake."

"The only mistake was coming back here."

"Jace..."

"You have your pack Jaxon, now I have mine."

- Cleo -

I spent the night asleep on the side of the road.

It must have been easily 2am or 3am when I left the Red Thorn pack, I hadn't thought past getting away from Mum. Hadn't even realised what time it was...I just knew I had to leave.

I pulled the car over when anger started to turn into hurt...my vision becoming blurry with tears and my breathing getting laboured from my sobs.

I just needed to sleep, I didn't care that I was alone, by the side of a road. I was exhausted.

I lowered the car seat down, laying back and curling up into a ball...crying myself to sleep.

There was something therapeutic about crying myself to sleep...something I hadn't done in a long time.

It means I have woken up stronger, more focused...it was now just me and bump.

I was startled awake by a female police officer who gently tapped on the car window before moving me along.

I guess Jaxon's car wasn't the type to be sat by the side of the road all night without raising suspicion.

The main problem, other than walking out on everything I've ever know, I didn't actually know where to go.

I couldn't go back, I won't go back.

I love my parents, there was no doubt about that, but my childhood wasn't without its challenges.

Do I want to raise a child in a home environment where some days I would be guessing Mum's behaviour still, and worrying about how she would be around a baby.

I've managed to find a petrol station that has a self serve coffee machine and pastries for breakfast. I didn't actually eat very much last night, my stomach calling out to be fed.

My phone is in my hand, numerous missed calls and text messages from Dad, Ares...even Mum, but also Jaxon.

I needed to get his car back to him, and I hadn't told him I was home...I didn't really get the chance before I was leaving again.

I can't even think on what is happening at the Dark Phantom pack right now, I can't. It wasn't just Callie's eyes...but also Josie's.

Not only had Jace betrayed his mate, but I had betrayed my best friend. Someone who had always been like a sister to me.

My fingers hover over an unsaved number, his text messages still in my phone's inbox. Could he help me? Do I want him to help me? Before I can stop myself I'm already dialling his number.

"Hello?" His grunt tone makes me immediately regret calling him. It was early, and a Sunday morning, I must have woken him. "Alpha Than... it's Cleo."

A pause and I lower the phone down to make sure it has r disconnected.

"Cleo?" I can hear him move the phone away from his ear, a swooshing noise as I guess he checks the caller ID.

"Sorry, did I wake you?"

"Yes, but that's okay. I thought it was my beta."

"No...just me." I feel awkward knowing I had woken him and trying to make general conversation with him. I needed to get to the point.

"Is everything alright? Are you okay?" Genuine concern is laced within his voice.

"Erm..."

"Cleo?"

"So it would appear I am without a pack." The words taste bitter as they leave my mouth.

"Where are you?" A growl vibrates through the earpiece on the phone, shaking me to my core.

"At a petrol station."

"Which one, I'm coming to get you."

"No, I'm not in any danger."

"Come over to the pack."

I pause, hesitation on my part, was this such a good idea.

"Please, I'm worried..."

"I'm fine." I try to make the words sound believable but as I move my hand to my lip, I notice the trembling movement. I wasn't fine, I was a mess. "You are alone, and you sound upset otherwise...and let's be honest you wouldn't have called me."

He had a point.

I wouldn't have even considered calling him if things weren't so dire that I was now technically homeless.

"At least so I can check on your welfare....and the baby's."

"Okay." I bite down on my lip, at least it will give me time to consider my options.

I'm at the Amber Desert gates before I know it, an ominous sensation washing over me.

I could spent the next ten years

easily living in the human

community but when my child

reaches the teen years, their wolset

will start to press forward.

Potentially exposing the truth of our kind and, my child, making them feel like an outcast.

Well, they would be an outcast.

Whereas, here was a pack that could offer us a place to stay, a place to raise my child in the safety of a pack environment.

The gates are noticeably more

relaxed than the Red Thorn ones, and considerably more relaxed than the Dark Phantom steel fortress. This was a pack that didn't seem in danger of attacks any time soon.

As my car closes in on the gates they start to open, four male figures walking towards me...gate guards coming out to check my identity.

One of them moves to the driver side window, bending down to speak with me.

"Can I help you?"

"I'm here to see Alpha Than, I believe he is expecting me." My eyes move to the three other males that are circling the car... maybe the driver doesn't suit the style of vehicle and it is raising flags for them. They aren't wrong.

""Name Miss?"

"Cleo Arancea, of the Red Thorn pack." As soon as I announce my full name, his eyes shoot to the other guards, before entering a mind-link. "Head directly to the Alpha house, you are expected."

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- Cleo -

He's waiting for me, standing outside the front of the alpha house...I know it's early but I'm surprised he is the first person I have come across since driving through the pack gates. It's quiet, a little too quiet, even for me.

A soft smile forms upon his lips as I turn the ignition off, moving to open the door only to find he was already outside it...pulling on it for me. He was fast.

"Thanks again for this." I offer as I step out of the car, locking it and placing the keys in my bag.

"You're a little overdressed for breakfast." He teases, an eyebrow raising as he looks down at my clothes.

I was still in my black dinner dress, I hadn't even changed before my family returned and chaos ensued.

I must look a state, having slept the night in a car.

Conscious of that, my hand moves to my hair to flatten it down.

I was an alpha's daughter addressing an alpha, there are certain levels of respect within our society...and I'm not doing very well at upholding it.

A cold shiver runs down my spine, goosebumps erupting over my skin.

"Cleo.." I feel material being placed upon my shoulders, Alpha Than covering my goosebumps with his own jacket.

"Hhmm?"

"I was joking, come..let's get you inside." He manoeuvres me towards the front door, his eyes glancing back at the flashy white sports car I had arrived in.

"I take it that isn't your vehicle."

"No."

"Do you want me to arrange for it to be returned."

"Erm, not just yet.." I wasn't sure how long I intended to stay here and I didn't want to lose my only way out.

It's an odd sensation being on a different pack grounds without knowing anybody else. I feel slightly jittery, my eyes moving at high speed as they take in as much detail as they can...my wolf's strength still low but she is sending me warning signals. I know he won't hurt me, it wouldn't be in his interests to do so.

"Let's get you a hot drink, you are freezing." He moves me over the threshold of his front door and towards the kitchen that seems to take central point of the house's design.

My eyes take in the décor of the hallway, dark green walls with paintings, cabinets with books

and trinkets provide a sense of financial abundance...and that he isn't afraid to show it.

He doesn't give me a chance to further inspect his displays, he places me on a chair at a kitchen table before disappearing and leaving me alone.

The kitchen has bi-folding doors that open out to a garden area like most modern style homes.

The kitchen was modern, a contrast to the hallway which had a different feel.

It was like a battle between old vs new.

Alpha Than returns, removing his jacket from my shoulders before swapping it with a blanket in its place.

"We need to warm you up. I should still have some female clothes upstairs.." He murmurs before moving away again.

"Still?" I turn, watching him as he places a mug down and switches a coffee machine on.

He doesn't answer my question instead moving around his kitchen space, making me a hot drink and then returning to the table to place it in front of me.

I sit in silence watching him the entire time, he seems to be muttering to himself but not audible enough for me to hear it.

Why...why is he in need of a luna. Surely this pack has females that would jump at the opportunity to mate with an alpha.

I didn't

know him very well yet, but

even I

could tell there is something

wrong about him. A loss, he did say his mate was dead.

"Than?" A female voice forces my eyes to snap behind me, back towards the hallway.

A petite female wearing a skirt suit and heels, the sound of hurried feet clicking towards us.

"Oh?" She pauses as she enters the kitchen, her eyes coldly staring at me.

She had highlighted hair, not as blonde as mine, but it was neatly styled in a bob.

The wrinkles on her face inform me that she was covering up the greying hair, she was older than she looked.

She was sophisticated in her style, almost as if she was preparing for a business meeting.

Her eyes roam over me...I wasn't dressed anywhere near as smartly as she was and I feel out of place. "Mother, this is Cleo."

"Cleo?"

"Cleo Arancea.." Alpha Than moves from the kitchen worktop back towards me.

A moment is shared between the two of them where realisation starts to dawn on her of who exactly I am.

Her eyes, that look back at me, aren't as cold now but I still feel uncomfortable under her gaze.

"Oh I see." There's barely any

warmth in her demeanour, and I had

a feeling she was trying...again my wolf sending me warning signals.

"I can leave, I knew I shouldn't have been here." I stand, throwing the blanket off me and preparing to leave.

"No, not at all. I just wasn't expecting you." She takes a step towards me, as does Alpha Than.

Chapter 527

"I don't think Cleo expected to come either Mother." Alpha Than bends down to pick up the blanket, before placing it back over my shoulders.

"I just wasn't expecting a visitor so early. I am Luna Medea.." She places a very well manicured hand out to me, I notice expensive rings staked up on her wedding finger. "Cleo.." I take it, shaking her hand.

"A pleasure. We are actually related.."

"Yes Alpha Than had told me.."

"Than, we don't use titles in this household." She smiles out at me, showing her teeth that were perfectly aligned....not one showing any hint of red lipstick which was on her lips.

This woman was a professional Luna, and I was feeling inadequate standing before her.

"What can we do for you?" She gestures for me to sit back down, where she now joins me at the table.

"Well, I was just passing by. Than and I met recently..." I stop myself from going further.

Do I mention his offering, has he even told her. Does she even know that I am pregnant.

She still classed herself as the luna, which means she still was hands on with parts of running the pack.

But how much exactly I wasn't quite sure just yet.

"Are you not well?" The back of her hand moves to my forehead where she checks my temperature.

"Cleo has been sleeping in her car all night, so I've offered her a place to stay for a few days." Alpha Than responds on my behalf.

"We would love to have you Cleo."

"I don't want to step on any toes."

"You aren't at all, we have another guest. It seems we are being very hospitable of late.." She smiles out, but I don't miss the way her eyes dart to her son.

There seemed to be a power struggle between the two of them which may also explain the contrast in style to the house.

The old and the new way of doing things.

Alpha Than showed me to a guest room where female clothing was already placed upon the bed. Apparently the beta's mate helps around the house and he had already mind-linked her to find some clothes. He encourages me to be at home, to explore the house and to treat it as mine.

He leaves me to myself for the rest of the morning, I take advantage of the ensuite with a warm shower... the coldness of the morning long gone. Once dressed in a pair of leggings and a plain white T-shirt I head back downstairs just before lunch to see if I could help with any preparation.

I wasn't a freeloader and if I was to stay, even only the day here, I would earn my spot at their dinner table.

Especially when they had been so kind as to come to my aid.

I leave my phone upstairs, I knew if I turned it on I would be bombarded again with messages and voicemails; I just wasn't ready to face it just yet.

I head into the kitchen to find it empty, lunch seemingly already made and placed covered on the kitchen work top.

So much for being able to help.

I move back into the hallway where I move back to the display cabinets, taking the time to look at each object on display.

After a few minutes I start to feel

awkward know Alpha Than said to

feel at home, but I was still a stranger in another family's home and felt as if I was snooping.

I become curious by a door along the hallway... that must be the alpha office. Surely I would locate Alpha Than in there completing his alpha duties.

I move towards it, knocking on the ajar door, pushing on it when I do not hear a reply.

I enter further into the office, moving to the desk. Yes, this was definitely Alpha Than's office, and just his private space.

Only one desk informs me that his

mother doesn't use this space for her luna duties, also... the office was modernly designed. I have a feeling Luna Medea liked her own office and

it was decorated accordingly to her style.

Where was everybody...

Without access to the pack link here, I was suddenly feeling more alone than being back at home.

Perhaps this was a mistake after all.

My eyes move across the alpha desk as I prepare to leave the office.

Nothing seems out of the ordinary except for one photo frame.

My eyes flash towards it, a sudden glimpse of a face that I recognise has me moving closer to the desk and around it.

My hand reaches out before I can stop myself, picking up the silver photo frame to inspect it further.

I don't believe it.

Luna Kaia's young face smiles back at me. She is next to an also young Alpha Than. How was this even possible... She was so young, she must be fifteen, sixteen in this photograph. She looks carefree, she looks in love.

But she looks different; her hair a

darker shade of brown...her eyes a

differe

shade to her green

ones. then I realise....this isn't Luna

Kaia, this was her sister.

Her twin sister...the two of them identical unless you really know them...this was Beta Alora.

Chapter 528

- Cleo -

How is this even possible, how does Alora know Alpha Than. Not just know him...judging by how loved up they look in this photo, they were once a couple.

I can't help but bring the photograph closer to my eyes, for as long as I have known Alora she's always seemed to be fighting against something, always a hidden sadness.

I knew she didn't grow up with Kaia, I just assumed that they had both a past they didn't want to relive...but if this was her past...

"She was my mate."

I shriek with shock, his voice startling me from the doorway that I drop the frame.

I hadn't even noticed him watching me..

"I'm so sorry, I didn't know you were there..."

"It's fine Cleo."

"No, I shouldn't be in here.." I reach down, picking up the photo frame and placing it back on his desk, moving towards the door.

He has just caught me creeping in his office, I can feel the prickly hot rash of embarrassment rise up my neck onto my face. I had been beyond rude, who snoops in an alpha's office. I feel so ashamed.

I frantically try to go past him but he blocks me, his hand raising to slow me down.

"I said to make yourself at home. You were just being inquisitive." Why wasn't he mad at me, his calmness about this was if anything...too calm.

"I was looking for you, I would never dream of stepping into an alpha's office without permission. What you must think of me." My hands move up to my hair, running my fingers through my long blonde-freshly-washed locks. "Cleo, I promise you, I don't mind." He closes the office door behind him, before moving towards his desk and taking a seat on his chair.

His fingers skim across the top of the silver-plated frame before he moves it, re-angles it to how it was before.

I take a step forward, my hands resting on the back of the chair on the opposite side of his desk. I had so many questions, but the first one was how can Alora be his mate.

"I'm confused, how is Beta Alora your mate? You told me your mate was dead."

"She is dead to me." His teeth flash as the words exit his mouth.

His fingers that were readjusting the photo frame are now clenched into a ball on top of his desk. He was angry at the memory of her, angry at what must have happened between them. "What happened?"

"She rejected me, so therefore she is dead to me." He seethes out, his teeth grinding together.

He's hiding it through anger but I can see the pain that still manifests beneath the surface, it has been slowly eating away at him for all this time.

"She was forced to pick between me and her sister."

"No." I gasp out.

"Yep, and then your parents sided with my own brother..."

"You have a brother?" I was so perplexed by his admission at having a brother that I overlooked the way he sounded resentful towards my parents.

"Hector..."

What...

"Wait, Hector is your brother?"

"Yes, you didn't know..."

"No....." I'm starting to understand that the reason I hadn't heard of Alpha Than, why I didn't even know I was related to him...runs far deeper than I could have ever realised. Then I remember what Dad told me..

"Hector is half human."

"Yes, my father was with a human before he found my mother, his fated mate. Hector lived here but then he decided he didn't want this pack, that he wanted something that was solely his.

He wasn't willing to share. He left after he tried to convince Alora that she was his mate...she was too young to feel the mate bond

between her and me, so she believed his lies. Then....it got too

much for her and she tried to kill

herself."

I can feel my mouth has dropped open by this revelation, I'm so busy trying to process this information that I let my jaw hang...I too stunned to function right now. "No..." My voice sounds like a strangled gasps, I never knew Alora tried to end her own life.

"Then she found Kaia, a sister she never knew she had. A real family. Kaia manipulated Alora, twisted her against me...even made Alora reject me so that she could have her for herself."

Chapter 529

"Why would her sister get in between your mate bond.." I've known Kaia all my life, she wasn't manipulative, she 's been nothing but supportive to my family.

"Alora was raised by her adoptive parents in this pack, nobody knew at the time that she was a twin. "He stands, turning to the painting before his desk which he pulls away from the wall to reveal a hidden safe. After keying in the code, he pulls something out...a

photograph that he holds in his hands.

It's not framed, not like the one of him and Alora. He's angry at her still, even after all this time...but he continues to treasure the picture of them both. It is on pride of place on his desk.

"When I left for college Alora was in a coma. I was told I couldn't wait, that she would die...against my better judgement I did what my parents wanted me to do. I wish I had waited.

You have know idea how much I regret not waiting. Then I saw her...walking down the college corridor, then sitting by herself...I couldn't not talk to her.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

My mate, that was in a coma, was at college with me. Except it wasn't her..." He places the photograph out to me, expecting me to take it.

What I see before me, is completely unbelievable.

It's a picture of Alpha Than in a suit...standing next to Kaia..in a wedding dress.

I'm speechless...Kaia was already married.

"But that would make her..."

"The Luna of the Amber Desert pack. Technically yes, but I never marked her...I couldn't."

My index finger runs across Kaia's young face, except for her hair colour she looks like a young Josie.

"Why are you telling me all this?" My eyes flicker up to his, the picture held tightly in my finger tips.

"I want you to understand that just because I no longer speak to your father, that you can trust me Cleo. That I still look out for family, even if he doesn't."

"My father is a good man, I won't have you saying otherwise." I snap out, I was fiercely defensive of Dad. I always will be.

"I'm not, I know he is. He's just been manipulated...just like Alora to be against me. I'm not an idiot, I know she pretends to be in love with Hector's ex beta...but the mate bond is created for a reason."

I'm struggling to understand why Kaia of all people married Alpha Than, and why I have never heard about this.

I don't even think the triplets know...nothing, has ever been mentioned about Kaia being married before.

But then again, she always said no to Hector every time he proposed over a span of nineteen years.

Is the alpha before me the reason behind it.

"Why did Kaia make Alora reject you?" I demand to know.

"She was also my mate."

"Kaia, Kaia was also your mate?"

"Yes, the connection with her was nothing compared to Alora, but for some reason the moon goddess paired me with her too...so I brought her back here and married her."

Alora was mated to Than, Kaia was mated to Than, Kaia was married to Than, Hector was mated to Alora, Hector is mated and married to

Kaia.. My head is spinning as I try to

digest the bombshell of information

being shared to me.

I can feel my hands moving to the desk as I slowly sit myself down on the chair, using the desk to support my weight as my knees weaken.

"I think me being here is a mistake." This was just too complicated.

"Why?"

"Because if this is some kind of revenge.."

"No Cleo, it's not. It's a simple business deal, I need a luna...you are pregnant and can provide me with the heir that my pack needs."

"There must be hundreds of females within this pack that would be willing to be your luna. Why don't you just choose one of them?" "Because...I need an heir and I can't produce one myself."

Chapter 530

- Cleo -

It was one bombshell after another this morning. There was a lot for me to take in and consider.

"All I am asking is for a few days, to see if you could imagine raising your child here Cleo. Where they would be protected, nurtured...and would have a pack waiting for them to run when I retire." He extends his hand out to me, indicating that he would like the photo back. I place it in his hands where he puts it back in the safe, locking it and recovering with the painting...as if it didn't exist.

"What about me?"

"You will be the Luna. You will contribute to the success of the pack, you will train...to the outside world, even to our pack members, we will be an alpha and luna.

We will raise your child together, you would receive your own income...I would make sure you were rewarded financially Cleo.

I would make sure you were well looked after. All I ask is that you take sometime to consider it, for you to think about the opportunity I am offering you."

The knock on the door that disturbs our private conversation, couldn't come at a better time.

The door opens to reveal a male of a similar age to alpha Than.

"Ah Cleo this is my beta Zane, and his mate Freya you will spot around the house."

"Hello." I smile out to Beta Zane, his wide eyes staring back at me as he nods his head to me in a greeting.

"The morning report Alpha.." A document is passed between the two of them, one that Alpha Than places upside down on his desk.

"Thanks Zane, I'll take Cleo on a tour of the grounds soon. She's going to be staying with us for a few days...I hope?" Alpha Than puts me completely on the spot. But it isn't as if I had anywhere else to go. ""Yes...yes I will."

....

Lunch was interesting, Luna Medea joined us along with another female...I think she must be an elderly relative of Than's.

She didn't talk at all over lunch, even when I asked her questions. She just stared back at me, blankly.

Perhaps she was slightly senile, Luna Medea kept answering my questions on the female's behalf.

After lunch I was taken for a walk around the pack...getting to know the borders and the typical main pack buildings.

It was a big pack, bigger than I had expected.

Like any other pack there were guards on the borders, view points to watch for potential threat..but nothing to the level of the Red Thorn pack.

This place was like my old pack, the pack before the White Moon attacked the Dark Phantom pack.

That night changed everything, in more ways than one.

I could see me raising a child here, it had modern elements to it but still captured a traditional pack character.

"So what do you think?" Alpha Than interrupts my thoughts as we walk along the path back towards the alpha house.

"It's a great pack.."

""You can be honest."

"I am, it is."

Ret

"You wouldn't change a thing?" He stops walking, which results in me doing the same. I turn to

smirk forming upon his

im, a

"I didn't say that..." I smirk back. Why was it so easy for me to talk to him,

to be around him. Maybe

sense that we were related

way.

His tale of his mate bond with Alora is enough to scare most shifters for life.

But here he still stands, still breathing. He was strong, he didn't let her rejection ruin him.

"Okay, what first?" His shoulder playfully bumps into mine.

"Let's talk about the dark green hallway."

"Well, Mother is the luna but as soon as I find someone to replace her...they can do whatever they want to the house." "That's a lot of trust...whatever she wants?"

"Whatever you want."

"Hhmm...nice try!" I laugh out at his attempt for me to make a decision this early. It was a tempting offer, I won't lie.

I had never really thought of being a luna, I had always thought I would support Ares from the sidelines, maybe my mate would have been his

beta.

There was still time for that. I could still find my mate, but would he want me, when I have a baby...a baby that wouldn't be his.

Whereas, here stood an alpha, that was openly offering me an opportunity to be luna of a pack. For my child to be an alpha.

My child at home would be the cousin of the future alpha, but here he or she, would be an alpha.

They could support Ares and his heir

in the future...I could bring the two packs back to mutual

understanding. They were related by family...shouldn't the two packs be like that again.