

Denied 561

Chapter 561

"Your Luna? Are you fucked up in the head?" Jaxon responds as Jace seethes by his side. Trying to keep his wolf contained.

"Cleo is my luna, the pack's luna...and the child.."

Than stops, an almighty roar bellowing out of Jace, a smirk forming across his face before he continues.

"...will be my heir."

Jace's wolf is on the precipice of taking control, of seeking out blood.

"First you abuse my mother, and now you take my mate as your own...I don't think so." He's rumble is low, predatory...inhuman.

"There is nothing you can do..."

"She is the rightful luna of the Clear Waters pack."

"She is now the luna of the Amber Desert pack, it cannot be undone. Even if I die... Cleo will remain the luna...her child..."

"My child." Jace takes a swing at Than, reminding me that Than is slower...he is a similar age to Dad...and his reflexes confirm as such.

He's slow in comparison to the alpha son of the White Wolf and Dark Phantom leader.

I am knocked backwards trying to dodge the sudden movement but I needed not bother, Jace catches me with ease in his arms....arms that pull me away from another alpha and only into his.

Than's jaw tenses...spitting out blood as he stares at me, now wrapped in Jace's arms.

My back pressing against his brick built chest...this is all I ever wanted to be.

But that was the old me...not the new me.

"Your child is the heir to the Amber Desert pack. Like I said...it cannot...and will not be undone." Than roars out impatiently.

"And if you die?"

"It can not be undone."

"And if you die?" Jace yells out.

"Then Cleo here remains the luna...she cannot leave this pack...ever."

"Then I'll burn this pack to the ground. Then it won't need an heir." Jace threatens.

"That would be one way of solving this predicament you have found yourself in." Than

deviously smirks out, his mind already spinning a new plan that will no doubt already be including me. I am forever to be tangled up in his web of lies too.

No..no more. My baby is not a pawn. Not for any of them.

"You need to leave." It takes all my strength to do so, but I manage to push my body out of Jace's hold.

"What... No Cleo..."

"You all need to leave. I'm fine...you didn't need to come here. I appreciate your concern but Than and Medea have been looking after me. I'll be safe here." I move just out of Jace's reach as he tries to pull me back into him.

"No, you staying isn't an option."

"Well then it's a good thing you aren't making decisions for me Jace, because from what I hear you've been making a few ill-advised

decisions yourself lately..." My

land on Callie, a surge of heated anger flooding back through me.

"Cleo."

"I'm fine, I'll be fine." I growl back, jumping further out of his way so that he could not touch me again.

Could not change my mind...that addictive sensation of wanting to be touched by him, kissed by him...loved by him...I can't let that control me any longer.

"No Cleo, nothing about this is fine." Josie bellows out at me.

"I am the luna of the Amber Desert, and these are my pack members. You need to call your warriors back, these are my pack members and they are innocent."

"No....you are my luna...you are my..."

"What Jace, what am I to you?" I seethe out.

"Mate...you are my mate."

"Was, I was your mate. But you threw it all away. You couldn't trust me, you couldn't love me for who I was..." I scream the words out, any holding back of my emotions having now vanished.

He seems stunned by my words, shocked in fact. He's too fast...and my body is slow with this pregnancy.

"What...No...you've done nothing wrong...you were...you are perfect." His hands cup at my face, his face inches from mine. His forehead leaning in against mine.

"Please Cleo. His words break my

heart, but it is too late. This isn't

about us any more...this is about lives caught up in something not of their own making. I can't let the pack members die because of me

swnov

And if I leave here now... Than will attack...Hector and Jaxon will destroy everyone here. If I stay...the souls of this pack are more likely to survive.

"You should go...you need to go." Excruciating pain hits me in my chest, my heart breaking.

"You heard the Luna, all of you need to leave...now." Than orders out.

"She remains the luna if you die?" Jace's hands are still cupping my face, his eyes

still set on mine. But his jaw tenses as he speaks to Than.

"Yes?"

"Then I'll fight you..."

"Fight me for what?"

"For your lands, for my luna...for the title of alpha of the Amber Desert pack."

Chapter 562

- Cleo -

"No Jace, you can't do that." I gasp out.

"Oh yes I can."

"But the Clear Waters. It's your destiny, your birth right...I wouldn't expect that from you." No...no this is messed up, he can't do that. Not for me. I wouldn't want him to do that.

"You are my destiny Cleo, not lands...not a title...but you." He looks straight into my eyes, his hands still on my face...I want to believe him...I do believe him...he was being truthful. I can tell, I know him sometimes better than his own siblings... well knew him.

"No...you need to leave." I place my hand upon his chest, pushing him back slightly. To guarantee his safety, he needs to leave.

"No, I'm challenging him..." He defiantly growls back at me.

"These aren't your lands...and I can't let you hurt these people, they've done nothing wrong."

"Neither have you."

"That's debatable." I whisper out, my guilt clawing at me from the inside.

"Cleo..." His voice is low, meant only for me.

"Jace, you need to leave...now."

"I think you should listen to my luna.." Than barks out, arrogance rolling off him... he was enjoying every moment.

"If you call her your luna one more time im going to rip your tongue out." Jace seethes out, his hands gripping onto me...all but claiming me as his.

"Then it is settled then..."

"Yes, it is."

"Wait, Jace...no."

"If I win you will accept Cleo as my luna, the child as my heir...and offer aid when necessary." He turns to Dad, laying his demands out on the table.

"You will break free of the alliance in support of me, which will continue with your son."

No, I've done all this so that Ares also wasn't caught up in my mistake.

"Agreed." Dad roars out, after looking to Ares...who nods in agreement. This can't be happening.

I feel hands pull me backwards into a position, helping to form a circle around the two alphas.

It was to take place here...in the alpha house courtyard. This place would define the future of the Varon family, my own destiny.

"I've got you." Kaia's voice whispers into my ears, her hand loosely rests upon my shoulder, the other holding on to my hand.

Than doesn't miss the movement, the way kam steered towards Jace's family. a flash in his eyes before he enters a mind-link, the waiting warriors that were awaiting orders finally move.

Their bodies moving as one, creating a circle around the mock up arena.

"There is to be no dirty tricks, if I win...she remains." He points to me, his face

viciously snarling at Kaia who remains by my side.

"No special abilities...I know what

you can do...and you..." His head

snaps towards Josie, a growl

er

escaping her as he pinpoints on her. Something that isn't appreciated by Knox.

"You watch yourself Alpha."

"No help...I get it...fight fair...then tell her to put the gun away." Jace's head whips

to Medea, the gun holding the silver bullets still clasped tightly in her hand.

This can't be happening. This was the mess I made yet I was standing on the edge, unable to fight myself...something that I was trained for.

I was a good fighter, this should be me in there...determining my own future....

But the challenge has been made and accepted, the agreement amongst two alphas isn't even breakable by an alliance. The claim to an heir, to a mate...the highest of werewolf laws.

If something was to happen to Jace, I would never forgive myself...I would never be able to look at our baby in the eyes. Have the man that killed him, raise our child.

Pretend to be their father, when my baby's father's blood is on his hands.

"This is wrong, it should be me in there.." I seethe out, trying to move out of Kaia's tight hold.

"Shh, Jace will be fine...just watch."

How can you watch the love of your life in the midst of a bloody battle for his own life. Than may be older, but he doesn't let that affect him during the fight.

He is vicious, and moves with a speed that I can tell is pumped by revenge and hatred towards the audience.

His eyes flash towards Hector and at Kaia a number of times, his wolf growling out in disdain only for Jace to knock him back to the ground and rip a part of his skin off.

They are fighting in skin form,

neither of them has shifted yet, the post thunder storm sky continues to be oppressive, the heavens holding their breath as they gaze down upon the fight that will determine the fates of so many.

Chapter 563

The more it continues the bloodier it gets. Thick blood sprays across the courtyard ground, the smell of it churning my insides...just the thought of Jace bleeding is sending me into a frantic state of panic...one that I refuse to sink into.

I had to remain strong, I had to mask any emotion. I couldn't afford for Jace to be distracted, for him to lose concentration even for a split second...because Than would use that against him.

They both fight as Alphas, both strong...but Than was starting to show signs of strain, of struggling to continue at this pace.

I guess time and energy catches up with age.

Punch, scrape, kick... bruises were already developing upon both of their visible skin. The silence around us was deafening, even the invasion of warriors has paused, the Amber Desert pack members taking a moment to recuperate, to count their dead...

The entire world felt as if it had stopped spinning, as figures continue to gather. To watch the fate of their own pack...of who will come out of this as their leader.

"Come on Than." Medea growls out in frustration as Jace holds him by the throat, his body gripping him against the hard cold gravel courtyard ground.

Than groans out in pain as Jace drags him, the uneven ground cutting into Than's back.

She's losing her patience, her own future on the verge of being destroyed. She was about to lose her luna-ship, about to lose her lands.

Pure anger registers upon her face as Than tabs out of Jace's hold...surrendering under the younger alphas hold.

"Do you surrender?" Jace pushes him away from him...panting out himself.

Than grips at his throat, his entire body heaving from lack of breath, his eyes darting around him.

"No he doesn't surrender...get back in there." Medea screams her command, her eyes burning with fury.

"Kill him!" She shrieks out.

"Or I will!" She raises the gun, pointing it directly at Jace.

No...no I cannot lose Jace.

My legs move for me, preparing to push Jace out of the way but I'm too slow and the gun shot fires out, my heart beating at a pace that makes it almost impossible to remain in my chest.

"No.." I scream out, my eyes watching on in horror as the bullet is launched from the gun...it's going to hit Jace.

He swerves out of the way, he acted fast...moving his body at an incredible speed... but he hasn't stopped the bullet...just moved out of its firing line. The bullet may

swnovela

bypass him, but it hits ther

"No!" A high pitched desperate scream erupts beside me, her hands no longer clinging on to me as she leaves my side, rushing to the side of her sister.

"Alora!" Kaia's cry is heart breaking as she grips at her sister, cradling her body before it falls to the floor.

"Alora, no...don't leave me." She begs out, her hands moving all over her sister's face...

Kaia, Josie, Jaxon, Ezra and Hector gather around Alora...it's okay, she's going to be okay.

Kaia and Josie can use their abilities to save Alora...

I'm stood, frozen as I watch Kaia and Josie scream out in desperation...it wasn't working...their powers were not working.

Why...why wasn't it working....then

as Jaxon moves to the side, his head hanging low...I finally get glimpse of why... the shot hit Alora square on in the head.

No magic, no ethereal power could bring her back from that.

Roars erupts around us, even from Amber Desert pack members...an innocent bystander was just brutally murdered. Medea broke the rules...she went against the agreement. en

"No..." Ezra clings on to Alora's body, her skin already turning pale. No, she was dead...

An almighty roar shakes me; Jace was shifting into his black wolf beastly form. Than does nothing, his eyes are on Ezra...cradling the mate that once was his.

He falls to his knees, any fight within him gone. His first love killed by his own mother.

"Than!" Medea growls out, the gun pointed back out again.

No...she won't be callously killing anybody else that I loved. I would kill her myself.

I move towards her, a mixture of hatred and anger fuelling my wolf's movement.

I hate her, she was the epitome of evil...of everything that was wrong with this world.

That bullet was aimed for my Jace...I'll kill her before she touches a hair on his head.

"Cleo, No." I hear Jace roar out just as I move to Medea, just before a second gun shot is fired out...

Chapter 564

Jace

I'm toying with him, I could have killed him by now. But that would be too easy, he deserves a slow...painful death.

A death that has come from him losing...from being defeated. I want him to bleed each drop of blood before I take his life. He dared to think he could have what was mine, to take my Cleo as his.

My dark aura is vibrating off me, part of it channeling from Jaxon through the sibling bond, he was struggling to keep his anger at bay. Struggling to let me handle this prick..for what he has done to Mum...to Cleo. He wanted in on this fight too, but this was all me...I would skin the man alive in front of his own pack.

I can feel Jaxon trying to push on the mind-link, trying to give me pointers...but I don't need them. I know what I am doing.

The bastard was slow, but I wasn't letting him think that, I was letting him think he still stood a chance. I want him to die at the moment he thinks he has a chance of winning this.

"Come on Than!" His bitch of a mother roars out as I pin him to the ground, my hands gripping around his throat...cutting off his air supply.

One more squeeze...

I drag him across the ground, letting each sharp-edged piece of gravel cut into his skin. He moans out, blood oozing down his back.

I let go of his windpipe just as he takes his last few breaths. Annoying, he taps out...surrendering.

"Do you surrender?" I roar out.

"No he doesn't surrender, get back in there. Kill him..." The deranged mother screams out, her high pitched voice assaulting my ears. Who exactly was the alpha here...him...or her.

"Or I will." She raises the gun, pointing it directly at me. I smirk out at her, one shot and she's broken the rules of the challenge...I can kill him, her...and any one here who stands on my way.

She raises the gun, but I didn't think she was fucking stupid enough to fire it...

Bang...

My eyes dart back to Cleo who screams out, rushing towards me but the gun has already been fired.

I twist my frame away from the path of the bullet, missing it by millimetres, but the silver bullet continues...

No...

I can see who it is going to hit before it reaches them...and there is nothing I can do.

It's too late.

My entire world falls apart as I watch Auntie Alora's eyes knowing the bullet was going to hit her. She wasn't fast enough to move out of its way.

"No!" Mum screams out as the bullet hits Auntie Alora in the head, her body sinking to the ground.

My family rush around her, Dad dropping to Mum's side as he tries to pull Alora away from her to check her wound...but it's too late.

We can all feel the void now in the family connection...how quickly her life was snuffed out. How cold it already feels as she has already passed over.

My family hover around her but I can't afford to lose my concentration I had two predators in front of me, both who will go to unimaginable tactics to win.

Anger rages through me, I can feel him, feel him pushing forward...wanting blood. Wanting justice.

The roar bellows out of me, my wolf wanting out, just as Than drops to the ground at the sight of Ezra grieving over Alora's still body.

"Than!" The Luna scolds out, as she raises the gun once more.

I'm going to bite her arm off first...plunge the bullet down her throat....make her taste the silver before it kills her.

I'm going to end her and her precious son.

But what I'm not expecting is for Cleo to charge at her.

"Cleo, no." roar

out as my wolf

shifts, a growl emitting from him as he leaps over Than, Cleo having

knocked the gun out of Medea's

hand just as it fired. The bullet firing

into the sky.

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I don't waste a second, my teeth sinking into her hand, tearing through

skin....mauling at her hand.

"Arhh." She cries out in pain. I'm

biting down through bone, et

to rip it off when she plunges a dagger into my side, forcing my wolf to retract his teeth.

The bitch...

She kicks my wolf back, gaining enough space to move to one of the cars... locking the car door as she turns on the engine.

"Get her!" Mum commands out, her hands moving to the car as she tries to steal her energy but it is too late...

I give chase just as she floors the gas pedal, tearing out of the pack grounds.

Leaving Than on his knees. Abandoning him to his fate.

The coward.

My wolf prowls back towards him, circling him...snarling with pure hatred.

I won't rest until she is dead, and I'll

start by killing him. Let her feel his life being ripped from him as she drives away. She may have escaped, but she'll feel that.

"I didn't imagine a world without her in it!" He whispers out, his eyes watching

Ezra as he rocks Alora back and forth in his arms.

"Just end it already..."

I shift back into human form, I want my hands to feel this...for my eyes to watch his life leave him.

"As you wish!" I bend down, growling out by his ear as my hands grip onto his neck...twisting it until I hear it snap.

As soon as his neck breaks I toss his body to the ground, his eyes wide open...as

I watch his life leave his body.

I feel the warm of the Amber desert pack bond spread through my chest, voices pushing through my mind pledging their allegiance to me.

Their new alpha.

Chapter 565

-Jace-

"You all need to go back into your homes. I'm setting a curfew until tomorrow at 10am. My

warriors will patrol the grounds tonight. There will be no training at dawn, nothing until I say so.

Anybody...and I mean anybody caught out will be imprisoned ...do I make myself clear?" I open the pack link, pushing upon that newly created bond.

Pushing through each and every mind that belongs to the Amber Desert pack.

I've accepted the role as Alpha, I've accepted the pack bond...but that doesn't mean I trust them yet.

What I had just done is unprecedented in my generation, I need time to think on my next step. To take stock not only of what has just happened, but what I've just taken on.

Cleo could be right, they could be innocent...but until I see that for myself...my warriors remain on patrol.

"Yes Alpha!" Voices respond in unison, before they start to disperse back to their homes.

I turn to the group of warriors that had been holding back, waiting for Than's command to attack.

These men were different, they were something else. I could sense their lethality in their demeanours...something that intrigues me.

They hold themselves differently to standard warriors, yes...they were trained for the deadliest of operations. They may just come on handy.

"Do I have your allegiance or do I need to disband you?" I let my alpha aura roll off me and wash onto them. Reminding them of who exactly is in charge here.

The male, at the forefront of the small group turns to look at his comrades, all nodding in unison before he turns back to me, tilting his head in submission.

"The Alpha of the Amber Desert pack holds our allegiance, whoever that may be." The right answer.

"I want a full report at 8am, no holding back on details. I also want any detail on where the bitch that murdered my auntie may have ran off to." I command out.

"Yes Alpha." The leader nods before they move out.

"Jace, she can't stay out here...not like this." Dad's saddened eyes find mine as his voice filters through my mind.

"What are you doing... No don't move her!" Mum desperately shrieks out, throwing her body over Auntie Alora's as Dad prepares to lift his sister-in-law off the ground.

"She needs to be moved my love, she needs to be laid to rest."

"Mum?" Josie reaches out to Mum, pulling her up into her arms.

"I...I need to be with her..." Mum tries to move back to Alora but Josie's hold on her is tight.

"You will, we all will."

I watch on as Dad carries Auntie Alora back into the Alpha house...knowing exactly where to go. I suppose if this was his childhood home, he would know where to go...what a mind fuck that is.

Mum and Josie follow, as Jaxon and Knox move towards me.

"What do you want us to do?"

"I need warriors on the borders, I don't need word getting out just yet. Not until I know what I have just

inherited....what enemies the pack may have other than ourselves."

"I'll run you a report of local packs, most are part of the allegiance with my pack

being nearby.

But there are a few that refused..." Uncle Orpheus takes a step forward towards me also, placing his

hand gently upon my shoulder.

"Thank you..." I pause, I guess calling him Uncle doesn't seem quite as fitting as it used to be.

Not when his daughter is my mate. When my child is his grandchild.

"Orpheus. that would be a great

help." I nod to him in a moment

he...considers me for a moment before nodding back in

moment return

SWNOV

He moves into the house, along with Rosa, Ares and an elderly female that

seemed on death's door.

"Luna?" I turn to find a male approaching Cleo, who stands above Than's lifeless body on the ground.

"Can you move him Zane. "

"Luna..."

"Not now Zane..."

"Luna, I must speak with you.."

"Can you move him Beta." She growls out, anger penetrating off her. So this was the beta of the Amber Desert pack.

I watch as he, defeatedly, bends down, collecting his dead alpha in his arms.

"Where should I put him?" He looks to her at a loss of what to do.

"In the beta house for now!" She mutters out, his eyes widening at her request.

"But I need to speak to you...alone..." Who is this dick, and why can't he take a simple instructions.

"Is there a

I

to Croblem?" I bridge the

gap, taking long purposeful strides

to cross the distance between Cleo and myself.

Her shoulders curl in at my approach, a gasp escaping her, as she refuses to turn to look at me.

"No Alpha, no problem."

"Good because I believe my mate, your Luna has given you an order to follow."

"Yes Alpha." He moves away, taking a dead Than with him.

Cleo moves to follow him but I snatch at her arm, pulling her back into my chest.

Chapter 566

I know exactly what she is thinking, how she is blaming herself for everything that has transpired

just now. She is blaming herself for Alora's death, for his death, for me being the new Alpha.

"Cleo..."

"I should go inside..."

"No..." I grunt out, only for her to turn to look directly at Knox.

"Can you let Josie know there is an injured female in the beta house that needs attending to."

My eyes flicker up to the beta house, my brows furrowing at her words.

She was shutting down on me, whether through shock or guilt...but in no way do I blame her for

this....I was the one to blame, not her.

"Cleo..."

"I'll be inside Alpha, when you are ready." She coldly comments, moving away from me.

"Is she okay?" Callie calls out to me from behind, my eyes watching Cleo move slowly back into the alpha house.

"No...she's in shock." I rumble out, only just realising I was still fully naked from my shift. I move to the back of the car I arrived in, pulling out a change of clothes I always kept in the boot space... pulling on a fresh pair of shorts and a training top.

"We are all in shock." Jaxon sighs out, as he pulls his phone out of his pant's pocket and hits dial.

"I'm going to call the Clear Waters, have them prepare for Auntie Alora's funeral." "Yes...yes good point."

"I'm proud of you Jace." Jaxon places his arms around me, pulling me into a brotherly embrace before patting me on the back.

"Now take your mate before she escapes again." He whispers into my ear.

"I'll go inform Josie about the female in the beta house. We will reconvene in the alpha office shortly, when you are ready."

"Thanks Knox." He moves into the alpha house, leaving me outside with Callie.

Shit...I didn't even think...

"Callie, I'm..."

"Nope, don't say it. Jaxon is right to be proud of you. You've finally stepped up into the role of alpha. Accepting your fate."

"Yeah well, I didn't expect this.."

"Sometimes life happens when you are busy making other plans."

"What about your parents."

"My problems are my problems...either they will give me the pack on my terms or they won't."

There isn't much I can do about that." She swipes the car keys out of my hand, moving to the driver's side.

"Where are you going?"

"I'll go back to Clear Waters, my parents will be there by now. I'll give you time to grieve as a family...I'll message Colt, keep him in the loop."

"Thanks Callie."

"Look after yourself, and her." She gestures her head towards the house, towards Cleo before entering the vehicle, starting the ignition and driving away.

Heading into the alpha house, I block out the cries of grief coming from Mum and Josie upstairs, their sobs too painful to hear right now.

I need to grieve, I will grieve...but right now too much was still at stake.

I had just won a pack through an alpha challenge, the ex Luna has escaped and could be rallying packs against us. We could be attacked at any moment.

I had to focus, I had to secure the borders and figure out what I am going to do about Clear Waters.

In defeating the alpha of the Amber Desert pack I had just inherited the lands here... the title...the people...everything.

I've got days to learn decades of history of this pack, to assure the pack members of their safety. As long as they play ball.

Following her scent, that scent that I have tried so desperately to ignore...to avoid, I can hear her breathing heavily in the alpha office.

Moving into the room, I slowly close the door behind me, blocking out the sounds of despair coming from upstairs...of the whispers coming from presume the kitchen area that was at the end of the hallway

No distractions, no interruptions, no sudden noise.

I needed to be with her, alone.

She's fiddling at a wall painting behind the desk, removing it to reveal a build-in

safe.

She types in a range of digits, each time the safe refusing to open. She screams out in frustration as she continues to hit digits...before

banging heavily on the safe door.

She was crumbling before my very eyes.

"Cleo..." My voice calls out to her.

IMS

"Don't Jace..." Her back tenses.

"how can you ever forgive me?"

"Forgive you...what for?"

"For Alora...for what you have taken on...for losing the Clear Waters pack."

Enough of this, enough of her self blame. If anyone was to blame it was me...not her. My actions

have brought us here, it was me and me alone that pushed her away.

Pushed her...pushed her to this.

"Because...there is nothing to forgive. You've haven't done anything wrong...this

is all on me."

Chapter 567

- Cleo -

I move his hands off my face...I can't look him in the eyes. My mind was spiralling

and I couldn't stop it.

Freya.

Borders.

Alora....

Supplies.

My mind was making lists of things that need sorting...things that would keep me going right now. If I stopped for a second I fear I would crumble under the heavy burden of guilt.

The hospital.

The injured.

The dead.

No...Alora...

My legs were trembling as I try to remain upright...but she was dead...Alora was dead.

How will they ever forgive me.

There must be something...something in these drawers, in this safe...on this desk that tells me where Medea has escaped to.

I want to kill her myself...I don't think I've ever felt such deadly anger coursing through my body.

She needed to die, and now.

"Cleo...I need you to look at me." His voice is like a beacon calling me home during a terrifying storm at sea. He was guiding me to him, all I had to do was listen...to open up to him.

"I can't.." I shake my head, refusing to give in. If I give in...the guilt takes over, the pain takes me..I will be surrendering myself to it.

"Cleo...just stop." He grabs me, pinning me against the wall and him, holding my hands behind my lower back with one hand... the other trailing up my body, resting against my neck and collarbone.

The scent of coconut brutally invades my senses, not giving me a chance to fight it. That gravitational pull to him playing with dirty tricks.

"Are we really having a baby?" I didn't expect those words to leave his lips. Why isn't he yelling at me, blaming me... hating me.

"I...." Reactively, from those unexpected words at a time like this, I look up into his green eyes, eyes that look down at me with mixed emotions.

I see pain, sadness, growing need for vengeance but I see love, happiness...even excitement at the prospect of being a daddy.

"Yes..." the words "we" wasn't lost on me.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why didn't you stay? Had you of stayed that morning...had you of reached out..."

"Ouch." He sadly smiles out, my breath catching as his hand moves from my neck down to my stomach...cupping at my lower belly.

I bite down on the moan that wants to leave me when he slowly lifts the hem of my top up, as tingles erupt across my tummy from his touch.

I may be able to stifle the moan but not the way my eyes roll into the back of my head from his touch, from the way he kneels down and places a trail of kisses at my lower abdomen.

"Well hello in there." A second hand moves on to my stomach as he greets his baby, the experience forcing emotions to rise at the surface.

To force themselves out of me.

Without thinking my hands move through his hair, cupping his face as he looks up

at me...with those eyes. I can feel my eyes glistening with silent tears.

"Hey..." Concern for edges upon his face.

The emotions become too much...the guilt.

"Jace, I'm sorry..."

"Shh, it's done, and it wasn't your fault. None of this was your fault."

I watch him as he takes a step up, his eyes following me as he leans in closer to

me, his hands gripping at my hips before yet again trailing up my curves, locking me in place.

"You are mine Cleo. I tried to keep

you safe, I tried to live without you. It was a stupid notion, I can see that now. It's cost

's cost the life of my aunt, and

I have to live with that mistake for the rest of my life. I knew you were my mate...I got scared. The thought of losing you because of the threat on my back... made me push you away."

"I would have fought a threat with you, you know that." I respond, his forehead now pressing against mine as we just hold one another.

"I love you just too damn much, more than reason...more than sanity." His words break down the walls I had placed around my heart. Walls that I had built brick by brick to keep him out.

"Jace..."

"No, let me finish. I don't expect you to forgive me overnight, but us having this baby...it's the moon

goddess reminding me of my fate, of my destiny and that is by your side."

"But you're birth right..."

"Is wherever you are Cleo, if that is being the alpha of this pack then I will remain

the alpha of this pack. You are my destiny...not land...not borders...you."

It's all I have ever wanted to hear from him.

"Jace..I..."

"Tell me I'm wrong, tell me you don't love me." His eyes hold mine challenging, as

if that was ever up for questioning. I've loved him all my life, before I even knew what love was.

"Of course I love you Jace, I love you

so much it hurts to breathe when I'm not around you. That I was willing to move away, to give up everything I've ever known just so you could have a chance with Callie. I was

going to give it all up, so

you could

have a mate bond you deserved."

Every fibre of my being was calling out to him, was wanting to be

touched..licked...kissed by him.

I don't think I will ever not desire him.

"I need to speak to my family, but then...you and I, will continue this." His

forehead rests against mine, his body pushing into me...pressing my back even more up against the wall.

"I can wait."

"You are to stay by my side."

"Jace."

"I mean it Cleo, you are to remain by

my side, at all times. We have just taken over a pack through a violent method, until the dust settles, I'm trusting nobody. So you go, where I go understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

Chapter 568

- Jace -

It was vitally important that we plan out our next steps. I couldn't afford to make a mistake.

We were all gathered in the living area, it can't be past 3am. We were all still awake, Mum refusing to leave Alora's side...it won't be long before cars from Clear Waters arrive to take her home.

I keep pushing back that very thought...I had to remain focused.

I had sat with Auntie Alora in silence; wrapped in my own guilt for fucking dodging that bullet.

She saw it coming...and she didn't make any attempts to move. It's like she had accepted her fate in that very moment.

Rosa was upstairs with Mum, refusing to leave her side...as was Ezra. All had said goodbye, all but Cleo.

She was nestled into my lap, her head resting against my chest as her breathing and heart rate finally starts to slow down. She was close to falling asleep, yet kept fighting it.

"What of the pack members?" Orpheus asks out.

"What of them?"

"What if they rise up against you and Cleo." His concern is valid, however they were so quick in accepting me...perhaps they were ready for a new type of leadership.

"They won't, they've already accepted me. I guess Dad being the original heir speaks volumes...it's in my blood."

"What of the Clear Waters?" Dad leans forward, his hand moving through his dark unkept locks and rubbing at the back of his neck. We were all beyond exhausted, so much has happened since I found out back at Clear Waters that Cleo was pregnant...that she had been put in to a position of danger...because of me.

"I don't know, I can't lead both...not whilst keeping a closer eye on this pack. That wouldn't be fair to the Clear Waters, they deserve an alpha that can give them their all. I just can't do that now." I shrug out, the movement making Cleo moan out.

"The Clear Waters needs an alpha

to

Jace, and your mother won't be able to step up again, not after this. The loss of Algra will be like losing a mate bend...she won't recover from this." Dad was right, the loss of

Auntie Alora will be felt by all of us

for a long time...but Mum of us

will feel it

in her very being.

Part of her soul has gone...I know it, because I couldn't ever imagine losing Josie

or Jaxon. I could never recover from that.

"I've been thinking about that...what

better person to take on the legacy of the White Wolf than her daughter, the Red Wolf." Jaxon offers out, his eyes firmly locked on our sister Josie.

"The red wolf? Really?" Josie scoffs out in reply.

"Why not. You fight like an alpha, you think like an alpha...heck, your mate is an alpha trainer. What better two people to take on the Clears Water pack. Kit is alpha by blood, I can't think of two people more better suited." Jaxon continues, his suggestion making complete sense. Why hadn't I thought of that.

"Yes, that would work..." I mutter out in agreement.

"Hang on...as much as that appeals to me, what about you Jace. The Clear Waters is your birth right, what if you regret it in time." Josie interjects.

I look down to my mate, her body finally succumbing to sleep as she rests in my lap.

As well as keeping Cleo safe, I never truly felt that the Clear Waters was for me... there was something

always in the back of my mind that kept me accepting the pack, even without a Luna by my side.

I tried to create that feeling with Callie, but I would have been living a lie...in more ways than one.

Something that Jaxon would never ever contemplate doing would be giving up his birth right. He has always known the Dark Phantom would be his, and I Clear Waters.

He never once showed any sign of hesitation.

Yet it never sat easy with me...something was always stopping me...now I understand.

Chapter 569

I was never meant to have the Clear Waters, I was

always meant to take on Dad's original legacy...the Amber Desert.

With Cleo by my side.

We would be close to her family pack, which is important to Cleo...she is extremely close to her Dad and brother, and she would want to support Ares in the years he takes over as Alpha of the Red Thorn pack.

This felt like divine providence.

"No, this feels right. Like this is where I am meant to be. The alliance can't deny my request, being that this pack is in your bloodline Dad, and that my mate was already the luna. For the first time in a long time, I know I am where I am meant to be."

"So, Kit and I are taking on the Clear Waters? I don't know..." Josie bites down on her lower lip, the feeling of hesitation hitting me through the triplet sibling bond.

"If this is what you want, I will be by your side the entire way Red. It's fitting that a moon blessed wolf should return home don't you think?"

By the time 5am arrived everyone just fell asleep in the spots they were sat in.

Silence finally descended upon the alpha house, Mum's uncontrollable sobs from upstairs faded out, and I gave into that call to sleep, to recharge my mind.

I can't have been asleep long when I jolt awake, to find my lap empty...coldness washing over me from the lack of her touch.

I check the clock on the wall behind me, 8am...gentle snores come from those around me, Josie asleep in Knox's arms, Dad and Orpheus each sprawled out in an arm chair, whereas Jaxon and Ares both passed out on the floor.

All accounted for but my mate. Where was Cleo?

My mind is instantly put at ease when I hear the low whispers of Cleo talking...to

the elderly woman, that so happens to be my long lost great auntie...

"Can't you stop drinking that now?" Cleo's hushed tones hit my ears. "No, never."

"But Than and Medea aren't around, and we won't trade you."

"You are pregnant dear...with my great great nephew."

"So?"

"So, if anything the White Moon have more leverage over me now. If they were to find out where I am and realise what is at stake, they will take you without a second thought. No it's best for everyone involved that I keep taking this."

My wolf growls in my head at the very mention of somebody taking Cleo and my child.

"But it is killing you." Cleo sighs out in despair.

"A small price to pay for freedom."

"Freedom?"

"Oh yes, compared to what my mate would have in store... yes this is freedom. "

A slight pause in conversation lands between them both, as movement comes from upstairs.

"You should eat.."

"I'm not hungry." Cleo yawns out, her voice slightly hoarse from tiredness. "Morning sickness?"

"Guilt."

"I remember the day my sister died like it was yesterday...Kaia will get through this. It will just take a while. But in no way are you to blame for this."

"If I hadn't of left, if I hadn't of been so reckless..."

"You mustn't be too harsh on yourself child, I...whats that?"

They pause, my own hearing stretching out further as I hear the sound of paws climbing down the stairs.

I leap out of my seat when I hear the terrified gasp escape from Cleo's mouth.

"It's Mum, she's overtired...just don't

move, pretend you don't see

her.

20's once hoarse voice is higher

fear laced within it.

"She what...oh my..."

I don't wait, not when my Cleo is at risk.

I creep down the darkly decorated hallway, towards the kitchen where I find Rosa in her wolf form, prowling around the kitchen table as if Cleo and my relative were on the menu for breakfast.

A snarl escapes her wolf, as she snaps her teeth at Cleo...who flinches back

slightly.

I see red, pure unadulterated anger.

Chapter 570

This isn't the first time Rosa has lost control of her wolf and Cleo has had to pick up the pieces, had to protect Ares even as a child.

We were all grieving, we were all exhausted...but we don't let our wolves take on full control and block out the human side.

I let my aura roll off me and direct it solely on to the small luna wolf in front of me,

my mate frozen in her chair...her hands placed protectively upon her stomach. She was protecting what was also mine.

This was now my kitchen, my house...and I won't have anybody treat my luna in

such a way.

"Out!" I roar out, my fury rolling off my tongue.

"Jace..." Cleo calls out to me, trying to calm me as her mum's wolf whimpers under my powerful aura. Yes she was a luna...but I can feel the power coursing through me...I was no longer hiding from my Alpha title, I was embracing it...my power was not getting stronger.

"I said out!" I move towards the kitchen doors that seem to lead out towards a patio area into the garden.

"Don't come back until you have control of your wolf Rosa." I burst the doors open, my hand tightly gripped around the door handle as I try to not let my own anger take control of me.

"What is going on?" I hear Orpheus growl out just as Rosa's wolf moves past me into the patio area.

"Get control of our mate Orpheus." I bark out, slamming the door shut.

"Jace...what..." His eyes move down from mine to his mate's wolf on the other side of the door.

"This isn't the first time she's done this, I won't have my pregnant mate put in harm's way by her own mother."

"Cleo?" Ares steps past his father as he moves deeper into the kitchen, the entire downstairs now awake by my sudden angry outburst.

"Ares, I'm fine...it's nothing." Cleo waves her hand at her brother, trying to down play the situation.

"Not again." Ares sighs out.

"She was just tired, that's all."

"What do you mean again?" Orpheus growls out, his eyes locked on his son, before moving to his daughter.

"I'm going to go back to my room.." My elderly relative decides herself from the table.

"Here let me help you..." Josie jumps in towards the elderly female, her hands moving to her arms...a red

glow shining under her grasp

I watch on in surprise as a glow surrounds the female, her body changing before

my very eyes.

Her white wispy hair starts to turn a

darker shade of grey, the aging

spots upon her face start to disappear...as does the

wrinkles...only for her to snatch her

arm away from Josie.

"I didn't need you to do that." She clicks her tongue at Josie out of frustration.

"You should really stop drinking that tonic. You are safe now."

"Ha, that's what you think."

"I think it is best that we give Uncle Orpheus, Jace, Cleo and Ares some time alone to talk." Josie places her hands gently upon the female, moving her out of the kitchen,

towards the hallway.

I refuse to leave, moving to the kitchen island counter top where I pull my body up upon it to sit and watch.

I can be present without uttering a word. But I meant what I said, Cleo is not to leave my side.

Not until I have marked her and the energy of mate bond between us is fully formed and coursing through our veins.

But I have a feeling, that even then, my wolf's levels of possessive will not decrease...if anything...it will only intensify.

I nearly lost her...I won't make that same mistake again.

She was mine, this pack was now mine...and I would protect both with every drop
of blood.

This was where I am meant to be...I know it now. She was my destiny.