

Denied by Destiny: Trapped in the Shadows of the Mate Bond 341-350

Knox ~

The waiting is a living hell. The medical staff closed off the viewing area, meaning we were waiting in the corridor outside the theatre room.

My body had sunk me to the floor and I hadn't moved since. I planned to stay here for as long as it took to complete her operation.

My knees were up as my hands pulled on to my hair. My wolf was whimpering internally, his own agony distressing me even further.

Over and over I kept playing out what must have happened, how long she must have been alone for... how I was going to make a playful comment until I realised she was in immense pain.

Alpha Hector's eyes keep moving into a mind-link only for it to be cut short and a growl to escape him. He was pacing the corridor, my assumption that his mate kept pushing him out of the mind-link. He was barely keeping it together.

We had been here for hours, with no news...no update. Jaxon just as frantic, he must have tried Jace's number hundreds of times. Poor Jace, when he finally sees his phone, the number of missed calls with send him into a frenzy. But he was right to do so, he needs to be here... he needs to know.

She's going to be okay, she has to be. The silver bullets won't have poisoned her. As soon as they get those out, she'll start to recover...she has to. I'm not prepared to hear any other words but that she will make it through. Alora stands at the end of the corridor, Ezra holding her as she cries onto his shoulder. The sound not doing any of us any good. Each time Hector paces the corridor, he stops, turning and sending a scowl in Alora's direction. The tension was tangible, taste-able on the tip of my tongue. We were all worried, we were all wrecks.

"Can you just stop!" Hector growls out towards his mate's sister. Her eyes look his way, pain registering in them before Ezra acts fast; removing her from the situation. Removing her from the almighty alpha's firing line.

As soon as the doors are closed, silence settles back over us and I think I preferred her sobbing, it stopped my mind from spiralling. Flashbacks now appearing of Josie dying in my arms.

The head of emergency arrived a few minutes after Josie went into theatre, by which point Doctor Abel had already commenced surgery. But he and his team went in to assist, they had been on the pack run, they had seen her collapse in the meadows. Thank the goddess that Doctor Abel chose not to run, that he was ready...had gotten word through the pack link of what had happened.

Otherwise the other hospital staff wouldn't have been prepared. Most of them were still in their naked human forms as they pushed past the doors into the operating theatre.

After what feels like an eternity, the head of emergency opens the theatre door...the room completely empty again.

I stand onto my feet again but they aren't as strong as they were this morning, when I knew my future...knew I was going to leave and not look back...no matter how much it would have pained me. She would be safe.

Now....now I don't know what to do. My decision had been purely based on that key fact...keeping her safe. But I'm a fool, she is the daughter of the most powerful alphas in the shifter community, perhaps she would never be safe.

With a wobble of the knees, I stand. Peeking into the room, it was sterile clean... no evidence of the alphas daughter being on the operating table. No signs of blood.

The only evidence being my own hands, which were stained a crimson red.

The doctor exits into the corridor, his head hung low. I'm waiting for the reassuring smile, that she is going to make it through that she had been strong...because she is strong.

He clears his throat, Hector, who had been pacing now notices him, as he turns hopeful of a positive update.

"Alpha...the silver bullets have been removed, but Miss Josie was already too far gone...I'm sorry." His words seem to be of a language I can't understand, a code I can't decipher. These were not the words any of us were expecting.

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"What?" Hector's crestfallen demeanour shatters my already breaking heart.

"Alpha Kaia demanded she was placed on to life support..I can take you to her now." He states with a tensed tone.

"I don't understand." Hector softly states, his hands running through his hair before landing on his jawline.

"Her heart gave out...we are keeping it pumping but only by machines."

"No..." Jaxon cries out pushing past me as he barges through the double doors...Hector and I hot on his tail. We race up three flights of stairs, entering onto a new level...named Intensive Care. No this can't be.

I follow Jaxon, not knowing this level of the hospital, as he moves towards gathered pack members. She's there, a crowd of staff members standing outside her room...all of them praying to the moon goddess.

I push through the crowd behind Jaxon and Hector, before closing the hospital room door and closing the blinds. They needed privacy, we needed privacy.

My world wasn't prepared for the sight of her, for my eyes to land upon her broken body upon the bed. I feel as if the world has vanished beneath my feet.

There she lay, as if she was only sleeping. My heart pounding in my chest at the very sight of her.

Her skin was a dull grey, her red hair taking on a more brown tone to it...her life's force really had left her. I could see, I could tell...that she was only alive because of these machines. The beeping a clear reminder on the ears, if the eyes didn't understand. "Josie?" Jaxon places his hand on hers, his approach to her void of any arrogance. He looked

lost. Kaia places an arm around her eldest, comforting him even though her own eyes were red raw and her hands still shook.

"We got the bullets out...but she wasn't breathing and her heart stopped. I wasn't ready...I wasn't ready to say goodbye." Her voice starts to break as Hector moves towards her. "Kaia?"

"Forgive me Hector, I wasn't ready to say goodbye."

"Doctor Abel says we need to be prepared that she might not respond to the machines." Jaxon's voice is shallow, cold.

"She will, she has to." Hector says, no level of negotiation possible within his expectations.

"I just keep thinking..."

""What Mum?"

"If she didn't have the gun, would they still have shot her." She starts to sob again but I can't handle the thought of them thinking she might have deserved this.

I know they wouldn't, I know they don't, but she didn't cause this. I know Kaia and Hector have never seen eye to eye on Josie having a gun, even Jaxon...even me, but it just saved the pack.

She was out there alone, she acted with such bravery that any question of her character...I would shut it down immediately.

"Yes, you don't bring silver bullets to a wolf pack without the intention of shooting. Her having a gun saved many lives tonight, and she managed to raise the alarm. By the time they reached her, they had already killed your guards at the border." I grunt out, I can't help but feel protective of Josie's actions. I didn't like her having a gun, I hated her having the silver bullets, but tonight she saved the pack.

But look at the cost.

"Have you tried Jace?" Hector nods to me in agreement before turning to Jaxon.

""Yes, non stop."

"He needs to be here. He needs to see her before..." Kaia can't finish her sentence, her emotions overwhelming her as she breaks down. Hector is by her side, pulling her into his chest as he soothes her.

The door opens, my head turning to find the crowd still gathered outside as Doctor Abel walks in, followed by Alora and Ezra. As soon as they enter, a gasp escapes Alora...before she rushes to her twin and flings her arms around her.

"What can we do?" Alora whispers to her sister.

"Pray."

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- Knox -

I have no way of measuring time at the moment, I've not even left the hospital room. None of us have.

I couldn't even tell you if it were day or night outside. My lungs were stale from the lack of fresh air, my stomach past the point of hunger and my throat dry.

Food and fluids have been offered to us, but we take what we need only to keep alive. None of us wanting to leave this room, just in case.

Days have passed with no change, no sign of her ever coming back to us.

How long, how long do you keep someone on life support for? How long do you make the family live in pain.

The head of emergency has broached the subject with the alphas to consider ending the life support, but it has been Doctor Abel that has been the one to block him ever since. He refused to even let him in the room. This is why I don't let anybody in, this is why I don't want people getting close to me...for me to get attached.

I can't cope with the loss all over again. I know I'm going to have to survive without her, but I'm not even sure how I would do that. I don't think I would want to even try.

It is just Jaxon and I in the room, the life support machine's noise having been turned off days ago. The constant repetitive beeping was too excessive in the early hours of the morning and it hasn't been turned back on since.

For now she looks as if she is sleeping, although she is wired up to tubes...a breathing tube taped to the corner of her mouth.

Jaxon continues to call Jace, there has been no news...no word. Yet he still tries, still keeps dialling his number.

The mood of the entire pack has changed, even I can feel it. Every time a staff member comes in with food, or to check Josie's stats...they are sombre...the walking dead.

Even the weather outside has changed. Heavy rain thrashes against the window that remains covered in blinds...it's like I am in a bubble, locked in a room with no way of escaping. There is no outside world...not one that matters anymore anyway. Hector and Kaia are outside talking to the Head of Emergency, Doctor Abel was called elsewhere, I think a plan put in place by his colleague to get him away from this ward.

The door opens, the doctor entering first as he moves towards the head of the bed, starting to touch the machines.

Both Jaxon and I don't miss his actions. I want to rip his hands off his arms for going anywhere near her.

"What's going on?" Jaxon looks up at his parents, who have moved to the end of the bed.

"We've made a decision.." Kaia's voice holding an unsteadiness to it.

"What kind of decision?" I ask out, not liking the sound of her tone.

"Did you get hold of Jace?"

"No, nothing...why?" Jacob responds...surely he wasn't this naive.

"We..." She moves alongside the bed, her hand touching her daughter's arm as she takes a deep breath in and closing her eyes.

"Still nothing." She mutters as she opens her eyes.

"You are certain?" Hector asks, his question lost on me.

"Yes, she really has gone.."

"Will someone tell me.." Jaxon's voice starts to increase in decibels from their cryptic words, his patience wearing thin.

"We have decided to turn off the life support, for her to leave us in peace." Hector utters the words I was dreading.

"No!" I'm on my feet in seconds, rushing to be by her side, my hands touching her shoulders.

"You can't, she needs longer." We were running out of time, I was running out of time.

"There's nothing Knox, I can't feel anything. I tried, I tried in the surgery to bring her back but there was nothing, there's nothing now. Not even I can bring her back."

I stare at the Red's mother, she was rambling from being sleep deprived, on the brink of insanity from the thought of losing her daughter. She made no sense. What does she mean, not even she can bring her back...

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"It is time for us to say goodbye."

I'm watching a living nightmare unfold. Each person says goodbye, each person places a kiss on her forehead and a gentle whisper in her ear.

How can they so easily give up, why are they not letting her body heal. Give her that more time she needs in order to return to us, to me.

I am very aware that I am being intrusive on this private heartbreaking family moment. Alora and Ezra were present, the only person missing was Jace.

I can't seem to make myself leave, yet I can't say goodbye to her, not like they can. I don't even know where to begin.

We weren't official, we were in secret....how can I break her privacy now...of all moments to share our secret affair. I couldn't do that to her, I couldn't take that from her. She would want to share it, and now she can't. It will be as if we never were.

I'll go back to the training headquarters and start on the next program. I'll make it look as if I'm coping, that I have moved on. But inside I'll be dying, I'll be broken for the rest of my life. I'll remain in this room for ever more.

She was helping me heal, I can see it now...she was saving me. She didn't even know. I hadn't shared anything of my past with her.

I don't notice Ezra walk over to me until he is by my side, his voice whispering into my ear.

"Knox...maybe we should give them some privacy." His hand lands upon the tip of my shoulder, my eyes breaking away from my sleeping Josie for the first time in hours.

I should leave...but I can't seem to make my feet move. I have lost all connection between my brain and body.

This is what grief does, I can already feel myself slipping back into that dark void I spent my teenage years in.

Dark memories crash into my mind both myself and my wolf no longer able to confine them into the dark recesses of my brain. Painful memories of my past flood in, swirling with this live memory as I start to sink under the pressure of it all. "There has to be another way." Jaxon growls out, turning to the doctor just as Doctor Abel walks into the room.

His slow movement watched by all as his eyebrows furrow at the sight of us.

"What is going on?"

"Doctor Abel, the alphas have decided to turn off life support."

"No, you can't be serious."

"Doctor Abel, I will remind you that you are here to act in the best interest of the patient and the family..."

"She just needs a little time, Alpha Kaia..." For once I agree with him.

"No Abel, she has already returned to the moon. We need to prepare her body to let the pack mourn. Go ahead doctor." She nods to the other doctor, who moves closer to the machines. My stomach sinks even more as he starts to press a few buttons. Jaxon moves to the side, redialing his phone one last time...his eyes look at mine...complete desperation within them.

This was his triplet, this was his sister. They had all been together from the very moment they just started to exist as small dots...now he was going to have to live the rest of his life without her.

I was going to have to live the rest of my life without her.

"Jace, get here now! You're a selfish prick, do you know that? I can't believe you aren't here..." Jaxon roars down the phone, breaking the respectful silence that had fallen upon the room.

The doctor moves to Josie's head, his hands preparing to remove the breathing tube in her mouth. I can't believe this is it...I can't believe this is happening.

Bang.

We all turn to look behind us as the door is flung open.

"No wait." Jace commands out.

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- Knox -

"Where the fuck have you been?" Both Jaxon and Hector roar at Jace as he steps further into the room. He must have just arrived, he still had a black holdall in his hands.

I do a double take at first...was this really Jace? Gone were the boyish charming looks...instead he was lean, he had tattoos climbing up his neck...he was the complete opposite. "Where the fuck have I been...more like what the fuck do you think you are doing?" He pushes past his father and brother until a gasp catches in the back of his throat. "Josie.." His voice is like losing her all over again. He turns to Kaia, his hands cupping at her face as his great height towers over her.

"What are you thinking?"

"She's gone Jace...we need to put her to rest."

I don't think I can be here, I don't think I can watch as the very thing keeping her alive, keeping her in this world is switched off.

But she has already gone hasn't she, so what exactly would watching a machine be unplugged do for me. It wouldn't give me closure, not when she already died in my arms.

I felt it didn't I...I felt her slip away, felt her life force leave her as she safely rested in my arms.

I still have the stains upon my hands...I tried to scrub it off but it wouldn't go and I don't think I ever want it to.

I need a reminder that this isn't a nightmare, a dream... that this was my new existence.

I wished I had been stronger for her, I wished I had grabbed her by the hips and pulled her in for a kiss rather than walked away. Rather than giving her that space she wanted when I came back. If I could have a do-over, another chance, I would be the man she wanted me to be, I would make her mine. Because she was...

I need to be alone, I need to grieve in my own way. My wolf needs out. He's not had a chance to truly process this, not in his animal form. He needs to run, he needs to smash into things.

"I'll leave you all to it." It pains me to say it, but I can't be apart of this. I start to move towards the door, my eyes casting upon her one last time.

"No." Hector growls, his hand flying out to my chest preventing me from leaving.

"Hector?" Ezra gives Hector a strange look.

"He is a member of this family, he stays. Knox, you stay."

"Hector.."

"He stays." Hector's commanding voice fills the room, before he and his mate enter a mind-link. I know he has told her because she gasps, a hand raising to her mouth as soon as the mind-link ends and her eyes go back into full focus. She walks over to me, an outstretched hand reaching for me. Tenderly extending her comfort to me, when she was the one that needed to be comforted.

"I didn't know, I didn't realise.." She places a free hand up to cup the side of my face...Jaxon and Jace both tensing as they glare at me, their backs stiffening. I had kept a secret from them, as had she.

There is movement to the side of me, the Doctor reaching again for the breathing apparatus. But Jace is there, grabbing the doctor by the throat. His arm muscles almost ripping through the fabric on his top, as he stops the doctor in his tracks.

"What the fuck are you doing?" This wasn't the Jace I knew... he seemed different somehow. Even in a situation like this, a dark aura is oozing out of him. Whatever the reason he left... it's completely taken over him. Changed his appearance, his physique...even his personality.

"Jace...it's time." Hector moves forward pulling his son back and holding him steady with his hand as he locks him into his chest. This was a family broken, a family that would be beyond the point of repair.

"No, she can't be gone. Jaxon...do you still feel her?" It was becoming painful to watch Jace's attempts at delaying the decision. I wanted it delayed but she was their daughter, their sister. "What?" Jace grunts as he stands solitarily to the side of the bed.

"Through the triplet bond, do you still feel her?"

"Yes I will always feel her she is a part of me, a part of us."

The doctor moves softly, he presses a button on the machine before removing the tubes and wires off her. Making her look more like Josie, now she really did look like she was just asleep.

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Peacefully unaware of everyone breaking down around her. She wouldn't want this. She wouldn't want them to live like this. Visiting her everyday, not healing...letting grief suck the life out of them. She was giving, she was healing. Sobs follow as the doctor turns off the monitor, her heart rate flat lining...the machines aren't keeping her alive any more. She was gone.

"My thoughts are with you all." The doctor's head hangs low, as he takes a step back giving us the opportunity to take her beauty in one last time.

Sobs grow to wails.

Even in the corridor, you can hear cries of the hospital staff before howls echo outside. The pack in mourning. She sacrificed her life to keep them safe, to protect them the only way she could. She has paid the ultimate price for their safety.

We quietly watch her, her body remaining still..no noise...just a deafening silence shared amongst us.

Minutes pass and yet I feel no different, that desire to be with her still present.

I can't explain this feeling within me, she was gone...she died days ago...the machine in front of me had flatlined. Her heart no longer beat, her lungs no longer breathed...yet I can't ignore that tug...that pull towards her still exists. And it's growing more and more by the second.

She can't be dead, because I can still feel her...I can still feel that bond between us.

I understand it now.

Understand why I was drawn to her from the word go. Why I was possessive, protective...why I couldn't resist her. Why being with her made me feel alive again.

Why every second of my day was spent desiring her, even when she wasn't around me...I wanted to know where she was and how long until

I saw her again. She consumed my waking moments...and also my sleeping ones.

She consumed me still.

She was my mate.

Even without a wolf, she was my mate. She is my mate. My fated mate.

"Wait..I can still feel her."

"What?" Kaia turns to me in complete astonishment.

"Through the bond, I can still feel her." I nudge past the shoulders that were next to me, as I lunge towards her bed.

I feel the words of protest but take no notice as I lift her up slightly, only to place her back down gently in my arms. Where she safely fell into her deep sleep only a few days ago. When she wakes she needs to be in my arms still. She needs to know...I hadn't left her side.

"Knox?" Jaxon takes a step towards me, bewilderment in his voice.

"Just give her a minute...come on Josephina..come back to me." I plead with her, brushing her hair back behind her ear before placing a kiss upon her temple. My nose moves to her neck, I could smell her scent...it was faint but it was still there. "Kit.." I hear Jaxon use my

real first name to try and pull me out of this mental unstable state he thinks I have entered.

But it's like she has been a closed flower all this time...but I can feel her opening...feel her coming back to life.

"I can't explain it just trust me. It's like she's been in the dark all her life...a flower bud that is finally opening up to the sun. She is now being seen by the moon goddess." Judging by their stares I was delusional, all but Hector.

A hand grips on to my shoulder but I nudge it off me.

"Just wait, I can smell her scent...just trust me." I roar out to them, not willing to ever let her go. My hands clinging on to her, encouraging her to wake back up.

"I trust you." Hector's voice bellows out in the room. "It's working...come on Red...it's working. Touch her..." I place my hand out to Kaia who cautiously takes it, and I thrust her hand upon Josie's skin.

It can't be just me, she must be able to feel her own daughter's body temperature increasing... that it was working, she was coming back to us.

"I don't believe it. Keep going Knox...it's working." Kaia squeals out as she moves in closer.

"Come back to me baby." I whisper into her ear just as she takes a deep breath in and her eyes flash open.

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-Josie-

I can't help but lean into his touch, my body moulding into his hold...those tingles at his touch feel even stronger somehow. He was warm and for some reason I was cold. So cold.

There was no doubt who was holding me, his potent scent was calling out to me...leather and sandalwood. I'd happily stay like this forever, within his hold and still in a dreamy state of mind.

"Josie?" A female's voice calls my name and for a brief moment my mind calculates what exactly must be going on.

If I was in the arms of Knox, and my Mum was witnessing...no that can't be right. We were secretive...this can't be real.

I have to be dreaming.

I hear Mum gasp as my eyes open and I manage to focus around me, my vision sharper than usual. My entire family are standing over me and I know instantly something had to be wrong, because their eyes were teary, their faces were death-like...pale as ghosts. "What's going on?" I hoarsely say, grabbing at my throat as pain explodes in the area. It was sore, it hurt to talk..to even swallow.

"We thought we lost you.." Mum leans in, her arms cupping at my face before she starts to smother me with kisses on my cheeks.

"What do you mean?" I search their eyes, the severity of my situation evident for even the most sceptic of characters.

"You don't remember? You were shot by silver bullets..." Knox softly speaks next to me as he places a lingering kiss upon my lips. Tingles dance upon my mouth, his kiss igniting a spark of mini explosions.

I can feel my face reddening at his public display of affection...in front of my brothers, in front of my parents.

"Erm...I think so...humans, they were humans." I frown out from his out of character motion, my brain trying to make sense of the little information I had.

"That's right. You saved the pack Josie, you raised the alarm." Dad proudly declares as he makes no attempt to remove Knox by my side.

"I..." I start to respond that the memory was hazy but slowly coming back to me...but my words stop as a new sensation washes over me...some kind of uncontrollable heat.

I shift in discomfort, my movement alarming Knox next to me as my hands move to cling at my head...a huge blinding migraine hitting me.

"I'm going to vomit." I announce, Knox reaching for a small bin only for the nausea to pass as soon as it came. With my eyes closed I slowly lay back down on the bed, only to reopen my eyes. A dizzy spell now overwhelming me.

"Huh Josie, your eyes..." Jace gasps, and I only notice how different he looks.

I remember now, he had been missing, he had left. I hardly recognise him at first, he looks so...different. If I didn't have that triplet connection with him I would question if he was an imposter...tattoos climbed up his neck like a vine and were even branded across his knuckles.

"Jace?" I question whether it is really him.

"Oh goddess! Look at your eyes." Mum squeals, her hands moving to cover her mouth. Her reaction sending panic through me.

"What is it, what is wrong?" I look at Knox in horror at her response, thinking that my eyes must have been damaged. But rather than look at me with pity, he looks at me with raw adoration.

"They're beautiful, you are beautiful. Look..." He pulls his phone out of his pocket, placing the camera on selfie mode.

I zoom in on my pupils... my eyes that had always been a grey colour, like Dad's but not as menacing...they now had a red ring around the pupil, just like Mum does but hers is blue to her green eyes.

"What does this mean?" I sit up more, excitement rising within me until I feel her...feel her push through the void.

Gasps surround me, as she must push through to peek out through my vision...the sensation foreign and making me reach for Knox in concern.

"She's just looking, she's just being inquisitive...give her a moment." Knox's lips are back by my ear...his reassuring voice helping to soothe me, his hands gripping onto me securely.

What does this mean...does this mean I finally have a wolf. That she has been there all this time...she just needed to be awoken somehow.

"In dying you must have awoken her." Auntie Alora comments, her words confusing me.

"Dying...did I die?" I look to Knox whose jaw tenses...his reaction just as surreal to me as his kiss in public had been.

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"I knew the daughter of the White Wolf was in hiding...no Josie you didn't die...you've been awoken." Doctor Abel comments from the back, as he takes a step towards me...a big grin forming upon his face.

"We must share the news." He says as he continues to smile at me.

"They already know..." I smile back as pack member's voices enter my mind, just as I can feel the warmth of the pack link settle upon my chest. Excitement radiates through me as I realise I can feel them, I can feel them for the first time in my life. I want to get up, I want to dance, to cartwheel down the hospital corridor.

I hadn't been forgotten after all.

....

I wasn't tired, how can I be.

I felt more alive for the first time in my life than I had ever been. My wolf was like this buzz flowing through my body, an electrical current that never ended.

It was warm, it was empowering...I loved it.

The sensation of having her was new, and I could feel she was weak...needing to build up her strength in both wolf form and within my skin form. Yet, I could already feel the power she possessed...is this how all werewolves feel...

"Just take your time." Knox growls as he helps me climb out of bed. He was the only one with me right now.

Dad had surprisingly ordered everybody out except for Knox... his exact words were..."they need time to talk. Alone." He empathised the alone part as Jaxon growled in disapproval.

I was desperate to shower, to wash my greasy and lifeless hair, to smell of anything but hospital.

"I only want a shower..."

"Yes and only a few hours ago your life support was turned off."

"A shower...a shower won't hurt me Knox...you can join me if you like."

On everybody parting, a tray of food and water was brought in and Knox sat with me until I had at least ate a few mouthfuls of food. I wasn't hungry though, I just wanted to get home...wanted to check on Lobo.

The last time I saw him he was mauling one of the intruder's legs. I missed my fur baby. I needed to

Know he was unharmed.

"Now that's the kind of patient support I can get on board with." He wiggles his eyebrows at me as he escorts me, slowly, into the bathroom.

He sits me down on a white plastic chair before moving to turn the shower on...his hands testing the temperature of the water.

He pulls his T-shirt off over his head before pulling off his jeans. My eyes roam across his body, that desire to touch him ever present...stronger even.

He had lost weight, his ribs were protruding through his side. My heart sinks at the sight of him. Had he really not left my side.

"I don't understand Knox..." I can't help but still feel slightly jilted by his behaviour before the attack. How he didn't want to go public, how he walked away...but as soon as I wake up he was kissing me in front of my family. Publicly announcing that we had been hooking up all along.

"It's a shower Red, I'm sure the dial is universal."

"No smart ass...I don't understand why you are here. The last time..."

"I was a fool, a prick. I tried to push you away because that's what I thought was best for you." A large sigh escapes him as he moves back over to me, his hands reaching out to mine as he helps to pull me back up on my feet.

His attentiveness was a little overkill but I wasn't going to complain, I was enjoying this new side to Knox.

"Then...when I realised you are the daughter of the two most powerful Alphas in existence...it dawned on me that you would never be safe." He backsteps towards the shower, pulling me with him as he stops to help remove my hospital gown.

It drops on to the floor, his eyes scanning the length of me, lustful desire shining out through his eyes. She's there instantly, pushing through that veil to respond to him. Her hastiness giving me a head rush.

"I'm sorry Red, I didn't want you being with me to put you in unnecessary harm...but then you were dying in my arms and I realised..."

"Realised what?" I push as his voice chokes in the back of his throat.

"That I can't live a life without you."

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- Josie -

This was all so surreal, was I even awake because this felt like some kind of heaven.

I should be mad at him, I am mad at him...but I can't deny that urge to be with him...it's multiplied. If I found him sexy before...nothing would prepare me for how that desire for him now is.

I can feel her pushing forward, her eyes roaming the length of him as his hair dampens under the shower. He pulls me into him, his hands gripping me on my hips as I hear a purr escape from me.

It's like a rattle on my chest, a smirk forming upon his lips as I tut in embarrassment.

My fingers lace themselves within the waistband of his black boxers only for him to pull them back out and spin me.

"Let's keep it clean shall we?" His lips press against the tip of my shoulder.

"I think it's pretty unfair that I'm the naked one."

"Because it's taking all my self control to hold my wolf back." His tongue licks across my shoulder to my neck, where I feel him smell me.

"I don't mind." I look up at him from behind, flirting with my eyelashes.

He doesn't respond and I chose to not push him. The hard bulge in his boxers is telling me that he wants to be with me but he is more concerned about getting me showered...and that to me shows he cares more than having sex with me. Adrenaline was pumping through my system and it wouldn't be long before it faded away, for the true grave severity of what I've been through to hit me. But for now, I was going to enjoy this chaotic euphoric feeling flooding through me. I let him wash my hair, my head leaning into his hands as he takes care of me. When his hands skim across my chest, his eyes glow a spectacular ruinous black. His jaw tensing as his body starts to shake violently.

I look down, his fingers lathering against three wounds...three scars. I hadn't even noticed. Even with my wolf now, these won't ever heal, these are like birth marks and I'm okay with that. But it seems to create a chemical reaction within him. "Knox.." I place a hand to his face, his eyes darting up to look at mine. Remorse, regret, hatred for who did this, revenge... his eyes shared a mix of emotion.

"I'm safe now." I try to hush his burning anger.

"For now..." He reaches behind me, turning the shower off before placing a warm fluffy towel around my shoulders and patting me dry.

Who was this Knox...I'd hope he stays. I'm just waiting for this new bubble of his to pop. For the cloud I'm on to disappear and my body to fall back down onto earth.

The warm shower has removed that icky feeling off my skin and hair, but it has helped to calm me which means the adrenaline was starting to deplete.

I could feel my legs start to tremble again as shock was setting in.

Once dressed in another gown, I don't protest as he demands that I go back into bed and try more of my food. It was cold now, but I at least nibble on the fruit.

"So who were they?" I ask as I chew on some banana.

"Who?"

"The humans?"

"We think hunters."

"Excuse me?" I almost spit out my banana. I've never heard of hunters let alone them being from a human population. Except for humans that helped run some businesses that we are linked with, our pack and the shifter community was kept under wraps from the human world. "I've had dealings with hunters in the past but why they came here...that's what we are trying to figure out. But it was put on the back burning whilst..." His voice stops again, his forehead furrowing.

"Say no more." I reach out for his hand as he abruptly stops talking. I know what he was going to say, whilst I was unconscious.

It is going to take me a while to get used to this veil between us and to put my guard up, but for now I was happy for my wolf to come and go as she pleases. I was even more excited at the prospect of shifting for the first time.

So when she whines in my head, pain and hurt controlling her behaviour I have to take a deep breath in to help navigate around her emotions.

She was in despair, upset about my parents even considering turning off my life support. For not giving me longer.

But I know my parents, they would have fought for me until the very end, if that was the only choice left..then they wouldn't have made it willingly.

Denied by Destiny: Trapped in the Shadows of the Mate Bond

"You okay?" I don't notice Knox take a step closer to me, his hand landing upon my shoulder. His thumb drawing little circles around my skin.

"My wolf, she's struggling to understand why the life support was turned off..."

"Believe me darling, it was the hardest decision of my life." Mum answers out of nowhere as she walks into the hospital room, followed by Auntie Alora.

She throws the pile of clothes on to the end of the bed before rushing over to me and enveloping me in her arms.

"Don't ever think we made the choice lightly, or that we had even thought of how to survive without you. Because we wouldn't have been able to...I just didn't want to prolong your suffering."

"I thought you were meant to be sleeping?" I feel bad that she walked in on me saying that. I didn't say it with any malice, I was just trying to figure things out so I change the subject quickly, not wanting her to dwell upon the matter. "We couldn't rest, not knowing you needed a shower..."

"Knox has just showered me..."

"Perfect, then we can help you dress whilst Knox returns to the house."

"But..." I didn't want him to go, a part of me thought this new Knox wouldn't come back to me. That the next time I saw him he would be distant and cold again.

"I'll check in with the alphas and find out what is happening with the borders. I'll put some calls out. Rest....I won't be long." He moves over to me before leaving, his thumb tilting my head up to meet his eyes, his lips crashing into mine. It's not enough, I want more...my wolf and I want to completely devour him. It's like I'm tasting his lips for the very first time again, the sensation more intense, more addictive.

He pulls away before peppering a small butterfly kiss on the tip of my nose and winking. I can feel my cheeks flame red again at the public display of affection that seems to come second nature to him now.

Even when in front of my family members. Whereas I was used to us being secret, only having touches in the shadows...now we are out in the light.

I can sense his reluctance to leave me. Whether that was to be away from me, or, knowing he would feel the brunt of Jaxon's and Jace's response to our hooking up...I'm not sure.

Knox had been here in a position of trust and although I don't care...my brothers, Jaxon in particular will feel betrayed. They'll just have to get over it, he makes me happy.

"Is Jace still at the house?" I ask Mum and Auntie Alora as Knox exits the door. My eyes watching him until he goes out of sight.

"For now yes." Mum responds as Auntie Alora moves behind me and plumps up my pillows.

"Has he said where he went?"

"No, nothing.." Mum vaguely replies.

"The tattoos..."

"Don't even get me started Josie..." Mum growls out in frustration as she places an assortment of pyjamas out for me to choose.

I look to Auntie Alora who, like me, is trying to hide the laughter at her reaction. Mum wasn't one to tell us what to do with our lives, she was very supportive in whatever we wanted...as long as it kept us safe.

Which is why when I started with gun training, it was hard for her at first but she did come around in the end.

It seems I'm not the only one to be completely perplexed in Jace's sudden disappearance and lack of communication...now for him to return covered in tattoos...adopting a bad boy image.

""Let's just hope it's a faze."

"Really Mum, a faze? The ink will be permanent..."

"Josie...I'm just trying to get through the day." She pinches at her nose, taking a deep breath in. She had been through a whirlwind of emotions I'm sure with my injuries...Knox even told me that Mum had been the one to help Doctor Abel operate on me. A mother shouldn't have to do that, a mother shouldn't have to say goodbye to their own child.

The signs of what shes been through is edged on her face. I reach for her, needing her to know I wasn't going anywhere.

She holds my hand in hers, our eyes glancing at each other without needing to say a word. She was my everything and some how the moon goddess found a way to let me have a

wolf and keep Mum...and for that I will be eternally grateful. For that it has been worth taking those silver bullets.