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"What? His voice is strained and shaky.

I know that tone. That's the way he always talked when we were kids and he was about to have a fit. Nearly seven years later and that's the only thing that hasn't changed about him.

"He's. My. Mate," I repeat, emphasizing every word like I'm rubbing salt in an open wound. "Did you get it that time?"

He laughs, trying to cover up the twitch in his eye, but it's an empty sound. "That's tragic then. Because that doesn't change anything. You're already taken."

A roar of thunder comes again, like it's in tune with my emotions.

"It's funny how he kidnapped me yet he still treated me more humanely than you ever will again," I say sourly. I turn on my heel to leave, sick of even looking at him.

"Where are you going?" He calls angrily. His footsteps trail behind me until they catch up. Like a sixth sense, I can feel his hand reaching out for my arm.

I spin around on a dime, my eyes black as I snarl in his face.

"Try to touch me and see what fucking happens," I snap, my voice so firm that it almost breaks.

He freezes in place as he makes his decision, then takes a cautious step backward. I can hear him swallow, the sound amplified by the silence. It makes me want to lunge for his throat so it never swallows again.

"Your stu is being moved here," he says quietly.

I raise an eyebrow at the audacity of his wording. He truly is trying to act like it didn't happen. So I decide to correct him.

"You mean being moved back?"

He grimaces, almost as if he's ashamed of something.

I shake my head and storm away. If I stay near him any longer then that thin line of control could easily break. And murder charges are the last thing I need, especially against the Alpha's spoiled son.

I storm down the hall, fuming to the point that I can't think straight. I leave Nathan's house, regretting ever going in. I simply walk without thinking, and somehow, my legs lead me to a rock face that helps to form the natural walls around our camp.

This side of the barrier, however, has an opening. An archway carved into the stone of the cliff. The stairs within lead into the underground, a massive cave made into the rock.

As I descend down a heavy feeling settles in my stomach. Everything is the same as I remember it—the glistening lake thirty foot below where I walk, the silver bars in the wall that seal off my chamber from the rest of the world. The only thing different is that there are no guards standing point to shun me.

As soon as I peer through the bars, reality washes over me like a flood. I realize that my eyes are hot and my vision is blurred. My breathing becomes shallow and shaky as I stare at the bare, short corridor. It splits at the end, the corners hiding what's further in the cell in either stone hallway.

My mouth goes dry when I see a small orange roll of paper laying on the ground in a pile of smeared ashes. I notice I'm squeezing my own hand, the knuckles of one pressed into the palm of the other.

Why did I come back? It's not like I'll miss it.

It's been a year and a half. The longest I've ever stayed out uninterrupted. Now that record is being threatened.

"Miss it?" A deep voice echoes in the cave. I turn my head, but the rest of my body is cemented in place.

My response is immediate, and somehow, composed. "No."

"Then I would watch that mouth of yours. Are we really going to have this problem again?" Alpha Andre comes to stand beside me calmly, facing the chamber just as I am. He talks in a soothing manner,

"Nathan told me about your little scene."

Of course he did.

"What else did he tell you?" I ask.

"That you've found your mate," he looks at me from the side, "That he's the Exiled Alpha. Correct?"

I swallow and nod.

Andre looks back to the empty cell. "That complicates things. But you're still to be the Luna of this pack," he pauses, speaking slowly and simply, "You're going to pick Nathan over him. And if you don't..."

He nods his head wordlessly toward the cell.

I finally find it in me to move, stepping back and angling my shoulders to face him.

"I'll think about it," I lie through my teeth.

He gazes at me, a doubtful gleam in his eyes. "I'm sure you will."

I saunter past him, resisting the urge to bump his shoulder aggressively with mine. I keep my pace slow, trying to hide the fact that I'm falling apart on the inside.

Snapping at Nathan is one thing, but disrespecting the Alpha is another. I learned where that boundary lay long ago. Whether I always acknowledge it or not is up for debate.

As soon as I reach ground level, a gust of wind hits me in full force. All of the leaves rustling across and blowing across the ground makes a so static in my ears. A streak of lightning flashes in the distance, the loud crack coming seconds later.

I push against the wind as I make my way towards the Visarian settlements, my hair whipping behind me. People rush into their houses, doors and shutters slamming to ward off the storm.

I make a beeline for my room, basically leaping up all the stairs until I reach the loft at the top. As soon as I open the door I slam it shut with a snarl.

Half of my belongings are gone. My closet is standing open, nothing in it besides empty hangers. The dresser drawers are pulled out, completely bare inside. The fairy lights are gone, as is anything else that was hanging on the wall. The room looks naked.

I go straight to my desk, praying that what I need is still there as I jerk open the top drawer. I breathe a sigh of relief when I see it.

Maybe it's all the memories of the past that push me to pick up the red box covered in bold warnings and disclaimers. Maybe it's the nostalgia of going down there again that makes me pull one of the sticks from the carton as old habits resurface.

I spark the lighter and light the cigarette, trying to numb the pain just like I did when I was at my worst.

I put it between my lips and inhale deeply, closing my eyes. When I open them again I blow out a long drag of smoke, coughing as my lungs readjust to the familiar stimulation.

My hand shakes as I hold it between my fingers.

Just like that, that same dark place is dragging me back again. The smell of the smoke makes me sick to my stomach, bringing back the view from the other side of those silver bars. I can hear the silence, minus the so rippling of the lake and the annoyed breathing of the guards.

Out of the blue my mind snaps back to Riot.

I don't have to choose like Alpha Andre wants me to. I can't. It's impossible to choose when there's only one choice.

Three curt knocks come from the door, pulling me out of my own head.

Even through the smoke I can pick up Nathan's scent—one I've come to loathe.

I move without thought: dropping the cigarette and grinding it into the carpet with my shoe. I go over to the window and slide it up. My legs go out first, and my knuckles turn white from my grip on the sill as I brace myself for the fall.

The shock travels from my feet all the way up to my thighs. When I lose my balance and fall forward, I catch myself with my hands on the cold dirt, quickly recovering.

The package of cigarettes in my pocket seems to burn a hole right through the pants and straight into my skin. I train my mind on anything else in an attempt to forget about it, observing the few blades of grass on the ground in great detail.

I stride angrily out of the village, with no intentions of looking back. I reach the top of the ridge overlooking the houses when the freezing rain finally breaks loose.

Although it's only about noon, it looks like night time as I make my way through the forest. I wipe at the water streaming down my face, trying to find the trail I'd leave myself.

A bare spot on a tree catches my eye where I'd ripped a slab of bark off. I follow the rest of the markings with ease, the only challenge being keeping the pouring rains out of my eyes.

It doesn't take long for my clothes to become soaked. By the time the cabin finally comes into view—which is an eternity and countless hours later—my legs are burning from the climb and I'm dripping wet. Strands of hair are plastered across my face, not a single dry spot on me.

The cabin is as dark as the sky, looking eerily vacant. The front door lays flat from where it was broken down early in the morning. I step over it as I enter, searching along the wall for a light switch.

When I finally find one, a large chandelier hanging from the high ceiling illuminates the room. I stare in horror at the scene, my mouth falling open.

The house is wrecked. I thought the couch in the wall and broken door were bad enough, but it gets worse. So, so much worse.

The couch is now in the middle of the room, sideways and flipped upside down. The coffee table is snapped in half, the halves laying on complete opposite ends of the room. There are obvious signs of rage, like splintered pieces of wood from the claw marks on the floor or vases shattered against the walls.

Although the moose head mounted above the fire place is the same, he looks different to me. Like he's witnessed something he didn't want to.

I wonder into the kitchen to take in the damage there. The table is in the corner, the glass part of it shattered and sprawled in a million pieces over the tiles.

I don't get the chance to look at anything else, because my eyes are glued to one thing and one thing only.

In the middle of the room, a dark furred wolf is curled into a ball among the shattered glass. Its paws are covering its eyes and its tail is tucked between its legs. It lays quivering, whimpering. Tormented.

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**As expected, Nathan and his dad are still anuses. Tell me your thoughts on the chapter :)**

**Thanks for reading!**

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