

Chapter 0040

Let someone else handle the lab. Don't you have colleagues?

My jaw trembled. "I don't think..."

"I have to run the pack. My kids need me. They're young. I can't do it all," I murmured to myself, the weight of it all pressing down on me.

Charles' voice, steady and reassuring, spoke again. "You need to do what you're good at and what you can do right now."

What I could do right now? Please. I couldn't even get my own lights turned on without help. I had no food and no clue.

"You and I both know that Wolfe Medical and Mooncrest don't have the capital or the time to hire a new team immediately." Charles' voice interrupted my thoughts again, cutting through the haze of uncertainty. "Not while preparing to take the company private again." 1

"That's why I said, I can't. There has to be—"

"Why are you so hesitant to step back into it?"

"I can't run the team without a Ph.D.," I murmured, feeling the weight of my inadequacy. I grit my teeth. "I never finished my degree because I got pregnant with Cecil... All these people on this list definitely finished their degrees. I can't lead them or anyone..."

I sniffled. "He told me that it would be better to just turn it over and focus on being a mom, and if he wasn't a traitor he would be right. I hated the long hours. I can't imagine doing that all again and letting my kids grow up without me."

Charles took a deep breath. "You can finish your degree and use this project as your dissertation still because it's not finished."

"Weren't you listening?" I growled. "I don't have the time."

"Did you forget that you have a ticking clock too?"

I blinked, looking down at the list. "What?"

"Didn't you say that you started this for your kids? What about you?" I blinked and met his gaze. "You made it sound like this was your life's work. Are you going to let it remain unfinished?"

"What?" I swallowed. "What are you talking about? If we hire someone within a year, it'll—"

"I know you know the statistics."

I closed my mouth as I thought about it.

Werewolves typically lived into their sixties. My father had died at fifty-eight, but female werewolves tend to die a lot sooner, especially if they'd had children. The statistics said that I wouldn't even live to see fifty because I had two children and all the stress. I looked at Charles who was already in his late forties and looked like was barely out of his twenties.

"Oh... Oh no..." My jaw trembled. "L..."

My mother had been a lycan, so maybe I could howl for fifty-five, but Richard would barely be twenty-five at that time. 1

No older than I had been when I met Devin. No older than I had been when I buried my father.

I couldn't breathe. The panic swarmed, choking me. I could see my grave. I could see Cecil and Richard standing with Eason, who wouldn't be there for much longer.

Charles took my hands. "You have a ticking clock, but you still have time."

He cupped my jaw and lifted my head. My breath stuttered to a slow, even pace.

"Business is a lot of hurry up and wait without something to sell, Grace. You can hire anyone to run the process, leave it to your assistant, leave it to me, leave it to anyone who can follow simple instructions, but you're the only one who can get into the lab and do the work."

My jaw trembled. "My degree..."

"Didn't you hear me earlier? The project isn't done. It's still yours."

I swallowed. The words rang true. It was as if I hadn't heard him before, but now his words were crystal clear. The car slowed to a stop. I turned to look out the window at the front of my house. I thought about all the years that had passed and the few years I might have left if I didn't, and how many more I could have if I did. It wasn't a decision I could make lightly. I still had to contact my school and see if they would take me back. I would have to study some more and get back up to speed.

I didn't know if it was possible, but I... I wanted it to be.

"I'll think about it."

