

## Chapter 17

ELLE

My body felt weighed down by some unseen force within the darkness. Everything hurt. Goddess, I had never once felt pain like this before even though I was personally acquainted with all types of pain. This felt like lava was flooding through my veins.

My body was stuck in limbo while the pain raged without mercy. That was until the burning lava began to diminish. It was not done quickly, but the fact that it lessened at all was an answer to my unspoken prayers. 1

The first thing that I noticed was that there were other people here too. My senses came back little by little. My hearing was the first sense, so I did my best to remain unmoving as the rest made their journey from the Valley of Bones into the land of the living.

"How long do you think it'll take for the bastard Alpha to give up looking for her?"

My mind was still foggy, but I would recognize that voice anywhere. It was one I often heard in my nightmares. The ones when I was asleep and awake. Dulaney was the last person I would ever choose to be around.

I bit down on the inside of my cheek to keep myself from

moving and announcing that I was awake. Perhaps he would leave me alone if he believed I was still knocked out. Her preferred my pain and fight anyway, so perhaps he would.

"Not long. He'll quickly realize that she's not worth the trouble. He came to find out that his mate was nothing more than a used up and pathetically weak Omega bitch that has so much fucking baggage. He's a powerful Alpha, so he would never want an Omega to warm his bed let alone help run his pack," Beta Oscar stated matter-of-factly.

While I knew that his words were not accurate, I could not help but feel there was some truth to the fact that I was not worth everything that everyone had been subjected to while knowing me. It was too much to have happened in the matter of hours. I could not even imagine how all of that made him feel.

However, he had done everything for me despite how difficult our pairing was. He could have left me at any time but did not. I knew in my heart that he was being truthful and honest with me. What I also knew was that he would not stop looking for me. How did I know that? You could call it intuition. My soul just knew it. Perhaps it was the strength of the mate-bond. It was as strong as if we had been mated for years.

"Isn't it odd how much Alpha wants her though? He would've murdered any other Omega for doing what she's done over the years. Then instead of letting her leave with

her mate, he insists that we kidnap her but can't kill her," Dulaney said with disgust evident in his voice.

It was hilarious that he was disgusted by me when in reality it should only be the other way around. Dulaney was the festering and rancid puss on the ass of Satan himself. All of the warriors were disgusting, but there were none more vile than him. He was only warrior who had no qualms about raping children. Hell, I was only eleven when he ripped my innocence from me. I hated him more than I ever hated another person in my entire life.

"He's always been that way since the men he hired to find her brought her to the border that night. Paid them handsomely before slitting their throats," Beta Oscar said with a scoff.

I knew he had been lying about my parents. He apparently had also been lying about finding me. Gabriel and I had been right that he knew about my destiny. That was the only thing that made sense about hiring someone to find me. How did he know though? That was a question that we desperately needed to find an answer to. Did that mean others could potentially know as well?

"What the hell would he want with her though? She's fucking nothing," Dulaney inquired as if it was the most ridiculous thing he had ever heard of before.

Fun fact was that I was more than anyone in this pack realized. Alpha knew about my destiny, but I could

guarantee that he did not know about my ancestry. Even Selene had waited until the rejection to tell me about it, so there was no way that Alpha would have known. He never would have let his son reject me if he knew.

Wait a moment ... Selene said that I had to be rejected by Eric for something to happen but would not elaborate on what that was. I would bet anything that it had to do with the fact that it allowed Kade to get the Council involved. That was what would be helping all of the Omegas become freed. I really wished Faye would wake up to bounce ideas off of. Her insightfulness would be most welcomed right now.

'Can you hear me yet?' Gabriel's voice flitted through my head. It was tinged with the blunt edges of worry.

'Gabe!' Relief flooded through my body.

'Em. It's so fucking good to know you're awake finally. I've been trying to get through for the past hour. The wolfsbane wore off enough for you to wake up. We're coming for you, sweetheart, but it's going to take a bit of time since we don't know where you are. Kade has a tracker who just got here. There's another one that utilizes astral projection, so we're going to try and see if she can get a lock on your location at all. Can you tell me anything about what it looks like where you are?' he asks.

My heart was elated to know that I was right about Kade. He would not stop. He also brought in people to help. He was everything that a mate should have been, and I was lucky to

claim him as mine. Nothing in life ever felt more right than that. I would hate to be those two when Kade and Gabriel got their hands on them.

'I haven't opened my eyes. I didn't want Beta Oscar or Dulaney to know I'm awake because they're letting things slip in their conversation since they think I'm still unconscious. Alpha hired people to find me and bring me to him. He killed them, and I'm thinking it was so that nobody knew this is where I was brought to,' I rushed out.

My stomach dropped as I thought about possibly having a family that would not have known where I had been for the past thirteen years. They would have probably assumed that I was dead, and that was a pain I hated to think of anyone feeling. I remembered how much pain Gabriel had gone through having lost his family, and how it still hit him sometimes.

'Try not to let them know for as long as possible. How are you feeling? Vince told me that Faye's still out.'

'There's still pain from the wolfsbane and the couple of places from the rogues. I'm alive though. How are you all? How's Kade?' I asked.

He then proceeded to tell me that the Alpha family and warriors are no longer a threat to the pack and were apprehended by the Council. He would fill me in on all the details later because it would cause me to laugh my ass off, blowing my cover.

Kade told Gabriel to relay a few things if he was able to get through at all. Apparently, he was talking with the pack members, which Gabriel was a brand new one at that. Kade was incredibly proud of me and could not wait to lay his eyes upon his darling mate. Gabriel said there were some things he refused to relay to me from Kade, so I gave him a pass. Those were probably things that I would rather hear coming from his lips anyways.

Jesse was safe and healing after being tended to by the pack doctor underneath extremely careful observation by the Council's warriors. That was a huge relief.

It was surreal to think that the pack's monsters had been apprehended. These two were the last ones. I could not even fully comprehend what that meant because we always spent every day of our miserable lives being tormented for our station in life.

'Em, keep the link open no matter what,' Gabriel said.

'Dulaney's here. You know what might happen, Gabe. I'm not doing that to you.'

'You won't fucking close this goddamn link!' he growled at me. He was not normally demanding, but I could hear the worry in his voice.

'Okay. Thank you for always having my back,' I told him, and meant every single word.

That was why he insisted. He knew I was alone right now, and he would not let me suffer alone. He would be there for me in the only way that he could be. Gabriel had always picked me up when they broke me down. He always pieced me back together as much as possible. I could never express how much he meant to me.

I did not even get to ponder how long they would leave me alone before I got my answer. Something was thrown onto me, and immediately the flames felt like they were melting me. Blood curdling screams tore from my throat. I looked down and watched as my skin blistered. The distinct odor of wolfsbane made my stomach churn. This was what they injected into me. I wondered how they would like it.

'You're not alone, sweetheart,' he reminded me loudly, giving me something to focus onto.

Thankfully, he would not be able to feel the pain through our bond. He would only sense that something was wrong. There was at least that small comfort. I could not imagine forcing anyone to feel this level of agony.

"Look who's finally awake. Wolfsbane hurts like a bitch. Doesn't it, Omega whore?" Dulaney asked with a smirk.

I bit into my lip as hard as possible to keep myself from screaming more. My entire body was burning, and I felt like the flames would consume me, but I knew they would not. This was torture. I had never been doused in this much

wolfsbane before. As much as I absolutely fucking hated Dulaney, even I was not cruel enough to wish this on him. 1

The only good thing was that it the bastard him away from me. There was that one small miracle. I would take this pain over him forcing himself upon me any day of the week. I never wanted another person to touch me that was not my mate. This would keep them away, and I would gladly endure it for that.

"No, it's a fucking walk in the motherfucking park," I snapped, the flames stoking my anger.

"What a vulgar a mouth for such a disappointment," Beta Oscar tsked, shaking his head at me.

He never liked me at all and often told Eric that I had done things which were obvious lies just to see me put in my place. He was thrilled each time when Eric rewarded him to stay and watch my torture.

Behind them was the image of a young woman. She raised her finger to her mouth, so I knew she must have been the one Gabriel mentioned. Astral projection. That was nifty as hell. How many gifted wolves did Kade know? Was she from his pack?

"What makes you say that I'm a disappointment?" I asked, to keep them talking.

I was not certain if they would be able to see her or not, so I really did not want to take any chances. It would also



hopefully help me gather a bit more information from them. They were idiots after all. Also, talking kept me focused on something other than just the excruciating pain.

"Seriously?" he scoffed indignantly. "Omegas are meant to be weak bitches who take what we give them without fighting back. You always like to play tough the same way that you did to your ex-mate. Perhaps if you had been a better Omega, he would've considered keeping you as a bed warmer."

I laughed at that, truly laughed, even though it sent spasms of fire through me. My body wanted to crawl into a ball and beg Selene for death, but I would never do that. I used to long for it when I was younger, but I would never long for it again because I had Kade and Tyre now.

"My Omegas are stronger than you'll ever be. They have decency and loyalty. What did you get for your loyalty to your master all these years? You're on babysitting duty with a fucking idiot warrior. That's how much your master thinks about you, Oscar," I said, emphasizing his name without a title. "When is he coming to relieve you from your duty? I'd rather deal with him anyways," I said with boredom dripping from my every word. 1

The anger on his face showed me that I struck all of the nerves that I intended to. Every single member of our leadership were predictable idiots who did not know when they were being played with. A growl left his lips before a

sneer made this even more amusing to me.

"Your Omegas are nothing and never will be. He doesn't even know where you are because he trusted me enough to keep you here until your mate left. He just linked me that your mate hightailed it right quick when he realized how right your ex-mate was about you all along."

I knew he was lying, but I had to play it as if I was uncertain whether I believed him or not. Thirteen years in this pack taught me how to play a part. This was what I excelled with, so it was now time to turn on the magic.

"You're lying. He wouldn't do that," I said, shaking my head. I gave it a count of three before my eyebrows drew together as I looked to be contemplating if they were being truthful.

"You think of yourself higher than you ought if you think he actually gives a fuck about you." They snorted before leaving the room.

My eyes closed and body shook from the agony coursing itself all over my body. I always prided myself on being able to handle anything they threw at me until they literally threw wolfsbane at me. I was not certain how long my body could handle this, but I would fight until my final breath because I had someone worth that fight. I would never roll over and give up.