

The Alpha's Guardian Chapter 16

Ali POV

My eyes bulge at the pain that blossoms on my shoulder. After tackling Alpha Wade from making a huge mistake, I expected retaliation, maybe a few punches or some wrestling, but biting? That I had not anticipated. I place my hands on either side of his shoulders as his eyes focus on me, becoming their normal shade. But I'm petty, and this asshole bit me like a rabid dog.

I Shove hard against him as he falls to the side. I roll over him and straddle his now prone body as he shakes his head in a daze. Raising my fist as he looks me in the eye. He holds no fear or blame for the fist that has his name on it. After a moment of breathing heavily, I drop my arm and stand up off of him. His lack of response has ruined what mirth hitting him would have brought me. The noise in the room floods back into my ears as my focus now shifts to the disgusting sorry excuse of a werewolf whimpering on the bed.

"Get up," I say short-tempered. She crawls further from me, up towards the head of the bed. I lean forward and snatch her ankle as she thrashes around screeching. I yank her towards me and she curls into a ball, sobbing. Robin stands next to me, shaking with fury.

"Shut up already." I groan, annoyed. "I'm not going to hurt you" she stops and peeks out from behind her hands at me. Her eyes fall on the bite mark on my shoulder and she lunges for me, screaming. I thrust my hand out, catching her by her throat, and pull her close while she punches at my wrist looking for release.

"I said I would not hurt you and yet you attack me when my guard is down?" She whimpers as I toss her like a rag doll to the floor. I know she is putting on a show. She has a wolf and her pain tolerance is much higher than that of an omega or human. Training taught pain tolerance to me, hers she was born with, yet she acts like a weak little pup.

"Ali" Wade's voice is soft as he lifts himself from the ground. I gulp when I look him over. His abs are on full display, flexing as he tries to keep his balance and his jeans are sitting low on his waist, exposing the top part of his boxer. He glances down and quickly buttons them up and I have to mentally shake the hold. Damn him and his ruggedly handsome looks.

"Alpha," I say, my voice flat. "How are you feeling?"

"Like I've gone 5 rounds with Mike Tyson. My wolf is drained and so am I." He says as he leans on the chair by my desk. I glance around, remembering we are in my room and shiver in disgust.

"You couldn't have gone to your room for your unholy s3x?" I say, looking back at him, feeling disappointed. This is supposed to be someone worthy of my protection, yet he

keeps proving to be tiresome, problematic and someone who is an arrogant pig. I sigh heavily as I walk to the door and pull it open.

“Francis!” I bellow through the hall. I wait until he pops his head out of his room and I motion for him to come to us. I walk back in, leaving the door open as we all sit in awkward silence until Francis appears in the doorway.

“What’s up?” he asks, looking around. His eyes land on a scared Trudy, scanning over to the panting half-naked Alpha and finally landing on me and quirking a brow at the set of teeth marks on the crest of my shoulder. I ignore his interest in it.

“Alpha Wade,” I say, sighing and turning to face him. “The flower that I think Trudy was using has completely disoriented you. Your actions were not your own or your wolves. You are only partially responsible, so to feel guilt over something you had no control over is useless. However, to ensure you don’t go marking random tramps, you will remain resting in here until it is time to get ready.”

“Do you really think Trudy did this?” he says, sounding doubtful.

“Alone? No. with help? I 100% believe she did and I think she used her mate to pull it off. What I don’t know yet is how she came up with the thought. It’s not a widely known toxin for wolves. It takes a lot over a long period and it rarely kills people. Its use is completely irrelevant-”

“Unless someone wants to use it to confuse us and make our wolves act up, making us unpredictable and useless.” he finishes. Finally, I’m seeing some brains.

“Exactly. I think someone knew what they were doing and used Trudy’s greed to get the job done.”

“No,” he says, shaking his head. “No way. There is no Rogue King,” he says, following my train of thought.

“There is.” I insist.

“Stop being ridiculous.” he spits out angrily.

“Stop being oblivious.” I retort, coolly.

“What the hell would a ‘Rogue King’ want from me? Hell, what would he want in general? Hmm? Chaos and darkness?” he says, growing irate. Clearly, his wolf is still a little aggressive in there.

“Rogues aren’t all bad.”

“Aren’t they though?” He shoots back, standing from the bed and crossing the room to where I am. I can see his anger, as he does nothing to hide it. I sigh as I rub my neck. Must everything always be a fight?

“Look. I get you are an Alpha. You are big and bad and strong, Go you.” I say sarcastically. “But I need you to understand that you are out of your element here. This is my world we are entering. This is what I eat, sleep, and breathe. Don’t you dare get all high and mighty with me when it comes to things I am knowledgeable about, things I have spent more than half my life learning and training for. Not. All. Rogues are bad.” I step up to him bringing us chest to chest as he peers down into my eyes.

“Please don’t act like you know a single thing about me and what I do and don’t know. Rogues are the scourge of the werewolf world. They are the filth on the bottom of our paws that we so easily wash away in the river beds.” His words are dripping with malice.

“Oh what? Your one experience with them colored your opinion of every rogue then? Hmm? What about the ones that run away to escape the slavery that is forced upon them as omegas? What about the ones who are kicked out of their pack for a wrong they didn’t commit, but someone else in their family did? Is everyone with the title of rogue to be held accountable for the injury that rendered you lame?” his eyes flash in hurt before morphing into anger.

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My words are harsh. I am aiming to hurt him, though. His words hit me hard and when I get hit, I hit back harder. I was a rogue once. I was innocent and so were my parents. My uncle did something unspeakable in our old pack and instead of facing the consequences, my parents and I were stripped of our Beta title. Our wolves were ripped from us, forever gone with a tincture of wolfsbane and magic. After living as slaves for a year, my mother could no longer handle the beatings, so we ran.

The shots rang out in the woods almost as loud as the dull thud of the silver bullets embedding themselves in my parents’ bodies. The silver bullets were overkill considering our wolves were gone, but they didn’t care. They wanted them dead. Though me, they left to the mercy of the forest.

His chest heaves up and down in anger, but his eyes stay true to their hazel. I can see the hurt there, and I feel a pang of satisfaction mixed with guilt. Though I’m not sure why I’m feeling guilty, I am just dishing out exactly what he dealt me. He steps closer and I refuse to back down. I feel pinned by his stare as my cheeks grow red.

His eyes roam over my face lazily. Working their way down from the top of my black hair and combing down to my eyes, over my cheekbones, my nose, and landing on my lips. A thrill shoots through me and I have to force it away. I have no feelings for this asshole before me. It’s entirely his unnaturally handsome face and the image of his flawless abs,

even with his scarred chest it was flawless. Shit. this damn bite must be much closer than I thought to the crook of my neck.

His hand slowly reaches up as my heart lurches with every passing second. My brain screams out alerts to my body, commanding it to step back, move, punch, anything that will break me from this trance, this unwelcome and unprecedented desire that's building inside of me. Like any moron in every romance novel, I lick my lips, thinking that somehow, this will help me. And the moment my tongue darts back to the safety of my mouth, his lips are melding to mine. Those pesky needles have turned from mild discomfort to addictive tiny sparks.

I apply pressure back, kissing him gently, trying to wrap my head around the craziness that is unfolding. Our lips move in sync as if someone had programmed us specifically for each other. My hands instinctively wrap up around his neck, pulling him closer to me. I entwine my fingers with his hair at the nape of his neck and he shivers at my touch. A vibration in my back pocket pulls me from the fog I am in and I jolt back, shoving him away from me.

I spin as fast as possible so I don't have to face him. Shit, shit, shit. I have only ever experienced this with one other person, and it was the first time I bonded with anyone I was assigned to. Liam. My heart aches at the thought of him and I whip my phone to my ear on the last ring.

"Samuel," I say, trying to sound normal.

"Ali, I heard you have already run into some problems?" he asks.

"Oh, yes" I clear my throat, taking a second to glance over at Wade, who is watching me intently, his expression unreadable. "I was going to call you when I was sure-"

"You should have called me immediately," he says stern

"Yes, I should have." I adjust, trying to understand his anger. It's just Pansy for Pete's sake. He sent me here on this mission saying I was the most capable of the guardians. Why is he so upset over me not checking in with every single fine detail?

"Get the ceremony done immediately. I do not care if things aren't set up. You can draw out the effect of the poison when you are bonded and because it won't affect you, it's basically healing him."

"Yes, sir," I respond to the now dead phone line.

Alpha Wade saunters over to me. The look in his eyes tells me he intends to pick up where we left off. I put my hand up to stop his advance.

“That will never happen again. Do you understand me?” I say with as much conviction as I can muster.

“Sure.” He shrugs, still walking closer to me. I get a distinct impression that he is completely ignoring what I said.

“Alpha. We need to get the ceremony done now. Go get dressed and call the pack to the packhouse.” I walk past him and to the door, opening it for him with a stoic face.

“I’ll see you there in 30 minutes,” he says, watching me carefully as he walks out the door.

The moment he is gone, I huff in relief. What the hell is happening to me? I grab my dress back out of the closet and head to the bathroom to get ready. It’s no surprise to me I am ready before the Alpha. I wait in the large community center where the ceremony is taking place as everyone hustles around me, setting up chairs and flowers and all the things unimportant.

Why must everything be some monumental event? it’s not a mating ceremony or a luna ceremony. It’s a damn guardianship. I tap my heeled black ankle boot in annoyance. It took me all of 10 minutes to be ready. A swipe of eyeliner and mascara, hair up in a large twisted bun, and stepped into my dress.

“Damn,” Kane says, approaching me.

“Thanks, I think.”

“Alpha Wade says he will be down soon. Do you know if we have everything we need to do this ceremony thing?” He asks, looking around at the spectacle that was being erected around us.

“Honestly, we just need us, the stone dagger which I already provided and my weapons of choice.” I tap my upper thigh where my daggers are safely tucked away.

“No sword?” Kane asks, looking disappointed. I smirk at him. My sword is my signature weapon.

“It’s with the dagger.” I lean over and whisper to him. Francis and his mate Sammy walk in and Kane waves them down. Sammy looks stunning with her bleach blonde hair sleeked down. Her lavender tea dress complements her figure and matches Francis, who is looking mighty dapper in his dress slacks and a paisley button-down with lavender swirls.

“You look lovely, Ali,” he compliments me, and Sammy nods in agreement.

“You have muscles I didn’t even know existed,” Kane says, poking my bicep and I can’t help but laugh at him. All three of them still and just stare at me. I make a funny face at them, confused why they are staring at me in such a manner.

“What?”

“You are just really stunning when you laugh,” Sammy says sweetly.

“Right, well thank you,” I say, clearing my throat. I look great in this dress, I get it. Heck, I’ve worn it so many times and the compliments have always been the same. Well, almost always the same. This is the first time that I have been complimented in the sense that my laugh makes me pretty and not the fabric embellishing my figure. It’s oddly nice.

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Wade POV

Ali is absolutely stunning with her green dress that matches her eyes and her stark black hair perched high atop her head in a chic slick bun. She looks calm, regal, really. Ali deserves to be royalty if there was a royalty hierarchy in the werewolf world. She stands across me looking stoic as per usual but I’m more concerned with what her dress is doing to me. The fitted top leaves nothing to the imagination as it perfectly highlights her muscular upper body. Her breasts are a sight to behold as the taut emerald green fabric firmly holds them in place. It flows loosely at her natural waist with a sensual high thigh slit on her right leg.

Her perfectly toned leg peeks out from behind the chiffon with as much attitude as she always has, and I can’t help but smirk. Our eyes meet and I swear the room might as well be empty. There is no one else here but the two of us. Is this what it feels like to be bonded to someone? Even a simple mistake and missing the traditional spot? How can I be drawn to her this much with such a small bond?

I can’t hear a single thing she is saying, as I’m so entranced by her graceful movements. She looks me in the eye, trying to engage me in the ceremony. I clear my throat quietly and bring myself to focus as she repeats herself once more.

“Alpha Wade,” she says slowly, making sure I am paying attention this time. “I, Aliauna Fletcher, 115th Guardian of the Guardian Committee, bind myself to you. It is my honor and my mission to protect you at all costs, My life is forfeit if it means that you may survive. My blade and my body are weapons for you to use as protection. I am your shield, your sword, and your confidant.” She takes the stone dagger off the pillow between us and she lifts it up to the sky.

“This dagger binds our minds.” Reaching out, she takes my hand in hers and I can feel the small sparks that she swears are from a simple bite on her shoulder. She takes the stone

dagger and places it blade down in my palm. She places her hand on top and we make eye contact. Pain slices through my hand but I make no movement or face as I realize she is slowly dragging the blade between our palms, causing blood from her hand to fall onto my cut palm.

“As my blood covers yours, I promise to bleed for you, to fight for you, and to die for you. My loyalty lies with you, Alpha Wade. I am your warrior now,”

Her eyes glaze over, and a breeze kicks up around us, swirling gently. A small ball of light forms between our palms and I stare at it in wonder. A shock rocks through my body as my vision tunnels and I toss my head back. I’m thrust into her mind. I see a young girl lost in the woods as she cries, covered in blood. It jumps to her in a training session where she is being destroyed by a much bigger male wolf.

Not once does her determination leave her. I see her bond herself with an alpha other than me, but before I’m able to feel jealous, I see her in a heated moment with the Alpha, and then I see her leave him, heartbroken. The sound of a wind turbine sucks me back to reality as my vision targets her and our eyes snap to each other.

She tilts her head as I feel a knocking in my mind. She nods in reassurance, encouraging me to answer it. I tap into my mind and her voice rings through my mind.

-Alpha, We have established our mental bond. You have access to me at all times and likewise. We will now do the emotional bond. This will be much more taxing on you than me, as I have done this many times. It will allow me to feel what you are feeling if you allow me. This helps me evaluate your pain levels.

-Understood- I say through this new link.

She reaches forward and takes my unslit palm in her hand and spins my palm facing up.

-You will mark me. On my wrist.- says through our link and I stare at her.

-How will you mark me if you have no wolf?-

-I’ll just have to bite you much harder- she says. I get a distinct impression that she is going to enjoy this a little too much.

I take her wrist in hand and with her guidance, I find the right spot as she finds mine and simultaneously we bite down. I’m nearly bowled over as I’m flooded with my emotion and what I can only assume is hers. A wave of strength and confidence runs over me as I look into her eyes and she smiles at me. Her eyes falter for a moment until I realize she can also feel my emotions. I smirk, knowing now that she now knows exactly what happens to me when I touch her smooth skin. She composes herself and I can feel a wall stop the emotions from leaving me.

-I will teach you how to control your emotions so that I do not feel you're everyone.-

-I don't know, I think I would much rather get to know what you really think of me.-

My hand falls to my side as she kneels down on one knee and takes her sword from the ground, unsheathing it and bowing her head.

"Alpha Wade of the Shadow moon pack, I pledge my life and my fealty to you." She stands and turns to face the pack members. "I promise to protect our Alpha with my life. The guardian bond is not just a bond of protection for him, but a bond of life. Should he sustain any serious injuries, they will show up on my body and leave him unharmed."

With the twitch of her wrist and without even looking my way, she slices a large gash down my bicep. The pain radiates through my arm up to my chest and then it vanishes. Looking down, I can see the open wound healing faster than I have ever witnessed before. I turn to her, stammering for words as she closes her eyes and breathes steadily.

Her bicep slowly breaks open, mirroring the cut on my arm that is disappearing. Blood seeps down her arm, circulating around her wrist, and falling through her fingers to the ground. My pack members seem as in shock as I am as they murmur and gasp. She flicks the blood off the tip of her sword and sheaths it, settling the strap over her head and down between her breasts before bowing before me.

"I am honored to accept you as my guardian, Aliauna Fletcher." She stands and smiles at me, walking over and clasps our hands together, tossing them up in celebration. The tingles are more prominent now, more like a getting thrumming through my body. She must be able to feel my surprise by it as she squeezes my hand and speaks to me through our own personal channel in our minds.

-This is what the bond will be like. You will be used to it in a day or two-

-This is normal?- I ask her, not believing it. Something about how she is saying it doesn't seem convincing.

-Normal is subjective. But for lack of a better way to explain it, yes this is normal.- I glance at her skeptically and she smirks, leaning over and whispering.

"We are going to have to work on your mental barrier, Alpha. I can feel your skepticism." Our moment is interrupted by an out-of-breath mind link from the patrol.

-Alpha rogues on pack land. We can't fight th- the link cuts off and panic and anger rises in me. I'm jumping off the stage in unison, with Ali right by my side.

"Rogues!" I shout to all my pack members as they look at us, eyes wide in fear. "Find shelter!" I boom as I burst out the front doors to be met with a wolf flying for my face.

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Ali POV

A black wolf lunges for Wade's throat the moment we throw the doors open. Before I can even move, Wade has his hand on the wolf's throat, catching it in midair. Whipping it down with immense force as it crashes into the dirt with a thundering crack. Wade breaks into a run and I follow his lead.

The air smells of fresh blood and sweat as wolves tear at each other, their teeth bared. There is a group of children hiding under a trailer to the left. They must have been in the daycare center. My heart hurts for them. These poor little babies don't need to be exposed to death and hate at such a tender age. Three large wolves spot the children cowering under the trailer while another one corners a young girl who is frozen in the center of the road. She watches with wide eyes as pack member after pack member fails to protect themselves and the ones they love.

I hate this part. The part where a pack realizes just how insignificant their fighting skills are. No matter how much heart they have, if they don't have the strength to back it, the end is still the same. Death. I'm torn about what to do. Wade is running from wolf to wolf, trying to save every single one he can. I am staying close to him, keeping each rogue off his back with quick kills or slices, sending them running.

-Wade! The children outside the general store- I shout through our link. I can feel his anger rise as his war cry morphs into a mighty alpha roar. His wolf is in the link now. And he is fierce. He growls through the mind link to anyone who can hear.

-Protect the children. Get them to the community center NOW-

I'm not supposed to leave his side. Not for a moment. I have sworn that I will not, but I can't watch this young girl die. I hike my dress to the side and whip out my dagger as I run towards the wolf, stalking her down. My daggers release from my hands at lightning speed, but the wolf shifts, and the first dagger misses. The second lands in his hind leg and he turns to me, foaming at the mouth. He lunges out, clamping down on the young girl's legs and yanks. He tosses her 6 feet, and she lands with a sickening thud on her back.

My heart breaks and I release a large cry of anger. Reaching back, I pull out my sword and dance around the beast, waiting for him to come for me. I can see Mason and Robin in my peripheral vision as they carefully collect the little girl. Mason takes her in his arms and runs off while Robin watches the fight from the side. The wolf lunges at me, and I dodge, sneering at him.

"No way, asshole," I say, lunging forward with my sword. He yelps and barely misses my sword stroke. I raise my eyebrow in piqued interest. Looks like this wolf might actually

have half a brain. I can see Wade fighting one of three wolves while other pack members sneak the children away and I curse. He needs me more than I need to kill this predator. The wolf backs away and I let it.

-Incoming on your left, I've got your right covered- I shout through the link. He spins in time to collide with the wolf on his left. I step up onto the trailer, bouncing off of it and landing squarely on top of the other wolf, ramming my sword down through the base of its skull.

"NOOOO!" an ear-shattering scream comes from behind me and I spin to see a wolf fighting for its life under a much larger rogue that tears at it going for its throat. Robin sprints and jumps in between them, landing herself over the bottom wolf's throat with her body. The wolf above her bites into her side as she releases an agonizing scream. My body moves before I even have a moment to comprehend I am moving.

Not Robin. She is smart, kind, and innocent. She has no strength, but she has bravery beyond many of the wolf warriors in this pack. Tears swim in my eyes as I stealthily sprint to defend her. The wolf under Robin shifts his weight, spinning her to the side as he tries to defend her by placing himself above her. The large rogue lifts his head, howling loud to signify his kill as he bares his teeth down.

He misses, and I blink my eyes and come to a stop. A pain erupts up my spine as I watch Alpha Wade in horror. He lays protectively over Robin and the other wolf. Turning slowly to face the rogue, who has his jaw clamped on Alpha's spine at the nape of his neck. After noticing the Alpha is experiencing no pain, he backs away slowly, realizing he has made a huge mistake. Blood trickles down the back of my neck as I put up my mental block. Alpha Wade does not need my pain. He needs to hone in and focus on the rogue before him.

He growls fiercely as he stalks towards the rogue, pushing him further back so that Robin and the other wolf can be tended to. I force my pain to the back of my mind as I stay near him, providing him with protection if he needs it. I can feel my dress being soaked behind me, but I push on, ignoring the sticky wet sensation. Francis and Kane come up on either side of me in wolf form, and the three of us walk behind Wade as he forces the wolf to turn and run. The moment the wolf is gone, I spin and run to Robin, who lies motionless on the ground in her own blood. Beside her, the na*ked young man that caused her grief this morning sobs, trying to get her to stir.

"Get off of her Isaac!" Mason screams, running towards her. The na*ked man growls lowly.

"Mine!"

"Fvck off Isaac!" Mason says, his voice cracking as he bends down, scooping up the injured Robin, who groans. The male named Isaac tries to stand but fails and he drags himself after Mason, who is trying to run Robin to the medic.

“Robin,” Isaac says pathetically, tears on his face. He turns to me and Alpha Wade. “I didn’t believe she was my mate. She isn’t of age. How was I supposed to know what I was feeling wasn’t some spell?” He is desperate as he tries again to drag his limp body in the direction that Mason went. If I wasn’t already growing weak from the wound at my neck, I would have carried Isaac myself.

Wade walks over to him and squats down.

“We can talk about it later. For now, you both will heal faster if you are near each other. She will be in worse shape than you. It is very possible that she will not survive.”

Isaac nods, unable to get words out as he breaks down sobbing. Wade Scoops up Isaac whose legs look far worse now that I can see them clearer. He turns to face Francis, Kane, and me.

“Make sure they leave the pack lands.” and he turns heading to the medical center.

Francis and Kane nod to me, still in wolf form, and we take off for the border. My vision is slowly fading as I continue to bleed from the injury my body took from Alpha Wade. I force myself to push on as we make it to the borderline on the heels of the retreating rogues. We stop in our tracks when we spot the rogue king. His wolf is the same size as Alpha Wade’s and his little rogue minions are running to him, bowing before him. His eyes snap to mine and I stare him down.

He takes a step towards me until he is only 20 feet away from where I am on the pack lands. He tilts his head and his ears shoot straight back. His eyes bore into mine and I can feel it. The pull to go to him, to speak to him. He seems so familiar and yet, I can’t seem to place him. Francis walks up to me in his human form wearing only a pair of shorts, and the Rogue alpha growls.

“Mate?” Francis asks me. And I laugh.

“Definitely not. But familiar for sure.” I say, trying to place those eyes. I wince slightly at the pain at my back and sigh.

“That looks nasty,” Kane says, walking up behind us. “They got you, huh?”

“They got Alpha Wade, and I got his injury,” I clarify. Almost as if the wolf can hear me, he turns to his waiting group and growls menacingly. All the wolves step back but the one who had injured Robin. Suddenly the Rogue king pounces on him, tearing and clawing, only ceasing before killing the wolf completely, and he turns to me once more, howling as if in pain, and runs off.

“Well, that was strange,” I mutter as I stumble slightly, Kane catching me. “Perhaps we should get back to the packhouse. I need to rest so my wound will heal,”

“Kane, go on ahead and make sure there is a doctor standing by,”

“Yes Beta,” he says, running off. After a long moment and a slow walk, Francis looks over at me curiously.

“You know I have to tell Alpha Wade about what just happened with the rogue king, right?”

“I would expect no less,” I say, trying to breathe through the pain that is slowly ebbing away at my mental barriers.

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Wade POV

I can feel her, but I can’t see her. I have been collecting injured pack members and taking them as fast as I can to the med center. There is a sharp pricking of pain in my head. A mental fog slowly rolls in, encasing me in a paralyzing moment of calm and agony. I know it’s her, the way the pain is reserved, almost subdued as if she is fighting to keep it caged. It’s seeping through the mental wall that sits in my mind, the one erected to protect her if I had been in any pain. Her pain must be too much for her to bear.

I look around frantically, trying to get my eyes on her. Where is she? I realize I sent her with Kane and Francis to the border to be sure the rogues left. I spot Kane, but I don’t see Francis or Ali.

-What is happening?- I ask Ali through our link.

-Rogues have left- she says, even her mind sounds weary.

-You are injured. Come to the med center to get sorted out-

-I am fine- she says and I intentionally let my mental barrier down so she can feel my anger over her comment.

-Fine- and she shuts off the link, the pain disappearing with it.

She finally emerges, her arm over Francis’ shoulder as she slumps and struggles to get her legs to comply with her body. I’m by her side in a moment, and I offer Francis a look of gratitude as he nods and smirks at me. I must do a terrible job keeping my attraction to her hidden. Though I can easily blame the pansy that has apparently been plaguing my mind for at least a year now.

I slip my arm under hers and hoist her up, her head tipping back slightly and her eyes flutter closed for a moment. Her pain is lapping at the recess of my mind as her

consciousness wanes and I move my arm to get a better grip. When it sticks, I lean back slightly and realize the gravity of her wound. I reach down, scooping her up behind her knees, and hasten towards the building. She groans in displeasure as her eyes close again and her head slowly lies on my chest.

I take a moment to look down at her in her unconscious state and I regret it. My heart pounds against my chest and I can feel it, a stirring inside me. There is nothing I wouldn't do for this woman in my arms. I can't call it love, love would take knowing someone. This is instant, deeper than a bond. It's my soul wanting to know hers. This is troublesome. Maybe it is the bond. As she mentioned, it would grow deeper as we trust each other more. But it feels like more. My instinct tells me it's more.

Upon entering the med center, Francis flags down the doctor. Who looks her over in my arms? He pushes his glasses up further on his nose as he looks over her back. I watch him with careful eyes, trying to read his face. He gives nothing away as he reaches out, touching her neck and muttering under his breath.

"It appears to be healing." He declares as he stands, looking at me. "It's strange that it is healing so fast, but perhaps it is a guardian thing?"

"Is it possible she was a healer before a guardian?" Francis asks, knowing that healers heal quicker than other wolves. Therefore, they can help heal others. They use their energy to channel their speed of healing to the person they are working on.

"I don't think so," I say, remembering the flashes of her past I got when we completed our bond. "She started guardian training as a little kid, plus she is an omega." I remind him.

"Is her mate nearby?" The doctor asks.

"She is unmated- she isn't allowed one until she leaves the Guardian sect," I answer, looking at her again. She looks like an angel, sent down from the purest of places to protect a jaded broken alpha.

"Interesting. Well, she will live. I will grab you some herbs and a salve to place on her wounds, but she needs rest. It is too loud here, there is too much going on. I would suggest taking her to her room." He turns to grab a nurse, who he instructs to grab what is needed.

"Francis, follow when you get the supplies. I will get her to the packhouse and settled." Francis nods, following the nurse as I head back out the doors.

The pack members move about furiously, making quick work of the mess in the center of the city. I can't believe how easily our defenses fell. They made it to the city center and attacked while my patrol was still informing me of what was happening. They must have come from several angles. I'm cursing myself for thinking I could protect them by taking

all this on myself. I should have trained them instead of insisting I would take it all for them. What I find even more frustrating is not knowing what they even want from me.

Ali groans in my arms and shifts slightly. Her eyes open slightly and she smirks at me through a haze.

“Can’t keep your hands off me, huh?” she says, sounding weak. I can’t help but laugh.

“Can I still blame the poison?” her eyes softly close again and I smile at her still face once more. She then sighs heavily.

“I can feel your emotions, Alpha Wade.” She says, snuggling her head closer to my chest. I’m struggling to tell if she is actually awake or not.

“I’m worried about you,” I say truthfully.

“I will heal, I always do.” She answers simply with a small yawn escaping her lips.

“How did you get injured?” I ask, curious.

“I didn’t” is all she says. I scoff as I climb the stairs to the packhouse, pushing the door open with a mild struggle. When I bring her upstairs, I walk right into her room and place her in a chair. She moans slightly, opening her eyes and watching me as I scurry around the room looking for something to change her into. I can’t seem to find anything but stretchy yoga pants, black skinny jeans, or leather pants. I sigh and rush to my room, grabbing a pair of my basketball shorts and jogging back over. When I walk in, I see her standing, leaning slightly against her dresser, trying to reach back and unzip her dress.

“Ali. You should sit down,” I say, finally getting the full view of the wound on her neck and shoulders. Large gaping gashes still seep slightly with fresh blood as her entire back and dress are coated in now dried blood. I make my way to her and ease her hands away from the zipper.

Slowly, I lower the zipper, trying hard to remind myself to breathe. Each inch exposes more of her porcelain skin, bringing along with it heaps of guilt. I can see her lashings from this morning in a faded pink across her bareback. Spots covered in blood and others not. She loses her balance a little as she falls back into my chest. My hand instinctively wrap around the front of her waist, pulling her closer to me. She is intoxicating. I have to stop and take a deep breath as to not nuzzle her neck.

“We need to clean up you back,” I tell her, stepping back from her. She nods in understanding and turns towards the bathroom. Neither of us was thinking clearly, so when she moved and her dress fell away from her body completely, I could only stare. Exquisite is not powerful enough of a word to describe her. She stands with her back to me and her dress around her feet in a crumpled, bloody mess on the floor. Her back is a

mess, but her muscles are pronounced. Lining her frame and leading down to her perfectly tight bottom that is clad in only a lacy purple pair of boy shorts underwe@r.

She takes a step and falls forward yet again, and I reach out to help her. I catch her hand and she spins to face me. My heart is in my throat as she looks up at me, confused, her eyes foggy. I can only assume since I feel no pain, that she has thrown up her barrier. Which works out better for me, considering the things I am feeling in my che3st and in my groin.

I try not to look down, to explore the beauty that she is with my eyes, but I fail and I stare at the most perfect pair of perky bre@sts. Quickly, I look away and move to step back when the door opens. I panic. I don't want whoever it is to see her like this. She is mine and no one else can look at her. I pull her roughly to my che3st, and she squeaks in surprise.

"Oh shit, I'm sorry!" Francis says, pivoting. Ali looks up at me and then down at herself and gasps. Her arms wrap around me tightly as she pulls me closer, looking for coverage. I blush knowing that though she found coverage, she also found out how turned on I am.

"Leave the supplies. I am trying to get her into a bath. Could you get Ethel to come and help her?" Francis looks at me and frowns.

-Ethel is with her granddaughter. It's not looking like she will survive.- He says to me through the mind link.

"Fvck" I mutter. "How about Sammy then?" I ask hopefully. I really, really don't want to test my patience by bathing this woman.

"She is helping with bodies." He answers.

"Fine. I'll do it." Ali goes rigid, and she looks up at me.

"No! NO! I can bathe myself."

"Oh, just like you are capable enough to get injured?" I ask.

"It is YOUR wound Alpha!" She demands. "I have never had to work so hard to protect an alpha on the first day before."

"Well, if it's mine then I will fix it," I say, scooping her up and walking her directly to the bathroom without looking at her na*ked che3st.