

The Alpha's Guardian Chapter 41

Ali POV

“Alpha Wade?” I ask as I watch him closely.

His demeanor is off and he seems to ponder something hard as he stares daggers at the closed door. He looks at me and then his eyes wander away, searching at his desk for the same paper he has been staring at for the last minute. He can't bring himself to even look at me. I try not to let the sting of it hurt so much.

“Ali. I have a question for you. And I need the truth.” He says, placing the paper down and turning the full weight of his heated gaze to me.

His eyes pin me in my place and I hold my breath, waiting for the question.

“Did you meet Alpha Liam in the woods today?” He asks softly. I can see a tinge of pink run up his cheeks. He is embarrassed to ask me.

“No, Alpha,” I answer honestly.

Hell, I want to discuss everything with him. But until I know what's in that manilla folder, I can't bring myself to admit that I am doing anything wrong. I am not going against the pack, nor am I endangering him. I am doing spy work, maybe not the same spy work Samuel wanted from me, but I'm gathering intel, trying to collect answers, and I'm doing it my way. Fewer questions from people outside of my mind the better.

“You look like you aren't sure.” He frowns at me.

“Alpha Wade, I did not meet Liam in the woods.”

“Alpha Liam, Ali. He is an alpha.” Wade reminds me, his words sounding as jealous as he looks.

“Yes, Alpha. I apologize.”

“I need to have a meeting with Kane. It will be a while. I will mind link you when I leave the office.” He looks away from me.

I move towards the door and stop with my hand extended to the doorknob. I want to turn and try to fix this. Make him drop his barrier so I can understand what's in his head. But I know that would only emotionally compromise me. He muddles my thoughts more and more. And I need to focus on my job. His protection is more than my desire to be close to him at this moment. The door swings open and Kane looks at me, surprised.

“Whoops! Sorry, Ali.” He smiles widely.

I nod in a nonverbal acknowledgment of his presence and brush past him. I make my way straight for the stairs, taking them two at a time. Now is as good a time as any to find out what is in the Manilla folder.

I remove my wooden box from its hiding place gently rub the engravings before pulling it open. I extract the folder and deftly open it up, eyeing its contents. The first page is official committee paperwork. I’m shocked that they could get their hands on it. Getting official records that are released is hard enough, but getting sealed documents like this? Near impossible.

I flip to the next page and find a large photo that must have been snapped during surveillance of Wade. He stands in front of his pack at his Alpha ceremony, proud and dashing in his black tux. I thumb through the next few photos, photos of him playing with younger kids, photos of him helping build a fence. All evidence of the caring soul that he is for his pack members.

The next page is an in-depth analysis of him. His likes, dislikes, even down to his mate’s status. My eyes bulge. Mate status? I run my fingers along the paper, reading it in search of an answer. Mate status: Believed to be Deceased.

My heart aches at the thought of Wade never finding his mate. He deserves someone amazing and kind to match his lion’s heart. As much as I crave the title of being his mate, I know that it’s not likely. Then a seed of hope plants itself right in the middle of my heart and my brain, not having the wherewithal to fight it, allows it to grow. If he doesn’t have a mate, does that mean I could reject Liam and choose Wade as he was willing to choose Trudy?

I find myself absolutely giddy at the thought and have to pull myself back to reality. Focus, Ali. Focus. I look down at the paper again. Wade is being slated for a new alpha position. Superlative Alpha? I scoff at the name. Not very original if you ask me, but they didn’t, so I press on. Below Wade’s name are a few other names of alphas in the country. I recognize only one, an alpha I protected a few years back. He is young, but he is kind and eager to be a good alpha.

The next sheet of paper is a hand-scrawled note in a red marker.

Aliauna,

Six of the alphas on this list are missing, after receiving these files, I think my goals are more aligned with the committee than I thought. Get a meeting set up with your Alpha and the committee. I will be there in two days.

Corbin.

Someone is eliminating the alphas on this list, or they have gone into hiding. That just means that Wade, as the top pick, needs extra protection. Shit. Reaching for my phone, I dial Samuel. I know he has been busy lately, and I assume it has everything to do with the missing alphas.

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"Ali now isn't a good time." Samuel sighs.

"I know about the missing alphas," I say.

There is a pause.

"Go on." he prompts.

"I received an envelope in my room from the Alpha King."

Samuel scoffs in annoyance.

"Even with Alpha Liam there, Alpha Wade's defenses can't keep a mangy dog out. And what did this envelope contain?"

"A letter saying the Rogue King wants a meeting here with the committee and Alpha Wade."

"So we can have all our committee members ripe for the picking for them to attack?" Samuel scoffs. "Not going to happen."

"Samuel, I think we could give him the chance to explain himself. We can arrange it so that it is safe."

"I really don't have time to think about all this Ali."

"Samuel, make the meeting happen. There, I did the thinking for you." I respond.

"Fine. Text me when and I will see what I can do." He says as he hangs up.

Well, that went better than I had expected. Now, time to go talk to Wade. Who is seemingly angry with me for some reason. I'm content with thinking it is just jealousy, but my brain knows better. He is more than jealous. This is a hurt anger. And I just don't know how in the world I have hurt him.

"Ali," Wade says as he peeks his head around the door.

“Come in.”

He shuts the door behind him as he crosses over to me. The anger he was carrying earlier is replaced with exhaustion as he slumps on the edge of the bed opposite my desk chair. His eyes look straight through me and I swear my heart decides on its own that a regular heartbeat is useless, as it beats irregularly.

My body responds by carrying me to him. I lower myself down in a squat and rest my hand on his knee cap trying to help relieve his exhaustion. Wade looks up, his eyes once more meeting mine. My stomach drops and my heartaches. He looks so distraught, so betrayed.

“You have been lying to me,” He says looking up.

And for the first time, I feel like crying.

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The Alpha’s Guardian Chapter 43

After Liam left, Wade went to his office, where he spent the rest of the day making phone calls and doing alpha things. Only emerging to grab dinner and then lock himself back up. I can feel him erecting his proverbial walls. Not only has he locked me out of his emotions and mind, but he is also now trying to create a physical distance between us.

I know a heavy conversation is coming about Liam, about my sneaking around collecting information. I don't see how it's any different from what Francis does. Wade doesn't know who he talks to and sneaks off to meet. Hell, he doesn't even know who Francis uses to collect the intel he collects.

Wade emerges from the office and walks straight to the stairs. I follow behind him and stop short when I see him walk into his room and close the door. My heart sinks. I mean, did I expect him to keep sleeping on the floor of my room when he has his own plush bed in his room? Yes, I totally expected that. Do I need him to do it? No, but it was nice, and I slept better knowing he was safe near me.

I stalk to my room disappointed and lumber to the bathroom. I stare at the bathtub that started it all. All these dumb feelings that I shouldn't be having for a man that isn't fated to be mine. I still feel the touch of his calloused hands running along my back, gently massaging the ache from my soul. An ache I didn't realize was there. I'm so much more aware of what I want out of my life now.

I want to be blissfully happy. To wake up next to the man that completes me and makes me smile just by doing the most mundane things. I want someone who is so kind that others would die for him. Someone who is loyal and protective. Damn it, I want Wade. My head aches and I groan in annoyance. It hurts my head thinking about all of this. This is why being stoic and emotionless is so much easier. When emotions come out to play, they play rough.

I take a quick shower and slip into my pajamas. The chilly night air seeps into my skin as I run for my bed and jump into the abyss of warmth, pulling the covers over my head. A low laugh sounds from the end of my bed and I freeze.

"Wade?" I ask from under my safe place.

"Who else were you expecting?" he says with a chuckle.

"I-I just assumed since you are mad at me..." I sit up and in the moonlight, I can see he is in his nest of blankets again. My heart swells. Even though he was mad, he still wanted to protect me, even if I don't need it.

"I'm not mad at you Ali," he says, sighing.

"You seem mad."

"Well, I'm not." he snaps.

“Right. Not mad, got it.” I say sarcastically.

The room stills and silence fills the void.

“Wade?” I whisper.

There is no response so I listen closely, hearing his even deep breathing. He must be extremely tired for him to be asleep so fast. Perhaps I should take the hint. My eyes slowly grow heavy and itchy as I succumb to sleep.

I wake up to Wade, who is folding up his blankets and placing them on a chair in the corner. I take the moment to just look him over. He is spectacular. His crinkled white shirt is slightly oversized, keeping from me the curves of his muscles. My eyes travel down to his gray sweatpants pants and drift back up to his tousled locks of brown. A giggle escapes me as he turns to look at me with a smug look on his face.

“You seem mod.”

After Liam left, Wade went to his office, where he spent the rest of the day making phone calls and doing alpha things. Only emerging to grab dinner and then lock himself back up. I can feel him erecting his proverbial walls. Not only has he locked me out of his emotions and mind, but he is also now trying to create a physical distance between us.

“Something funny?” he asks, knowing exactly what I am laughing about.

“Something funny?” he asks, knowing exactly what I am laughing about.

But it’s what makes him that much more attractive. That confidence knowing that even in the most vulnerable state of being a freshly woken tousled mess, he is a sight to be held.

“Your hair is a mess,” I say.

He quirks a brow and hitches his chin up, looking at my hair.

“And yours is any better?” he jokes.

I shrug my shoulders and fall back onto the bed.

“I’m not sure I care all that much.”

“You probably should. It’s a mess.”

“Rude!” I laugh and toss my pillow at him.

He catches it with precision and speed like the werewolf he is and throws it back.

“We have a lot to do before the meeting tomorrow. I’ll meet you downstairs.”

The moment the door shuts behind him, I begrudgingly toss the blankets aside and rush to get dressed, searching out my tactical vest and leather pants. It’s a day full of business and with so much going on, I need to be prepared for anything. And I have a feeling a shitstorm is coming.

My first stop is waking up Francis. I know he is the one who informed Wade of my meeting, so I take extra joy in waking him early.

“Francis,” I yell through his shut door.

When he doesn’t respond, I push the door open and flip the light switch. Francis groans and covers his eyes.

“What the hell!”

“Alpha Wade needs you,” I say, smiling.

“Why didn’t he mind link me then?”

“Oh he will, but I wanted to beat him to the punch,” I smirk at Francis as he glowers at me.

“Is this because I caught you sneaking around?”

“I was doing it for Wade!” I say, throwing my hands up. “I took a blood oath, Francis. Unless that oath gets destroyed, in like a fire or something, I can’t do anything bad to him. It would literally be suicide.” I slam the door shut, then open it one more time.

“And yes. It is 100% because you snitched.”

Was it petty? You bet your a*s it was. Did I enjoy it? Every second. I make my way down to the kitchen and find Wade is already eating a plate of eggs that Ethel had prepared for him. I grab my usual apple and lean against the counter.

“How is Francis?” he asks, smirking as he shovels a fork full of eggs into his mouth.

I take a smug bite out of my apple. Evading the question when a disgruntled Francis walks in, scowling daggers at me.

“Rough night?” I ask him, raising a brow.

“Sammy had a rough night, which means I had a rough night.” He says curtly.

I instantly feel bad.

“Is she ok?” I ask.

Francis sighs heavily, rubbing his hands over his face.

Wade Immediately stands up and walks over pulling his best friend into a big embrace.

“I am so sorry,” Wade says, sounding full of guilt.

“Wade. This is not your fault.” Francis says moving away. “This is Trudy and that a*****e who taught her how to poison this pack undetected. I want dibs on him. The dick who ruined my family.” He points at Wade, who nods in agreement.

“He is all yours,” Wade says, walking over and clearing his plate. “Now, we have to stay on task today. We need to get everything ready for the committee and for Corbin.”

“What’s first on the list?” Francis says perking up at the drastic change in subject.

“Liam. We need his help with extra security around the border.” I say.

Wade groans in annoyance.

“As much as I hate it, yes. Francis, would you mind talking with him?” Wade asks.

“Of course.”

“Ali, I know you can’t really leave me, but we may have to split up today to get everything covered.”

“No,” I answer. “I can not and will not leave my spot by your side.”

“Ali, I understand your reservations.”

“No, Alpha Wade. This is the only case in which I do not have to listen to your orders. I need to be within a certain distance of you at all times. And that is final.”

“What about Kane?” Francis asks.

“Kane tracking?”

Both men laugh.

“Ok, yeah bad choice.” Francis agrees. “I have someone. I’ve been training her. She is excellent.”

“Who?”

Francis smiles mischievously.

“Robin.”

“What? My Robin?” I ask, shocked.

I get she isn't my Robin. And that I only see her when she is around the packhouse because I can't leave Wade's side, but we bonded. I view her as a sister? Friend? Someone I just want to protect.

“Issac took her for a walk to get to know her and mentioned she was very observant and because she doesn't have a wolf, her scent isn't alarming to wolves which means she can get closer without being attacked.”

“But what if she does get attacked?” I ask, concerned. She almost died once, already. I'm not too keen on her or Mason getting hurt again.

“Issac always goes with her and keeps his distance so his scent can't be caught but close enough to aid her.”

“Interesting concept Francis,” Wade says, thinking. “Teaming up a warrior and a tracker who is an omega. It's genius.”

“I know you like to treat all ranks equally, so I just tried to see what worked best,” Francis says humbly.

“Wait! Was it Robin who tracked me?”

Francis smiles brightly.

“Yep.”

“Son of a gun,” I mutter to myself. “That traitor.”

“Huh, I feel the opposite,” Wade says, sounding amused.

“The doctor did the 3D ultrasound yesterday, and I missed it. I guess he is very weak. They believe his wolf died, but there is no way to tell until he is born.” He says, his eyes glistening with unshed tears.

The Alpha's Guardian Chapter 44

Wade POV

Ali has seemed anxious all day. Anytime we were near the forest line, she watched it like a hawk looking for its prey. As if she was expecting an attack at any moment. Even now, as we walk back to the packhouse, her eyes keep darting around looking for some evil force that wants to sweep me away.

“Ali”

“Mmm,” she says looking over her shoulder.

“Are you always this tense before stressful things?”

“No! And that’s what’s got me even more on edge. Something doesn’t feel right. But I can’t place it.”

“Everything will be fine,” I assure her.

“Right.” She scoffs. “Do you know how difficult you are to guard?”

“What? Me!?”

“Yes! You are always running headfirst into dangerous situations. Rogue attack? You’re the first out the door. Sparring session with a jealous mate? Tap Wade in.”

I laugh a deep, hearty laugh. I can see her point.

“And don’t get me started on your wily ways that got Trudy all enamored with you.” she huffs.

“Ok. But that was hardly my wily way.”

“Exactly. You attract trouble.”

“I attracted you,” I smirk at her.

“No, you got assigned to me. There is a difference.” She retorts. “Either way, you breed trouble quicker than mated wolf breeds their pups,” she mutters, annoyed, and watches the forest line again.

“You are being absolutely ridiculous.”

“Am I though?” She asks, exasperated.

“Yes! You are. What is going on?”

“Nothing.” she says without hesitation, “I’m fine.”

“Oh, great,” I mutter.

“What?”

“Fine, never means fine,” I tell her.

“Yes, it does!”

“Ali, I have a sister and a mother. I am well versed in the female meaning of the word ‘Fine’” I remind her.

She huffs.

“Let’s just get back to the packhouse, ok?”

“Fine,” I say smugly, and she groans.

By the time we make it back, Francis, Kane, Ada, and Robin are all waiting for us in the kitchen. Dinner is sitting on the counter for me and Ali, and while we devour the pasta before us, the 4 others run through their assignments for tomorrow.

“Ada, you are on packhouse duty, but you will be along the back. I will be at the front. Kane, you are in the city center keeping watch on the surroundings. Robin will be in the tree line with Isaac not far behind.” Francis fills them in.

“Why only us?” Robin asks, looking at me.

“You guys are the best in your respective field.”

“Really? I’m the best tracker?” Robin asks, her chest puffing up in pride.

“That won’t be of use elsewhere? Yes.”

“What about Mason?” She asks, looking at Ali for a moment, then back at me. “He won’t enjoy being left out.”

“I have a job for Mason,” I answer her honestly.

“You do?” Francis asks, surprised.

“Of course. Everyone has their role to play.”

“You make it sound like we are going into battle.” Kane jokes,

“I hope we aren’t, but we have to be prepared for that possibility.”

“Seriously?” Ada asks, concerned.

“The whole committee is going to be here, along with the rogue king and myself. We have a meager force of recently trained warriors and a handful of warriors from Alpha Liam’s pack and Alpha Liam himself. If anyone ever had an issue with the committee or the rogue king, now would be the time to attack.”

“It’s when I would do it.” Ali states.

“So what do we do if there is an attack?”

“You fight to save every pack member you can and get them to safety,” I answer with ease.

“What about you?” Robin asks.

“He can handle himself,” Francis says.

“He has me,” Ali adds.

“But what happens if you get taken down?” Robin asks, turning to Ali, looking worried.

“There is no taking me down, Robin.” Ali smiles reassuringly.

“There is always a chance,” Kane frowns.

“Look. I know you are all worried, and yes, we need to be prepared. But I will die protecting Alpha Wade if I have to.”

“We know because you have to,” Francis says coolly.

I shoot him a scowl. I know he is still struggling with the fact that Ali was meeting someone behind my back, but he doesn’t have to show division before such a big day. Ali sighs heavily.

“Everyone should get some sleep,” Ali says, sounding drained.

I look at her emotionless face, trying to see past her armor, but as usual, she gives away nothing. So often I curse this bond we have because she can so easily get into my head. Now I’m cursing it because I can’t get into hers. She is like a stone fortress that is locked up before the war.

As we make our way up to our rooms, I notice her little tics that she has been doing the whole day. A quick turn of her at the sound of a creak. The flexing of her hands as if trying to control her rage. I change into comfortable clothes and slide into her room,

setting up my usual spot on the floor while Ali stands at the window watching the forest line for any movement.

“Ali.” I call to her “Everything will be ok.”

“You can’t know that.”

I walk over to her side, gazing out the window into the dark line of trees.

“Ali, what is really going on?” I ask. Sticking my hands in my sweatpants pockets.

“Nothing.”

“Ali,” I say sternly.

Reaching out, I turn her to face me. For a moment she averts my gaze, but she succumbs and stares at me. Her stoic face falls and her eyes glisten with tears. My heart breaks as I reach up and wipe away a tear.

“What is going on?”

“I think I’m compromised.”

“What?” I chuckle.

“It’s not funny,” she whines. “This isn’t me. I don’t cry or get nervous or fuss like this.”

“Ok. So you are under a lot of stress.” I shrug. “It’s normal to break down every once in a blue moon.”

“It’s not that. I know what it is,”

“You want to talk about it?”

“I am going to reject Liam.” She says.

The air dissipates from the room and I feel like I’m choking on hope. She is going to reject Liam. She doesn’t want Liam, not that I’m all that surprised. He is an a****e, and she deserves to be respected for who she is, not who she is mated to.

My excitement sits deep in my stomach until I allow myself to look at her. She is distraught. She has always put so much value on the mate bond and respects it fully. For her to come to this conclusion must have put her at such odds with herself. I can no longer keep it a secret from her. I have to tell her that Liam is lying and that I’m her mate.

“Ali, I have to-”

“I’m in love with you Wade.”?she blurts.

The room spins.

“What?” I breathe.

“I am in love with you and it’s wrong, but I can’t help it. I thought I knew what love was when I loved Liam. But I didn’t know that it could be like this. I don’t want to be away from you, ever. The thought of anything happening to you sends me into a panic attack. I don’t know what to do. I-I love you.” she rushes all her words out so quickly.

“Ali,” I say, smiling so wide I’m sure my cheeks will split.

There is a knock on the door. I groan in annoyance. Of course, right now is when we get interrupted. Ali crosses the room and pulls the door wide open, looking over her shoulder.

“It’s for you Alpha,” she says, her stonewall face back in its place.

I look up and there stands Francis, red-faced and tears staining his cheeks. My heart falls. It must be bad news about Sammy.

“Francis.” I rush over to him. “Why didn’t you mind link me? I would have come to you.”

“I forgot I could do that,” he mumbles.

“What happened?”

“Sammy is sick. They admitted her to the hospital with 24-hour doctor supervision.”

“What? How?” I ask.

“It’s a rare condition where her wolf is trying to give herself to the child to ensure its survival. Sammy said she and her wolf agreed. But-”

“Sammy is becoming omega,” Ali finishes, looking shocked.

“Have you heard of it?” Francis says, looking at Ali.

“Yes. It’s but extremely dangerous,” she answers cautiously.

“Come, I will sit with you until we know more,” I say to Francis, shooting a glance over my shoulder at Ali. I guess I will have to tell her later.

The Alpha’s Guardian Chapter 45

Ali POV

Wade must have snuck in early in the morning, as I can see the calm rising and falling of the blankets on the ground. I have a strong desire to go over to him, crawl in and just be next to him, but I know it's inappropriate. Not that blurting out to him I love him was all that appropriate either, but it happened, so there isn't much I can do about it now.

I quickly get dressed in my usual guardian attire, loading my vest and holsters with their trusty steel companions. By the time I walk out of the walk-in closet Wade is up and moving swiftly as folds his blankets. When he notices me, he offers me a tight-lipped smile.

"Kane just linked me. Corbin is already at the border. He would like a moment to speak with you before the committee arrives." He informs me.

I can see his hesitation at Corbin's request. The question he asks with his eyes but verbally remains silent. A question I've been trying to avoid answering. Why would Corbin request to talk to me? I know it has everything to do with who I am to him. But I have left Wade in the dark about that identity of who Corbin really is. Now is not the time or place to call into question my actions and loyalties.

"Where should I meet him?" I ask, knowing full well Wade already has a plan formulating in his brilliant mind.

"I am having Kane bring him to my office since it's soundproof and already prepared for the meeting."

My head is whirling with all the things that Corbin might say. The high probability that it will be things that will leave me shaken to my core about my family and everything I grew up believing about the man I convinced myself to hate. What if my anger and hate have truly been misplaced? Is that something I can handle with grace?

"Ali," Wade says as he crosses the room toward me.

He braces my shoulders with his hands, the tingles from his touching quieting my noisy mind.

"Yes?" I say, already feeling shaken.

He moves his hand from my shoulder and gently caresses my cheek. I close my eyes and lean into his touch instinctively, searching for the inner strength I know I have. His other hand cradles my face and my eyes flutter open to see him so close. We have kissed a few times before, but instead of moving the last three inches, he lingers just out of reach. He offers me an encouraging smile and leans in, dropping a kiss on my head.

“Everything will be fine.” He breathes, taking a step back. “I’m going to go get dressed. I will be downstairs with Francis right outside the door if you need me. And please be careful. I don’t fully trust Corbin.”

“Ok,” I say as I amble towards the door. Wade close behind me, heading to his room.

Francis waits for me by the office doors, looking disheveled at best. I want to ask him about Sammy, but I know asking him such a personal question on such a high tension-filled day is not wise.

“Be careful,” Francis says, looking away.

“Keep your eyes peeled,” I tell him as I open the door, leading me to the answers I have been waiting for.

Corbin sits at the end of a long conference table that had been brought in for this meeting. His usually unruly brown hair is styled and presentable as he sits in a crisp white button-up shirt. I can see how anxious he is as he twiddles his thumbs on the table, stilling when he sees me.

“Aliauna.” he smiles.

“Let’s get this over with,” I say, taking a seat a few feet away from him.

“Where to start.” he jokes uncomfortably

“We don’t have much time before the committee shows up, so maybe start with why you left us to receive your punishment.”

“I didn’t,” he says calmly. “Gail and I were mates. Alpha and Luna knew that, but there was a peace treaty on the table and the Beta’s Son of the other pack lost his mate. He wanted Gail. Gail and I already had her parents’ blessing, but they didn’t want to announce it until after the peace treaty meeting.” He pauses and takes a deep breath.

“Gail and I were already mated. We had our own ceremony in private and we were expecting a pup.” I can see the ghost of a smile on his face from memory.

“Why did you kill her then?” I ask.

“I didn’t! I would never.” His voice cracks at the accusation. “She breathed life into me. She and my pup were my reason for living.”

“Continue.” I urge him, feeling aggravated.

“I found Gail like that. I have no idea what killed her, only that I felt the bond sever, and it knocked me over. When I found her, she was in a pool of her own blood. I clung to her,

hoping that my being near her would help heal her, but she was already gone. When the guards from the visiting pack showed up, they kept claiming they saw me do it. I fought them and I ran. I would not lose my chance at vengeance, and I couldn't get vengeance without my wolf."

"They said you killed her when you found out that she wasn't your mate,"

"No." he shakes his head. "She was my true mate. We were meeting in the woods to run away together. To be a family. Your father was the only person who knew our plan."

"Are you trying to say that Dad sold you out?" I ask, aghast.

He shrugs. "I'm not going to accuse a dead man. But he was the Beta."

His words feel like a blow. A man in the perfect image of my father, who I loved so dearly and thought could do no wrong. He had been perfect in my eyes. A loving father who did everything to protect his family and his pack. The same pack that betrayed him. And now this unanswered question is placing doubt in my mind about who he is.

"He defended you until the end," I whisper.

"What?" Corbin says in shock.

"He kept saying you were innocent. That you had been set up. When Mom begged, The Alpha got mad and took all of our wolves." Tears brim my eyes.

"He spent the rest of his time begging for me to be spared."

I remember the breaking of his voice when he sobbed for me to be left alone. How they put silver chains around his wrist as he tried to fight to get to me. His wrists were bleeding as he thrashed, trying to make them stop. I still remember the pain as if it were yesterday. The way the tendrils of my little mind ripped after they forced the tincture down my throat.

I remember the feeling of my wolves claws ferociously flailing inside, searching for any way to cling to me. I was lucky. They couldn't tear her away from me completely, otherwise, I would have died. Mom and Dad were not so lucky. I remember mom passing out from the pain while Dad gritted his teeth and bore the pain as a badge of honor, even if it was the stark opposite.

"He believed I was innocent?" Corbin asks, shocked.

"I don't know," I answer honestly. "Who believes a man who is about to lose a part of his soul? Mom blamed you, though. Until her last breath, she cursed you."

"And what do you think?"

“I think they would still be here if it weren’t for you.”

“What if I told you I knew who killed your parents? The person who pulled the trigger?”

I freeze at his words.

“Who?” I ask, my gaze snapping to meet his.

Corbin opens his mouth to speak but before he can form the words, the door opens, and in strolls Samuel and Wade. Samuel’s eyes land on Corbin and he freezes. His eyes flit from me to Corbin.

“Well, well. Isn’t this interesting?” Samuel says, smiling.