

Chapter 11 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

“So, about my skittles?....” The Casey guy interjects, making Axel create some menacing growling noise deep in his chest, startling me out of the momentary bliss I was feeling in his arms.

I quickly pulled away from him, taking a step back and cradling Taegan more tightly in my arms. My body is burning with the desire to step back into Axel’s embrace, to continue to along the strange behavior and feel his lips and face against mine, but my head is screaming at me that this is all too much; too weird and too confusing. I don’t need another man creating problems for me. I need to worry more about my son and less about the way Axel’s touch makes me feel....

When I look at my son, though, he is staring at Axel with wonder, and maybe even a little longing of his own, though he is still maintaining that hostile air. He looks like he wants to be back in Axel’s arms too, but also like he might bite the man at the same time.

Axel’s expression is a mask of hurt and sadness. For what, I don’t know. Is he just feeling pity for me because of what Taegan told him about Levi? I don’t need his pity? I don’t need anyone’s pity.

“You are a grown man with big boy money, Case. Why don’t you march your butt in there and get your own skittles?” Axel tells Casey, clenching his teeth.

“I don’t want to go alone,” Casey, the giant thug of a man, pouts like a 2-year-old child, “Hey, kid,” he looks at Taegan, causing Taegan to tear his eyes away from Axel to look at Casey in question, “Do you think you can keep me company while I go get some? I’ll make this oaf buy you some candy too.”

Taegan flinched, tempted by the offer, but did not wiggle to get down, jumping at the urge like I thought he would at the offer of free candy.

“Mommy said you can’t eat candy for breakfast. And I can’t take candy from strangers.”

“I’m not a stranger, though,” Casey opened his arms out, as if to show that he wasn’t a threat. “I’m Casey. What’s your name?”

“Nun-ya,” Taegan turned his face away defiantly.

Casey smirked, knowing what my son was going to say, but asking the next question anyway.

“Nun-ya what?”

“Nun-ya business. Stranger,” Taegan grumbled.

“Geez tough kid. How about this? I have a son a little bit younger than you. Want to see a picture of him?”

Casey pulls his phone out of his pocket, then shuffles through it, looking for the right picture to show. He turns it around when he gets to the one he wants, and Taegan leans forward slightly in my arms to get a better view.

In the picture is Casey with his arm around the girl I recognize from the contact photo on Axel’s phone; Courtney. She is kissing the corner of his smirking mouth. There is a tank of a toddler resting on his hip, scowling at the camera. The toddler and Courtney both have flashy #TEAMEDWARD shirts on while Casey is wearing a #TEAMJACOB tee. Weird. They must be big Twilight fans.

“That’s my son, Calum. He’s not supposed to have candy for breakfast either, but sometimes I like to sneak it to him when my wife isn’t around. I bet if you ask your mom, she won’t mind me sneaking some for you either. Plus, you are gonna need the extra sugar to keep your energy levels up to defend your mama, little alpha.”

“What’s a little alpha?” Taegan asked him.

“Um, it’s uh...” Casey looks at Axel sheepishly, and Axel rolls his eyes, looking annoyed with his friend. “It’s like the strongest and most protective wolf in a pack.”

Taegan tilts his little face, looking up at Axel, then back at Casey, “Then my mommy is an alpha. Right?”

Casey laughs, and even Axel smiles at that. “Your mommy is very much an alpha,” Axel answers for Casey. His intense gaze is back, boring into me and making my body buzz with that strange electricity again.

“So what do you say, little Alpha? Want to protect me while getting some candy? We can let your mommy and your...um, mommy’s friend talk for a few minutes?”

Taegan looks at Axel accusingly, not fully trusting him to leave me alone with the man.

“I promise that he would never yell at or hurt your mama, kid. He’s the ultimate alpha in this town.”

Ultimate alpha? Geez, what’s with all the dog talk?

Taegan scrunches his little eyebrows, scrutinizing both men for a few more seconds before looking up at me. "Can I get the candy, mommy?"

I bite my lip, thinking over if this is a good idea or not. We're just a few feet away from the open doors of the station, and I really would like to clear up the issue of Taegan's paternity to Axel without Taegan here to hear us. I really don't want to explain in front of my child how and why Taegan couldn't be Axel's.

"Sure, baby. If you need me for any reason, though, you scream really loudly and I will come running."

"Okay, mommy," Taegan wiggles down excitedly. Axel hands Casey a credit card, which Casey snatches quickly with a devious smile on his face, then reaches his hand out to Taegan. Taegan looks at it speculatively, but eventually takes it.

I watch nervously as Casey leads Taegan into the gas station store.

"Casey is safe. He's like a giant kid himself. Our son is fine with him while we...talk," Axel tells me.

"He's not our son, Axel," I sigh. "I had him less than 5 months after sleeping with you. I'm sorry to tell you this, believe me, I am, but he can't be yours. I was in a relationship up until an hour before I met you. He has to be Levi's," I looked away, feeling shame at how much of a whore that confession made me sound like.

"He's mine," Axel growls softly, "I don't know who this Levi fucker is, but I know that he is not that child's father. I am. I can sense it. I can smell it on him, Bailey."

"You can smell it on him?" I huffed in disbelief, "What is up with you both and the dog references. You can't smell his paternity. He was not a premie baby. He was actually pretty big. Definitely a full-term baby. There is no way that you were his father. You got mad that I didn't tell you I was pregnant, but why would I? He can't be yours."

"He is. I will take a paternity test if you really don't believe me, but I know he is mine, and I know you can feel that he is mine, too," Axel takes a step closer to me, resting a hand on my shoulders, that weird electrical spark on my skin again makes me gasp.

"I'm his dad, and you are my.... You are mine, Bailey. I knew it from the moment I met you. I spent the last few years searching everywhere for you. You just left without me being able to explain anything. You are mine. Your son is mine. I'm not letting you leave me again like before. Please, give me the chance to show you how I know he is my son."

I was momentarily lost in the depth of his clear blue eyes and my inner desires surfacing once again. Axel was staring down at me, so much conviction and longing on his face. His hand is rubbing soothing electric circles on my shoulder, and everything inside me is crying out to trust this man.

I'm not stupid. I know Casey showed me that picture of him and his son because it had that Courtney woman kissing him in it. It really was my misunderstanding that he was married, but that still doesn't mean that Taegan is his. It is just not possible.

Laughter can be heard spilling out of the open gas station store, distracting both of us. Axel looked into the store, then chuckled lightly. I turned to see what he was laughing at, trying to ignore the way his husky expulsion of breath made my body tighten up in all the right places.

Casey and Taegan both have their arms filled with all kinds of snacks and candies. Casey puts a big bag of powdered donuts on top of the pile in Taegan's arms, making Taegan squeal happily when it slides back across a king-sized pack of Twislers and hits him in the face.

"See. He's just an overgrown, annoying kid," Axel shakes his head, his face painted over in humor. "What's his name?"

I smile, watching Casey set everything on the counter, then help Taegan place his loot beside his, some of it spilling over as they hurry to pick it back up and put it back on the counter to be wrung up. Casey holds his finger up, signaling the cashier to give them one more minute. He and Taegan rush off to get more, and the way Taegan's cheerful laughter spills out of him has me laughing while tears fill my eyes.

Casey was able to erase all the tension and worry from my son's little body, replacing it with joy and childish mischievousness. I love it. I love seeing my son like this.

"Taegan. His name is Taegan," I whispered.

"Taegan," Axel repeated the name. "I like it." Axel's beautiful blue eyes trailed after Taegan as he moved around the store with Casey, Casey loading his little arms up with everything in sight, Taegan bouncing on his feet excitedly. There is amazement in those eyes, like they just can't believe how perfect that little boy is.

Levi never looked at Taegan like that.

Tears spilled from my right eye, and I turned away to wipe them with the back of my hand. "I'm glad you like his name, but that doesn't change the fact that he can't be your son. It's not possible."

"He is and it is, Bailey," Axel looks back down at me, "I promise you, it is. I'm not a normal human. That is why it is possible. He IS my son. Taegan is my kid. We even look alike, Bailey. You can't deny that."

I bit my lip timidly. I can see the resemblance. I have always seen the similarities between the man in front of me and my son. It almost hurt at times seeing how much my child resembled a man I couldn't get out of my mind and oddly yearned for.

"What do you mean you aren't a normal human?"

Axel took another look at my son. Casey was now paying for all their stuff with the card he took from Axel. When he turns those mesmerizing blue eyes back at me, they are filled with resolve. “I am a werewolf, Bailey. I’m a werewolf and the Alpha of Blue Cliff Pack. You, Bailey, are my mate, and Taegan is my son.”

12 Sugar Crash

Chapter 12 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Courtney POV

Calum is screaming his head off, mad that Casey wasn’t home when he woke up. The man-child I call my mate promised him double chocolate pancakes for breakfast, which is really just chocolate cake mix with chocolate chips in it fried.

I don’t condone chocolate on chocolate for breakfast, and Calum is not happy about my regular, low-sugar pancakes.

“Baby, can’t you just try the pancakes mommy made? I made them into Mickey Mouse shapes.” I thought that would win him over. Carli and Simone stole him and took him to Disney World with Rosey, my niece, for a weekend last time we visited, so Casey and I could have a few days alone. He loved Mickey Mouse and all the Mickey-shaped food the place had to offer. Simone bought him a little pancake shaper to take home and he makes us use it every chance he can.

“NO!” he screamed, throwing his plate across the kitchen from his high chair. “DADDY CAKE-CAKES!”

“Moon Goddess, give me strength,” I looked up at the ceiling. I did not have enough coffee for this child this morning.

Calum is in full melt-down mode, screaming at the top of his lungs, fists covered in a banana that he squished at the beginning of his tantrum. I just grab my coffee cup, fill it back up, then lean against the kitchen counter, watching as my son loses his mind over something I am not going to give in to. Chocolate is not a healthy breakfast option, and I have a feeling, even if I gave in and gave it to him, he still wouldn’t be happy because it didn’t come from Casey.

My phone starts going off at the end of the counter. I look at the ID and see it’s the main culprit himself.

If someone else had been calling, I would have left the room, but I wanted Casey to hear the monster that he had created.

“Ye-es?” I answered, drawing out the word.

“Hey, can you, ouch!....Hey, lady, I’m not trying to steal him, I’m just....ooof!....Quit throwing shit at me!”

I push myself off the counter, standing up straight, straining to hear the commotion at the other end of the line. Some woman is screaming and yelling in the background, and I can hear Axel shushing and talking in a voice like you would talk to a spooked horse.

“Casey? What the heck is going on?”

“He found her!” he huffs, sounding like he is running by the way he is breathing in the phone line now.

“Mommy! I want my mommy!” a little kid's voice growls surprisingly close to Casey.

“Found who? Did you just kidnap a kid?” I asked, my voice rising in concern.

“What?! No. I’m just, uh, borrowing him until she calms down.” His voice continues to bounce around while the little voice of the child continues to scream at him to take them to their mother.

“WHO?!” I yelled, trying to make sense of the situation my mate and cousin were in.

Calum, thank the Goddess, stops screaming when he hears me yelling, making it easier for me to hear what’s going on on the phone.

“HIS MATE!” Casey yells. “Axel found his fucking mate, but there were....issues. We need a woman here to reason with her. She just thinks we are crazy or into occult shit or something now. She said to give her back her kid and called us demons when Axel, the fucking idiot, told her at the fucking gas station that we were werewolves. It’s a fucking shit show, Court.”

“Mommy is going to spank your butt for having a potty mouth!” the little kid yells. “Give. Me. My. MOMMY!”

“Wait, who’s the kid?” I asked.

Casey huffs out a laugh. I couldn’t hear any yelling any more in the distance. Just the kid’s. He must have run into the forest or something.

“She was fucking pregnant Court!”

“Bad word!” the kid yells.

He sighed deeply. It no longer sounds like he is running because his voice is no longer bouncing around.

“Axel’s, uh, M-A-T-E was P-R-E-G-N-A-N-T when she ran away. She had his K-I-D. I got a little alpha under my arm in a football hold right now.”

“Wait,” I thought about the words he was spelling out another time, making sure I caught what he was trying to tell me. “She was pregnant and had his kid? Axel’s mate? He found his mate?” I asked in disbelief.

“Oh yeah. Shit, Court. It’s a fucking mess.”

“MOMMY SAID NO BAD WORDS! GIVE ME A SPOON! I’LL SPANK YOU!”

I want to laugh at the little voice threatening my big bear of a mate, but I’m still too much in shock at what he’s telling me.

Axel found his mate and she had a kid? His kid? Casey said little Alpha. Does that mean she had a son? Jeez, and she’s a flippin’ human to boot. How did she go through a werewolf pregnancy and not realize something was wrong with his development, or the rapid rate of his development?

“Where are you guys?” I asked Casey when my brain could finally wrap around their current situation.

“Gas station. The one on the main street. Not the pack’s utility station. Well, they are anyway. I ran into the forest with the kid when she started to freak out. She started throwing shit at us, trying to take him and run away.”

“So you kidnapped her kid?!”

“I didn’t know what else to do!” Casey huffs.

I shook my head, mortified that my idiot cousin and husband would steal someone’s child to prevent her from running away again. I mean, I get it. Axel has been looking for her for years now. The idiot should have told her what we were in a different setting, though, where she doesn’t have a car to run from him in and he can easily show her that he is in fact a wolf without risking other humans seeing him shift.

I mean, she’s a human. She probably thinks the worst of Casey and Axel right now, and Casey isn’t making it any better by stealing her son.

“I’m facetimeing you. Let me talk to the kid,” I told Casey, grabbing the washcloth from the sink to clean Calum’s hands quickly. Looks like we’re going to see our new Luna and her kid instead of fighting over breakfast. Yay us!

I throw the washcloth in the sink, then press the facetime button on the call. When the screen switches on, I'm face-to-face with a miniature Axel, the same blue eyes and everything. Damn, he really does have a son.

"Hey, little Alpha. I'm Courtney. What's your name?"

"Nunya!" he yells. He is dangling against Casey's side, Casey's arm wrapped tightly around his waist while Casey holds the phone out so he can see me. The kid reaches for the phone to smack it away, but Casey is faster and jerks it back just in time to save it from his little angry fingers.

"Taegan. Little runt's name is Taegan," Casey tells me.

"Oh, I like Taegan a lot more than Nunya," I smiled at him.

"I don't care what you like! I want mommy!"

"I know, honey. I want you to have your mommy too. I'm on my way there right now and I need you to do me a big favor. That big guy holding onto you right now said a lot of bad words and I'm going to come and spank him. See. I'm even bringing my spoon," I grab a wooden spoon out of the utensil holder next to the stove and show him. "Can you watch him for me and make sure he doesn't get away? You watch him for me, and I'll not only make sure you get back to your mommy, I'll let you tell me the number of spankings he gets. Do we have a deal?"

The kid looks up and glares at Casey, baring his little teeth, then looks back at me. "Bring two spoons. I want to spank him too."

I laughed at his menacing expression. He looks so much like Axel. It's crazy. "Okay, Taegan," I pulled another spoon out of the hold, "Two spoons. Just make sure he stays there and doesn't get away. I'll be there soon."

13 Alpha Aura

Chapter 13 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

"Give me back my son!" I screamed, trying to get out of Axel's hold to chase after that thug-looking punk that was running off with Taegan. He pulled out his phone and called someone, and I can only hope it was the police. He had better pray the police get to him before I do.

“Shh, Bailey, please,” Axel tries to calm me, his arms wrapped tightly around my waist, “You’re causing a scene.”

“You’re causing a scene, you freak! Make him give me back my son!”

“Our son,” the bastard tried to correct me.

“MY SON!” I screamed. “I don’t give a crap what kind of culty bullshit you are a part of, he is not your son and you need to make your heathen friend give him back!”

“Not until you calm down and listen.”

“I listened! You guys are freaks who think you are both werewolves. I get it! I saw the weird Twilight shirts your friend and cousin, and even their baby were wearing in that picture. I don’t know what kind of occult bullshit you are both a part of, but leave me and my son out of it!”

“It’s not occult bullshit, Bailey. I’m telling you the truth!”

“I don’t care! GIVE ME MY SON!”

I tried to snatch Taegan away from Casey and get him in the car so we could drive off, away from these two weirdos, but the big thug was faster, tossing their bags full of junk food on the ground and hoisting my son up in his arms before I could get a grip on him. The gas station attendant closed his doors, not offering any help after Axel yelled to him that everything was fine. Everything is not fine. Some thug ran away with my son and both he and the man holding on to me think they are in some supernatural romance novel or something.

I chased him around the small parking lot, throwing my shoes, keys and wallet at Casey to try and stop him, but he was too fast, and my shoe hitting his head didn’t slow him down at all.

Axel caught me right when Casey with my son ran into the forest, wrapping his strong arms around my waist, my stupid body betraying me for some reason and momentarily melting against him, giving Casey the chance to get away with my child.

“How can I convince you that I’m not lying?” Axel asks, nuzzling into my neck, making those damn confusing and euphoric electrical currents over my skin make a strained whimper escape from my mouth.

“How about you start by giving me my son?” I sneer, but most of the venom in my tone melts away as his breath washes down my neck.

“Our son.”

I whimper as his lips make contact with the dip in the nape of my neck. Why am I reacting like this right now? I should be fighting him to get to my son, but all my body wants to do right now is surrender to his touch.

“Stop,” I whimper.

“Not until you listen,” Axel’s husky voice coos in my ear.

His lips find my neck again, and I melt against his chest as they skim my skin, his nose brushing against my shoulder and the heat of his chest pressing into my back. My body is shivering despite how hot I feel right now.

This doesn’t make any sense!

“Axel, please,” I whimpered again.

“Mmh, I love the way my name sounds coming out of your mouth.”

I can’t fight him any more. My body is like jello right now, and everything in me is crying out for this man. This isn’t fair. I need to get to my son, but all I can think about is how Axel’s lips feel against my skin.

This overwhelming calmness and comfort washes over me, and all thoughts about how wrong this is are leaving my mind.

“What’s wrong with me?” I whispered, angling my neck to give Axel better access to that sweet spot that feels so good when his mouth touches it.

“It’s my alpha aura. I can use it to calm and comfort someone when I need to if they are a member of my pack or my mate. You’re my mate, Bailey. I know you don’t believe me or know what that means, but I’ll show you soon.”

“Mate?” I mumbled, closing my eyes as another wave of calmness washes over me.

“Werewolves have mates; a partner the moon goddess chooses just for us. They are the other half of our souls. You are my heart and soul, Bailey. I’ve been missing both my heart and soul since the morning you ran away.”

I am leaning into his touch, savoring every second of his body pressing against mine as his breath continues to wash over me, as well as that comforting feeling that is bleeding out of him and into me. He is rocking slightly, swaying to some imaginary beat.

After a few more minutes of swaying, Axel lifts me in his arms and carries me over to the truck he drove here in. I should probably be concerned about him abducting me, or what Casey is doing with Taegan right now, but all I can think about is how wonderful it feels to be carried by Axel.

I’m not a small girl. I mean, I’m kind of short, but I have curves and meat on my bones. I have lost a lot of weight over the years because of stress, but I know I’m not anything like what most men’s ideal body type in a woman is, but Axel is carrying me like I weigh nothing.

Levi could never carry me like this. He tried once when I fractured my foot, getting it caught in the space between the stairs when I was carrying groceries up to our apartment.

He gave up and got mad at me while I was on the ground crying and just walked off, embarrassed by me, going up to the apartment on his own, not even bothering to help carry up the groceries or Taegan. Taegan and my crying got the attention of several women passing by on their way to the apartment complex's gym, and they ended up carrying me and Taegan up to our apartment, then helped to bring in all the groceries while Levi hid in our room taking a nap.

Taegan was barely 2, and I was so embarrassed by Levi's lack of care. He made me feel like shit because of his inability to lift me.

I have this overwhelming feeling that Axel would never make me feel like that. He is cradling me against his chest like I am the most precious thing in the world to him, staring down and checking on me every other second, his beautiful blue eyes full of intense adoration.

Those eyes. I could get lost in those eyes....

Axel is sitting in his truck with me cradled in his lap, in a complete state of calm and relaxation. I have never felt safer in my entire life. A white Ford Explorer pulls in next to his truck on the other side of the pump, causing me to look over at it in a daze.

Axel's attention went from staring down at my lips to the car as well.

Courtney, the same girl from the picture, gets out of the driver's seat. She rolls down all her windows before closing her door.

"You got her calm?" Courtney asks, looking into the open driver's side window of Axel's truck.

"Alpha aura," he mutters.

She smiles warmly at me "Hi Bailey. I'm Courtney, your mate's cousin."

"Hi," I smiled, despite myself. Whatever Axel is doing to me, it's making me feel slightly drugged. I almost feel high right now, staring over at the beautiful red-headed woman I once thought was Axel's wife. Cousin. She is his cousin.

"Where is my idiot husband?" Courtney asks Axel.

"Forest somewhere. I don't know. I was focused on getting her to calm down."

"Breaking news like that in the gas station parking lot was probably not a good idea," she chuckles.

He growls deep in his chest, making me giggle. "She kept denying my son was my son. I got over eager to tell her why I knew he was."

“Understandable, but still not the smartest idea. Big bad alpha with a big bad ego. You could have told her somewhere where you could have shown her you were telling the truth and not bat shit crazy.”

“I’ll remember that next time,” he growls, making me giggle again. He’s like a puppy when he does that. An angry, over-grown puppy.

“Man, using your aura on a human is fun. She looks like she just huffed laughing gas. You have a beautiful smile, Bailey,” Courtney giggles.

“Thanks,” I smiled wider. I didn’t even know I was smiling to begin with, but now that I know I am, that’s all I can focus on. “I have a mouth,” I muttered, stretching it wide and puckering my lips together over and over again.

“You do. A beautiful mouth,” Axel whispers, then chuckles when I put my fingers on his mouth. He kissed my fingertips lightly.

“Okay, cuz. Calum’s in the car. Watch him for me for a few minutes.” Courtney walks back to her car, then reappears with two wooden spoons in her hands.

“Why? Can’t you just mind link him and tell him to come back?”

Mind link? What’s that?

Courtney shakes her head, “Nope. I promised the little alpha that he could spank Casey with a spoon. Calum would lose his mind if he saw another little boy being mean to his daddy. He’s already in a foul mood because I wouldn’t give him sugar for breakfast like his daddy does.”

Axel chuckles deep in his chest, the sound making me sigh in contentment. Everything about him is so manly and safe. I snuggle my head against his chest, enjoying the feel of the rise and fall of it.

He rests his lips on my head, puckering them slightly over and over again, snuggling his nose in my hair and inhaling deeply.

“Once Courtney gets back with our son, we can go home and I will show you that I’m not lying.”

I nod my head, not able to fight anything he says anymore. I know in my heart after what he is doing to my body right now that whatever he is saying is the truth.

Chapter 14 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

I cradled Bailey in my arms, her head resting against my chest, under my chin until she lulled herself to sleep.

Thank the moon goddess for my being Alpha. I don't know how I could have gotten her to calm down if it weren't for that. I almost lost her again in my rush to have her understand how I knew Taegan was mine.

Taegan. I really do love his name.

He looks just like me too. There is no denying that that beautiful little boy is my son.

Courtney comes back with Casey and my son a few minutes later. She is holding Taegan's hand, both of them holding a wooden spoon while Casey walks in front of them, rubbing his back side like it's sore.

They pass by the bags Casey tossed on the ground with all their snack food they bought in the gas station store. The ones he tossed aside when he grabbed Taegan and ran off. Courtney picks one up, then starts scolding Casey for buying all that junk food for the child for breakfast.

Taegan yells, "Yeah! Cousin Courtney said no! Mommy said no!" he then looked up to Courtney, "I spank him again for you?"

"You go right ahead, Taegan," she smirks.

Casey, being the dutiful husband and cousin, stands in place and takes a couple spankings to the ass with the wooden spoon, feigning pain with each hit. I know it doesn't actually hurt him. He winked at Courtney before Taegan started swinging.

I don't know if I agree with Courtney teaching Taegan to hit with spoons, but I'm impressed she got him to call her Cousin Courtney. The little dormant wolf in him can tell that we are family. He didn't seem hostile towards me until he thought I was threatening his mom. Instinctually he already knows we are his kin. He knows I'm his dad, but he just doesn't know how to trust his instincts yet.

His words about Bailey being hurt by his "dad" come to mind and have the beast in me growling, eager to tear through anyone who has ever been mean to my mate. I want to know what it is she

has been through and what she is running from. I need to know. She is mine. Taegan is mine. They are both mine to protect.

Bailey getting pregnant from our one night together isn't something I ever imagined. I'm sad I missed the first few years with my son, and that someone else was raising him, though he sounds like a piece of shit. I'm not going to miss any more time with either one of them. They are coming home with me.

I bet the prick didn't even pamper her or cherish her the way she deserved while pretending to be my son's father. She wouldn't be here without him if he was worth a damn. She's running. I just need to know from what.

It makes sense that Bailey didn't think Taegan could be mine. Werewolf pregnancies are half the time of a regular human pregnancy. It pisses me off that she could even consider Taegan being anyone else's. It may be hypocritical, considering I was not a virgin when I met her, but I'm a fucking alpha werewolf. I'm possessive as shit and the thought of Bailey with any other man infuriates me.

Her perfect lips, luscious curves, the delicious taste of her skin and the agonizingly arousing face she makes when she is overcome with pleasure, those are all things I want for myself. No one else will ever have the chance to see her in those ways again. Ever.

"Whatcha thinking about there, Alpha? You're looking scary as fuck right now," Casey leans against the door, peering into my open window. His face softens momentarily when he sees Bailey asleep in my arms. Courtney is looking in her car, checking on Calum, but looks over and smirks when the curse word slips from her mate.

"Bad word!" Taegan comes up from behind him and hits his ass with the spoon again.

"Ouch! Jeez! Okay, I'm sorry. You've got a little arm on ya', kid."

"You've got a potty mouth on you," Taegan huffs.

Courtney is smirking, watching them. "Taegan, we are going to be the bestest of friends in the future. You have to help me keep this one in line."

Taegan looks up at her, smiling shyly, then turns his face down to the ground, holding up his fist so she can bump it. It's the cutest display of comradeship I've ever seen. Courtney just laughs, bumping his fist, and Casey even has a smirk on his face.

"Taegan?" I said his name to get his attention, loving the way his name rolled off my tongue. He looks at me skeptically but curiously.

"What?"

“Does your mommy spank you with a spoon?” I don’t want to assume or judge her about it, but I’m dying to know where the whole spoon thing came from. I’ve never seen Courtney spank Calum and she definitely does not threaten anyone with a wooden spoon. I hope not, anyway. If that’s some weird bedroom thing between her and Casey, I want to remain in the dark about it.

Taegan shifts his lips to the side, then shakes his head. “Mommy doesn’t spank me. Dad did it once when she was at work. Mommy does not know. You can’t tell her. It will make her sad.” He furrows his little brows like the thought I could tell his mommy had just occurred to him.

I resist the urge to growl and snarl, and it takes everything in me. The mere thought of some other man acting as Taegan’s father having the nerve to spank him infuriates me. It makes me near homicidal.

Courtney, sensing my anger, takes the spoon from Taegan’s hands. Her face is the most composed of the three of us. Casey looks just as pissed as me.

“Taegan, baby. Your mommy fell asleep with your, uh,” she looked at me, wondering what to call me to Taegan.

I cleared my throat, burying down my dissipating anger as much as possible. “Your mommy is asleep in here,” I told him, saving Courtney from having to figure out what to say. “I am going to let your mommy sleep, because I think she is really tired so-”

“Mommy did not sleep last night,” Taegan interrupted me. “She was staring out the window until I went to sleep, and then she woke me up when it was still really late at night time. We drove for a long time. Mommy was sleepy.”

I grimaced, wanting to know what it was she was watching for outside. “Who was she looking for out the window?”

“Dad,” Taegan growls, a little, high-pitched rumbling sound in the back of his throat. “Dad tried to take me from Grandma Lucy before. The police people came. They were not nice to mommy. The girl police was mean.”

“Why was he trying to take you from Grandma Lucy?” Courtney asks for me while I try to compose my anger again.

Taegan shrugs, “He is mean to mommy but he doesn’t want her to be living at Grandma Lucy’s house. He wanted mommy to go back to his house, but he hit mommy and she said no. Mommy thinks I don’t know, but he is loud when he yells. I can’t sleep when he yells. I saw him being mean to her. He doesn’t like me much.” Taegan looks down, scowling.

I can’t help the growl that rips out of me hearing that. It didn’t surprise Taegan this time. He just looked back up at me, eyes full of conviction. “I’m going to protect mommy now. I don’t need a dad.”

“What if you had a dad that just wanted to protect your mommy with you?” Casey asked him.

Taegan tilts his head, thinking, “If he makes mommy smile, maybe. But Dad doesn’t make mommy smile. She is only sad with Dad.”

“Taegan, what was your, uh, dad’s name?” Courtney asked.

“Levi? That’s what mommy called him. When she wasn’t calling him bad words.”

Casey chuckles softly at that, but the humor does not reach his eyes.

“Levi isn’t your dad, Taegan. I promise you. I also promise you that Levi will never hurt or make your mommy sad like that again. Your real dad is going to love you and keep you both safe, making sure you both only smile from now on.”

Taegan scowls, “Are you saying you are my dad again?”

I nodded, smiling hesitantly.

“Why were you not with us before then?”

I grimaced. “I tried to be. Believe me, I did. I didn’t know where to find your mommy. Now that I’ve found mommy, you are both going to stay with me from now on.”

He still looks at me like he is unsure about what I’m telling him, and then his eyes move to his mother sleeping in my arms and his eyes soften slightly. I can see the love and protectiveness in every little bone in his body as he looks at Bailey in my arms.

"If you can only make my mommy smile. If you make my mommy cry, you can't be my dad."

Fair enough, I think to myself. It is going to take some time to earn his trust. "I promise, Taegan. All I want to do for the rest of my life is make your mommy happy."

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A/N: This will go PTR some time after the 9th. Leading up to that, I want to do double updates daily to give you guys as many free chapters as possible. To do that, I need the following to grow so I can still qualify for promotions. Can you guys help me by sharing this as much as possible

over the next week? If you share it, send a snapshot to my f@ce.b00k and I will do another drawing for Am@zon gift cards on the 12th. Comment if you have won a gift card in the past, so newer readers know it's a real thing!

Thank you all so much for helping this newest book of mine grow as fast as it has. I'm excited to be able to make it my priority now that my other two books are coming close to completion!

15 Perfect Fit

Chapter 15 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

I groaned, rolling over on the softest bed I had laid on in a long time. My senses are overwhelmed with the comforting scent my body has longed for for so long. The scent I could faintly pick up on my son, and the same smell that clung to my sweatshirt years ago that I used to comfort myself with when life was getting to be too much.

I clutched onto a pillow, taking it under my face and breathing deeply in the scent over and over again.

I know this scent.

Axel.

My eyes snap open with the realization, and then my memory from before falling asleep returns to me. I am no longer under that strange spell Axel cast on me, but I can still feel that deep comfort. It's like it is rooted in my soul, numbing my limbs and making it impossible for tension to build back in my body.

I no longer have the will to fight him.

I should. He's obviously crazy. Who seriously believes that they are a werewolf?

All I want to do right now is envelop my body in this scent and enjoy this magnificently soft bed for as long as possible.

But Taegan....

That giant thug better have given him back. I groaned again, pushing myself up in the bed, my eyes adjusting enough to finally see around the dim room.

The room is familiar. I've been here before. It's Axel's room at that strange hotel behind the bus stop in town.

"Morning," Axel's soothing husky voice carries over to me. I looked behind me, and saw that he was lying beside me, Taegan napping on his lap. The sight of my son sleeping against Axel's broad chest makes my body tingle in weird ways and my heart swells in my chest. The image looks so....right.

Taegan fits perfectly against him, and seems to be as comforted by Axel's smell as I am. His little nose was pressed up against him, breathing deeply in his slumber.

"He was exhausted too, so I held him and let him watch a show on my phone until he fell asleep. Got about 5 minutes into an episode of some show called Bluey before passing out."

I rolled over and ran my hand down my son's cheek. His eyes flinch, but his breathing remains even as he continues to sleep. "He must not have had any of that sugar for breakfast then," I mutter.

Axel laughs deeply, my core tightening at the sound, and shakes his head. "No. Courtney told us he couldn't eat sugar without a proper breakfast. She made him oatmeal."

My brows furrow. I forgot Courtney was there before I fell asleep. "Is she here too?" I asked. I wonder if she thinks she is a werewolf as well. She had on a #TEAMEDWARD shirt in that picture. Maybe she thinks she is a vampire. That's even crazier. Vampires being real seems more unlikely than werewolves. You can probably genetically modify a wolf's DNA, but how could you make a vampire? With a bat?

"She will be back soon. She is taking your car and all your stuff to the packhouse with Casey, then she and Calum are coming back here while Casey covers for me at work."

"You took my car?" I asked in disbelief.

"I took your car," he smirks and chuckles.

I work extra hard to get my face to glare at him. "That's theft."

He shrugs, "You stole my heart. I'm just taking your car."

"I didn't steal your heart," I muttered. Hearing him say that made my skin tingle and my throat swell, but he doesn't need to know that. Damn whatever spell he cast on my body. It's so hard to be mad at him right now.

“You did, Bailey. My world felt like it was ending when I woke up that morning and you were gone.”

Guilt eats away at me, because I can feel his pain in his words. I can see the evidence of the heartache I left him with on his face and with the way he is cradling my son in his arms.

That doesn't change the fact that he is crazy, though.

“You think you're a werewolf,” I deadpan.

He chuckles lightly. “I am a werewolf. Not just any werewolf either. I'm an alpha. I'm the leader of my pack.”

“Your cult,” I muttered.

“No, but it may seem like one from the outside to a human.” He sighs, then adjusts Taegan to lay beside him on the bed, tucking him into the comforter tenderly and kissing his head in the sweetest way. Taegan smiles slightly in his sleep, making my heart contract seeing the affection that Axel holds for my son, and the way Taegan responds to him, even in his sleep.

I've always wanted that for my son. Levi never showed Taegan any sort of affection. Axel is absolutely bat shit crazy with all his occult bullshit, but that doesn't stop me from wishing and hoping that he is really and truly my son's father, as impossible as that would be.

Axel, turning his attention to me, placed his large, rough hand on my hip, the callused skin rubbing against mine where my shirt had ridden up.

He turns my body to straddle him at the same time he shifts under me to sit on the edge of the bed, me in his lap. I don't fight him. I don't want to. So what if he is crazy? He has already shown me more affection and kindness than any other man I have ever encountered in my life, and now that I know he isn't married and that monstrous Casey isn't his child, what reason do I have to fight him?

Axel lifts me in his arms, my hands naturally finding their way around his neck as he supports my weight like it's nothing. It doesn't go unnoticed by me the way his hands are gripping my ass, squeezing ever so slightly, like he just can't help himself. He seems to be enjoying having me in his arms just as much as I enjoy being in them.

“Let's talk in the living room. Our son should get his nap out before his cousin comes back. Calum is a rough little boy. Taegan will need the extra energy.”

“My son is a rough little boy too.”

Axel's eyes narrowed, “Our son, Bailey. I am sending off our DNA samples to get tested as soon as we get to the packhouse to prove it to you. He's our son.”

I don't argue any more. I don't want to. I would actually love for Axel to be his father and if he is so insistent on the matter, I'll let him continue to believe it. What is it going to hurt?

Wait...

Taegan. That's who.

"Until you get the results back, don't even think about insisting on Taegan calling you dad or anything like that. It will hurt him more when he finds out it's not true."

Axel pulls a face, "It is true, though."

"Axel," I tilted my face, giving him a more scolding look.

His face softens and he sighs as he sits on the couch, holding me close, so I continue to straddle him. His hands remain on my ass, tightly gripping my flesh like he doesn't ever want to let it go. If I'm being honest, I don't want him to either.

"Fine. But you have to stay with me until the results come back. No trying to run away. If the results come back and he isn't my son, I'll let you decide if you want to stay or go. Well...." he made a cringing face, like the thought of me going was the worst thought that ever crossed his mind.

"I'm his father, so it doesn't matter. You will be staying here with me," he says, more to himself than me.

I bite my lip, trying not to let the way his body feels against mine distract me from our conversation. "So if the test comes back and you are not his father, will you just let us go? You won't use your cult witchy voodoo crap to get me to stay again?"

He grimaces, but nods, "Yeah, but I will always want you to stay. You're mine, Bailey."

"Because you think you are some werewolf?"

"Because I am a werewolf. I can show you. Just wait until Courtney gets back and I will prove to you that I'm not crazy. Courtney can watch our son and I'll take you into the forest and show you that I'm not lying."

16 My Heart

Chapter 16 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

She isn't fighting me any more. I was worried that when she woke up, she would go back to trying to fight me to get away and I would have to subdue her again, but she was much more accepting of me than I could have hoped.

Using my aura on a human is a little too effective. I could tell the effects were still keeping her relaxed, which helped my case a lot. She didn't fight my hold on her. She seemed to like it, her frail arms resting comfortably around my neck.

I love the feel of her soft body in my hands. I'm probably pushing it, the way I keep trying to subtly grope her, but if she notices, she hasn't said anything yet, or told me to stop.

I need to show her I'm not crazy and I'm not lying. I need to prove to her I am what I say I am. I should have done this years ago; told her the truth from the start. I was so nervous about her being a human and being sensitive to her ignorance that I didn't get vital information out of her that would have been extremely useful to find her.

I should have asked for more details about her life and what she was doing here. I didn't even think of asking her about her hometown. I was scared the more information I asked of her, the more she would ask of me, and then I would have had to reveal that I was not human like her. I thought revealing that too soon would scare her off.

Well, based on how she took the news this time, that reaction was probably a likely possibility back then too.

Werewolves and other supernatural creatures have to stay hidden from the human world. In the medieval days, humans would hunt and exploit supernatural beings for personal gain, and many natural disasters and diseases were blamed on us.

Humans fear what they don't understand, so it is a common law of supernaturals around the world to remain hidden, or blend in. Don't let the secret out of our existence. Let humans continue to think that we are nothing more than imaginary creatures from folklore and nightmares.

Bailey is a victim to this mindset, and I was scared she would run away from me when she learned the truth.

She ran away from me anyway, so now I'm going to do everything in my power as the Alpha of my pack to keep her with me. Courtney is a nurse at our pack hospital, but I may see if she would consider taking a leave of absence to be with my mate when I can't be. I want to keep her here and I want to keep her safe.

The first step in that is to show her I'm not lying. I need to show her I really am a werewolf and she is my mate, then explain to her what that means.

I made that "deal" with her that she could leave if I was not Taegan's father because I knew there was no chance of the test coming back saying I was not. If I can gain Bailey's trust and have her allow me to mark her, then everything else will fall into place.

I also need to find out exactly what it is that she is running from.

Taegan mentioned her ex, his dad, Levi, and that he wasn't nice to Bailey. He also told me about Levi trying to take him to get Bailey to come back to him. I need to know exactly who this Levi asshole is so I can stop the threat to Bailey.

Maybe I should just find him and deal with him....

I don't want my mate to live with fear or worry. I need to find out exactly what is going on so I can fix it, eliminating the problem, so I can fulfill my promise to Taegan of only making his mommy smile.

Her smile is gorgeous. I only want to give her things to smile about for the rest of our lives.

Bailey stays in my arms, allowing me to continue holding her, and after a while, she starts to ask me questions about what it is the leader of werewolves does.

I tell her about managing the members, the businesses and our warriors. She has a lot of questions about the warriors. Casey, being my Gamma, is the head of our warriors, and when I tell her that, she seems to believe me. Casey is very much the embodiment of a warrior, with his bulking frame and commanding presence.

"So you think my son is a werewolf too?" She eventually asks.

"No, I know our son is a werewolf too. He's a little alpha, just like his father," I boasted proudly.

"There is nothing little about you," she mutters.

"Is that a compliment?" I asked her with a raised eyebrow.

Her adorably beautiful face flushes scarlet as she looks away shyly. Her fingers have begun to play with the hair on the back of my head absentmindedly, and I love the way the sparks feel on my skin. My desire for my long lost mate is building with her straddling my lap, and I know she can feel my arousal hardening beneath her. No, there is absolutely nothing little about it.

I ran my hand up her back, gripping the back of her neck and tilting her head so she was forced to look at me again. My grip on her luscious ass gets tighter, to the point I hope it leaves a mark so there is a semi-permanent sign of who that ass belongs to on it. It's mine. All of her is mine.

Her eyes are wide, slightly glazed over as they keep glancing from my eyes to my lips. My eyes momentarily looked at hers, and the little indentation on her bottom lip from her teeth was so tempting. I just want to run my tongue over it, soothing the roughed mark away and implanting my own there instead.

The door clicking open breaks our moment. I internally growled at my cousin for her horrible timing. I could have claimed Bailey's perfect lips if she had just waited a few more seconds. A minute at most.

Bailey tries to shift off my lap, but I hold her firmly in place. This is where she belongs, in my arms, molded against me. Where I can feel her heart beating inside her well-endowed chest and the heat of her body melting into mine.

Courtney walks in, towing Calum on her hip, then freezes when she sees us on the couch, a slow grin spreading on her face.

"Look at you two getting along."

"We always got along," I growled at her.

Courtney rolls her eyes, "Yeah, that's why she was trying to run away from you for the second time."

The brat. I bare my teeth at my annoying cousin. She's lucky I love her. If anyone else talked to me the way she does, I wouldn't hesitate to put them in their place.

"Hey Bailey. I don't know if you remember me very well, but I'm Courtney. That big lug's favorite cousin."

"Only cousin. That makes you my least favorite too."

Bailey, embarrassed by the position she is in on my lap, tries again to slip out of my grip. Werewolves are possessive and very affectionate with their mates. She will get used to it eventually, especially after she sees the way Casey treats Courtney, and the way Courtney always disgustingly grabs Casey's ass out in public. I gag each and every time, but it's common among mates.

I show mercy to Bailey, though, and allow her to slip to my side on the couch, but keep a firm grip on her thigh. Call me paranoid, but she's successfully run away from me once, and tried to do so again. I'm a little apprehensive about letting her go at this point in time.

"Hi, Courtney. I remember you. It is nice to meet you again," Bailey told her shyly.

Calum, the tank, holds his chubby little hands out for me, then leans forward, almost causing Courtney to drop him. Courtney sighs, then plops the overgrown toddler on my lap roughly.

Seriously, Casey should stop sneaking the kid so much sugar. He weighs a ton. Probably more than my Taegan.

My Taegan. I have a son.

I grip Calum with my free hand, smiling slightly at the thought of my son and Calum playing together once Taegan wakes up from his nap.

Courtney plops down in a huff beside Bailey on the couch and pats her knee, “We are going to be best friends. I hope you know that. We are family anyway now.”

“Not until the paternity test comes back,” Bailey says softly. I cringe thinking about the deal I made with her. Not because I doubt Taegan’s paternity, but because I hate even thinking about the possibility of her leaving me again.

Courtney huffs comically, “Please. Taegan is the spitting image of Axel. Just look at their eyes. Plus, we can tell our kin by their scent. I bet you, even as a human, can smell the similarities in Axel and Taegan’s scent. They smell like father and son. There is no mistaking it.”

Bailey’s face flashes with surprise, making me believe what Courtney said is true, and that she can smell the similarities in our scents. Then her eyes tightened at Courtney. “So you think you are a werewolf also?”

Courtney chuckles, tapping Bailey’s knee again. “Let Axel show you. We are not crazy, I promise. Well, I’m not. I can’t make any promises for him in that department. But I can promise you that he is telling the truth about being a werewolf and I can also promise you that he is crazy about you. He has been searching for you for years. I am so happy that I finally get to meet the woman that stole my cousin’s heart, and I guess his child too,” she giggles.

Bailey bites that perfect and pillowy bottom lip, my dick twitches at the sight. I’m biting that lip too before the day is over.

She looks up at me, and for a moment, we are lost in each other’s eyes again. Her beautiful chocolate eyes shine so brightly, and they are framed by thick lashes, fluttering softly as my breath washes over her face.

She looks away shyly after a few more seconds, a beautiful blush spreading on her cheeks.

“It was my heart that was stolen, not his,” she whispered so softly, if I wasn’t a werewolf, I wouldn’t have heard.

My chest expands hearing her declaration.

She’s mine. 100% mine.

“Afa,” Calum grunts. He can’t say ‘Axel’ yet, so he calls me ‘Afa’ or ‘Alf’ most of the time instead, hearing everyone else call me Alpha all the time. “Mama said I haff new fwend. I want my fwend.”

“Well, why don’t you wait with your mama for your new friend to wake up, and then I can show mama’s new friend, Bailey, my wolf.”

“Wolf!?” Calum’s face lit up. “I ride?”

I mused his hair, “Not today, squirt. I can give you a ride another day. Maybe me and your dad can take you and your new friend out for a run later.”

”Dad say yes!” he grins deviously.

“Dad always says yes,” Courtney rolls her eyes. Giant kid; that’s what Casey is. He even insists on doing the kids’ classes at the warrior center because they’re more fun than the adult classes, or so he says.

Calum slides off my lap, then toddles to the toy bin I keep for him under the TV.

I stood, then gripped both of Bailey’s hands in mine, pulling her to her feet. She was watching the exchange between me and Calum with surprise and maybe a little bit of awe. Maybe that’s just my hopeful desire for her to be impressed with how much my second cousin likes me. I may not be a giant kid like Casey, but I think I am pretty great dad material.

“Come on. Let me show you I’m not lying. I want you to see my wolf.”

17 Nicknames

Chapter 17 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

Axel pulls me with him out the door, Courtney fanning her fingers playfully as she waves bye to us with a smile on her face. Calum, the cute and chubby little boy, calls out “Bye Afa,” as we walk out the door. So cute, but so weird to hear a toddler believing the same nonsense as the adults.

I guess their cult starts brainwashing them while they are young.

Is it really going to be okay keeping Taegan here while that ridiculous paternity test comes back? What if they try to indoctrinate me and my son too, and we are stuck, not able to leave.

We will end up in one of those Dateline specials on TV one day. I Survived a Cult. Maybe I should give the show a call when I get my phone back to prepare them for the story I'm sure is to come.

My phone.

I left it in my car. My car that Courtney and Casey, who both seem Twilight obsessed, took and did who knows what with. Are they going to give me my phone back? They have to, right?

"Uh, Axel?" I pull on the hand that is holding mine as he leads me down the familiar halls I once traveled through years ago. He looks back at me with a smile on his face.

"I like the way you say my name, baby."

"Baby?" I question the new nickname with a raised brow. I was going to ask about my phone, but now I'm distracted.

He chuckles at my face. "Yes," he yanks my hand, pulling me smoothly into his arms, embracing me and making my cheeks burn with surprise and embarrassment. It's crazy how easy it is for Axel to pull and move my body. He lifts me like I weigh nothing, when I know that is the farthest from the truth.

"You, Bailey, Baby, Honey, Dear, are mine. Get used to the names, because I plan on using every endearment that comes to mind. I'm not holding back now that I have you back. You, baby, are mine."

"Oh, am I?" I try my hardest to glare at him, but it's impossible. Hearing him being so possessive with me makes my core tighten and tingle. Don't even get me started on the way his touch feels; the electric currents running under my skin. It's like sparks or tingles are erupting all over my body where it meets his skin.

"You are," he says with full confidence. My body shivers, his sweet breath fanning my face.

"Does that mean you are mine? Or is this only a one way thing? I'm not sure how cult leaders usually lay claim to their victims."

He husky, deep laugh makes my pussy pulse, leaking with desire. This man has to have a major flaw like being the leader of a cult, because otherwise, he would just be too perfect. Besides how crazy he is, everything about him is just so radiant and beautiful. His smile alone could make me combust.

"I'm yours and you are mine. We are two halves of the same soul. That's how being mates works."

“Because you think you are a werewolf?” I raise a brow.

“Oh, I’m going to blow your mind when you realize I’m not some crazy cult leader,” he leans down, then whispers in my ear, “I hope you let me blow your mind in other ways later too.”

I slap his chest, I’m sure flushed bright red as my face feels like it is on fire. My panties are now ruined, and by the way his nostrils are flaring, and his eyes are darkening, I have a feeling he knows the effect his words have on me, despite my angry outburst.

“Okay, Brother Axel, let’s get this demonstration going so I can have at least one mind blowing experience. The other you are pervertedly referring to is not going to happen.”

“Don’t be so sure,” he chuckles. “I can smell the effect I have on you, baby. I can’t wait to taste it later.”

I hit him in the chest again, with much more force, but he doesn’t even flinch. It doesn’t hurt the wall of hard muscle at all. He just laughs more deeply, then starts leading me out the building once again.

When we get outside, Axel walks down a trail behind the building that goes into the lush forest, thick with foliage and brush. It’s completely blocked off from public view once you enter the trees. That scares me momentarily, knowing I’m walking alone into a secluded forest with a crazy man who thinks he is the werewolf leader of his cult here in the middle of nowhere. Sexy crazy cult leader, but still crazy.

He could kill me or attack me and no one would see. I doubt they would even hear me.

I’m just being paranoid. If he wanted to hurt me, he would have when I was asleep. He want to indoctrinate me, not murder me. There was that thing he said about tasting me, too....

I wouldn’t mind that.

He can taste me later...maybe....

Okay, it’s probably not a good idea, but I can still remember what being with him was like. It was the greatest pleasure I had ever, ever experienced, and my body is crazing the experience again. And again....and again.

Damn it. Why does the crazy cult leader have to be so insanely handsome and panty-dropping sexy? It’s making it so much harder to think straight. I want to just give in to his craziness so I can be with him. If I didn’t have a child to look after, and who I need to put before myself, I would have probably given into this craziness already. I can’t give in to it now, though. Taegan isn’t growing up in a cult.

Axel lets go of my hand, then starts to strip. All thoughts of keeping my head on straight for Taegan’s sake goes flying out the window.

Damn.

Is it weird that I want to lick his chest? Just a good swipe of my flattened tongue across his firm, beautifully muscled peck.

He drops his jeans, and my eyes trail down his washboard abs to the toned, muscled thighs and legs of the crazy man. Crazy looks great on him. My memory of our night together didn't do his body justice. Perfect, absolutely perfect. I don't know why he decided to start stripping, but I sure as heck am not going to complain.

More. Take off more.

I want to chant that, but hold myself back by sucking my lips into my mouth, the corners of my mouth turning up, my dimples indenting my cheeks as I restrain myself from panting and drooling at the sight of him.

He looks over to me, a smirk on his face. "Like what you see?"

I shrug, not trusting my voice to not squeak to verbally respond. I love what I see.

He chuckles deeply, then drops his boxers, making my knees buckle in astonishment. It's HUGE! Was it that big before? Maybe Taegan is his. That thing looks like it could tear through the fabrics of time and impregnate me months prior to the night we spent together.

It's a weapon. A scary, delicious looking weapon. It's not even hard, and it's cold outside.

No wonder Levi could never satisfy me in any way. Axel ruined me that night with that weapon of his. No other man could ever compare.

"Wanna touch it?" Axel raises a brow.

I turn my face away, my neck and cheeks heating in embarrassment. He shouldn't be stripping in front of me if he didn't want me to gawk at him.

He laughs, making my core tingle again at the sound. Even his laugh is sexy, damn it. Stupid, sexy cult leader. Is this the first step in indoctrinating victims? Stupify them with the hunky men in this town. I won the lottery having Axel be my mate on this road to madness. I want to ride him all the way to crazy town.

"Ready, baby?" Axel's deep voice causes me to peek at him from the corner of my eyes.

"For what? Are you going to call forth demons now to transform you into a dog?"

"Wolf. No demons, though. Sorry to disappoint."

"Well, I want my money back. I thought I was getting a full occult experience."

“I can put on a devil costume for you later if you want. Casey was a devil last Halloween and Courtney was an Angel.”

“That fits them so well,” I giggle. Axel’s face softens at the sound, the adoration in his eyes making me shy again, biting my lip nervously. He is a cult leader, Bailey. A sexy, naked, well-endowed cult leader, but bat shit crazy. Quit falling for it.

“So, the wolf thing?” I tilt my head in question.

He sighs, rolling his neck. “Don’t freak out. It sounds weird the first time you hear someone shift. I won’t be able to talk to you either since you’re not marked yet, so just don’t freak out. I’m an alpha, so I’m huge. Just know I would never hurt you.”

Marked? Is that step two to joining the cult? Getting a tattoo or something to mark you?

I nod, slightly mortified at the idea of getting a tattoo to stay with Axel. I don’t like needles.

“I won’t freak out, just do it,” I murmur. It's taking everything in me not to stare at his junk again. I should have taken him up on his offer to touch it....

“Okay. Here it goes,” he says. My hands fly to my ears as loud popping and tearing sounds emanate from his body before it starts to contort, folding in on itself.

Holy shit. What the hell is happening to his body?

18 Special

Chapter 18 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

I watch in horror as his body contorts, his skin tearing as the gruesome snapping and popping sounds of his joints and bones rearranging fills the dense space between us. Fur, golden as the sun, starts to sprout along the torn flesh, spreading until it covers his entire frame.

His body is no longer the shape of a human, but of a giant wolf. A wolf so large, I would think he was a golden grizzly bear, or maybe a moose if I was not staring at him straight on like this.

Huge. That’s what he said, and he wasn’t lying.

Holy shit.

He wasn't lying.

He is a freaking wolf! A werewolf...

I take a few tentative steps back until my back hits a tree. I look to either side of me in a panic. The shrubs are thick and viney. I don't know if I would be able to escape through them if I wanted to.

My fight or flight instincts have kicked in, and I choose flight, but don't know how to run away from the monster devil hound in front of me.

I hesitantly peek up at the giant mutt....then giggle.

His tongue is hanging out the side of his mouth and he's tilting his head to the side in that adorable way that puppies do when they are trying to understand what you're saying.

The sound of his body changing, combined with his monstrous appearance scared the hell out of me, but now that I'm getting a good look at him, he doesn't scare me at all. He looks like an overgrown husky. Like, a wolf that is the size of a large horse.

I wonder if I could ride him like a horse.

He tilts his head the other way, huffing dramatically before crouching down on his front legs, his fluffy butt wiggling in the air as his tail swishes back and forth.

Huge puppy is what he looks like.

I carefully hold my hand out, the urge to touch his fluffy fur too great to overcome.

"Nice, puppy," I whisper calmly, not totally trusting him to not maul and mame me yet. Isn't that what werewolves do? I may not be a Twilight enthusiast like Courtney and Casey, but I have seen Van Helsing plenty of times, and the werewolf in that is vicious. Goosebumps has a menacing werewolf too. All my knowledge on werewolves is horror based. This puppy looks nothing like a horror show nightmare. He's cute.

"Good puppy. You won't hurt me, will you?"

He answers with a wolfish chortle, then brings his nose to my hand, closing the space between us. My fingers touch the wetness of his blackened nose, then when I get a bit braver, run up his snout and scratch between his eyes. When my hand reaches his ear, I find the nerve to bring my other hand to the side of his face, running my fingers through the thick fur there.

It's not silky like I thought it would be. It's got this thick, denseness to it, making it fluffy and difficult to run my fingers through entirely. I give up on the idea and just start scratching behind his giant ears, his eyes closing as he tilts his face into my touch.

A deep purr vibrates his neck, making me giggle.

“You’re suck a good boy,” I cooed.

He snorts, his wet, hot breath blowing in my face, making me blink in surprise, then sputter when his big, rough tongue swipes up my face, coating me from my chin to forehead in slobber.

“Eww, gross! What the heck? Bad boy. We don’t lick our friends!”

He seems to enjoy that, laughing in his wolfish way before rolling on his back so his smooth, firm belly is in the air.

I try to resist, but I can’t help myself. I cave and rub his thick torso until I find the sweet spot that makes his leg start kicking uncontrollably.

Puppy. He’s just a giant puppy.

I thought werewolves were supposed to be scary. He isn’t scary in the least. Just a giant fuzz ball with bad manners.

“I thought you said you were some big bad alpha dog. You look like an overgrown puppy to me,” I mutter, rubbing his belly more vigorously, imagining his giant wolf body pedaling a bike or kick starting a motorcycle. That’s what it looks like with the way he is kicking.

In half a second, I’m no longer rubbing a wolf’s giant belly. Axel transformed back to a human so fast I completely missed it. My hand is scratching up and down Axel’s toned and firm abs, dangerously close to that weapon he keeps between his legs. I jump back in surprise, cradling my hand to my chest like it’s somehow tainted with cooties from being so close to his giant dick.

“Overgrown puppy? Do you want me to show you how Alpha I can be?” He rolls to his side, wiggling his eyebrows at me.

“No thanks,” I murmur, looking up to the tops of the trees so I’m not tempted to stare. He looks so seductive lying on the ground like that, his head resting on his hand, his muscles and dick on full display.

He chuckles deeply, then rolls to push himself up to his feet. He walks towards me until I feel his body heat radiating off him. Could he not get dressed first?

“Believe me now?”

“I believe you’re a big puppy. Werewolves are supposed to be scary. You probably just used your voodoo magic to make yourself look like a wolf. There was nothing scary about you,” I tell him, still looking up at the trees, avoiding his gaze. He’s naked. If I get caught in one of those intense stare offs with him right now, I don’t trust myself to not let it escalate to more. I’m not entirely convinced he’s not bat shit crazy yet.

“I only didn’t scare you because we are mates. If you were anyone else, you would have pissed your pants.”

“My pants are perfectly dry,” I mutter.

“I doubt your panties are though,” He smirks, gripping the side of my neck and forcing me to look at him. “I’m a werewolf. I’m an Alpha. You are my mate. Taegan is my son. Okay?”

I narrow my eyes, then make the mistake of letting my stare drift down to his lips. Those perfect lips. I can still remember the way they feel on my body. A shiver runs up my spine before I get my thoughts in control, meeting his eyes once again.

“How does being a werewolf make it possible for my son to be yours?”

“Because werewolf pregnancies are half the time of human pregnancies. I thought we went over this.”

“Did we?” I don’t think we did, but then again, I spent a long time fighting him thinking he was insane.

“We did.” He nuzzles his nose into the side of my neck, breathing me in deeply. “Goddess, you smell amazing. I just want to bath myself in your scent.”

I huff out a laugh, “Is that another werewolf thing?”

He nods, his lips barely brushing my neck, making me shiver again from the sparks.

“The sweatshirt. My sweatshirt that I wore over here that night was saturated in your smell. It smelled just like you. I used to use that sweatshirt to calm down when I was stressed or having a hard time. I still haven’t washed it.”

“See. Even back then, you sought me out. I bet you felt a pull to come back here too. I’m your mate, Bailey. You are mine and I am yours. You are meant to be here with me. It’s your fate.”

“You’re crazy,” I whispered, even as I tilted my head, giving him better access to my neck. I want to touch him. He is right in front of me, but his nakedness is holding me back. One touch is all it would take for me to lose all reason.

“Crazy for you,” he murmurs, his lips tenderly pressing against my nape, making my knees buckle and an embarrassing whimper to leave me.

His arm wraps around my waist bringing me firmly against his naked form. That’s it. That’s all it takes for me to give in to him.

His lips meet mine, and I'm done for. His tongue runs against the seam of my lips, demanding access, access I'm more than willing to give him. His tongue dives into my mouth, caressing against mine. If I thought his touch was powerful, it was nothing compared to his kiss.

I'm a mewling mess in his arms, desperate for him. He may have been a puppy to me in wolf form, but in his human body, he is all commanding, dominating me completely. Alpha is a fitting title for the power he holds over me.

"Bailey," he groans, breaking our kiss to rest his forehead against mine. "Fuck, wanted to do that since I saw you at the gas station in town. You taste even better than I remember."

"Mmh," is all I can manage. He stole my breath and reason all at the same time. I'm panting, trying to regain both.

"We should go back in. Courtney just mind linked me and told me Taegan's awake and asking for you."

Taegan.

That's the magic word I needed to break the spell Axel had over me.

"I need to go back," I whisper.

"I know." He sighs, then kisses me one last time, quickly but deeply before breaking away to get dressed. I should probably stop kissing him. All it would take is a negative match on the paternity test for me and Taegan to be on our way.

"What's a mind link?" I ask Axel, my mind wandering back to what he just said about Courtney.

"Wolf thing. Our pack shares a wavelength, kind of like a walkie talkie. All pack's have it. It connects our minds so we can talk to one another telepathically when we need to."

"Seriously?" I do remember something like that in Twilight, but I thought that in the movie they could only do that in wolf form.

"Seriously. Once you let me mark you, you and I can do it too."

"What if I don't want you in my mind? And what the heck is a mark? I don't want to get some wolfie cult tattoo on my body."

He laughs, "It's not a tattoo. A mark is like my brand on your body. Your neck specifically. It's my bite mark embedded deep enough to have my DNA flow into your bloodstream, connecting us for life."

"Do you guys not like wedding bands? That sounds so brutal."

“We do wedding bands too and get married like normal humans most of the time, but a mate mark is much more permanent than a wedding band. It’s our souls finally intertwining and becoming one. The way the moon goddess fated them to be.”

“Moon goddess?”

He laughs again. “I can explain more later, babe,” my core leaks every time he calls me a new nickname in that adoring and husky voice of his. I wish he would stop until I can change my underwear. “We need to get back. I need to get my stuff here together so we can move into the packhouse. Courtney unloaded your stuff with Casey into my place there. I know you are running from something, baby. I hope you can tell me so I can help protect you. You will be safe with me, but I don’t want you to be worried about trouble finding you here.”

“They unloaded my stuff without my permission? What if I don’t want to stay with you?”

He gives me a disapproving look before pulling his shirt over his head. “Do you really not want to stay with me? I can smell your pussy, baby. I know exactly how much you want to stay with me.”

I scoff, crossing my legs and turning away from him. “That’s so....crude! And rude. Even if you can smell....that with your strange voodoo wolf magic, you shouldn’t say anything about it out loud.”

“Why?” He finishes zipping his pants, pushing his feet into his work boots before sauntering back over to me, enveloping me in his arms once again. “I’m damn proud of the effect I have on your beautiful body, Bailey.”

“It’s embarrassing,” I grunt, looking away. He grabs my chin, turning my face back to his.

“Nothing is embarrassing about being turned on by your mate. I’d be embarrassed if I didn’t have that effect on you.”

“Is there a girl alive you wouldn’t have an effect on, Axel? Look at you,” I nod down to his body.

“The only girl I want to have an effect on is you,” he husks, bringing his lips to mine once again. Okay. Kissing is obviously a norm for us now. He is not showing any hesitation before doing it, and I have no reservations, welcoming his lips each and every time I feel he’s moving in for mine. How could anyone resist his lips?

“You’re good at making a girl feel special. You know that?”

He smiles cheekily, “Only you,” he kisses me one more time. “Let’s go get our son.”

“My son.”

“Ours,” he growls gently, pecking my lips once again before surprising me, lifting me in his arms and walking back towards the hotel with me like I weigh nothing. Seriously, a girl could get used to this.

19 Threats

Chapter 19 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Levi POV

“Fuck. Fuck, FUCK!” I punch the steering wheel in my Mustang. I just checked her night job, and they said she never showed up last night. Where the fuck could she be?!

Why the hell did I threaten her like that yesterday? I knew she was bullshitting. She wouldn't cheat on me. She was just trying to get me back for scaring her grandma. The old bat. She didn't have to fight me when I tried to get the brat from her.

Bailey gets extra sensitive when it comes to her grandma and son. It's something I've always hated. She would always put both of them before me. I do more for her than anybody. I love her more than anybody. Why would she choose to put the people who burden her the most before the person who treasures her so much?

I've been driving all over town all fucking morning looking for her car after discovering she wasn't at work, and I can't find it anywhere. She wasn't at home this morning either. Taegan was not at the pre-school, daycare, whatever it's called; the place he usually is at when she works, and I have no idea where they could be.

I wanted to check Taegan out of child care, bring him back to my place and wait for Bailey to come looking for him. If I could just get her to come back home, I could use the brat to keep her there. She doesn't need to work. She doesn't need her fucking grandma or to try and be independent. All she needs is me. The sooner she figures that out the better for all of us.

I grab my phone from its holder on the dash, scrolling through, past her work numbers and the numbers for Taegan's daycare, until I find her number then dial it for the third time this morning. I was trying to restrain myself. I didn't even try calling her grandma yet, but what's the point if she is just going to hide from me like this.

It rings over and over, and just when I think it's about to go to voicemail, a male voice answers, startling me.

“Y-ello?”

I held the phone away from my face, checking to make sure I called her and not her work again.

“Hello? Who is this? Where is Bailey?”

“Bailey?...Ah, Bailey! She’s not here right now. She’s a little, uh, preoccupied with my Alph-.... Uh, I mean. She’s busy with my friend right now. Seems she left her phone behind in her car. Can I take a message?”

What the fuck? Why is some other guy driving her car and what friend? I made sure she didn’t have any friends to poke their noses into our business.

“No, you can get the fucking phone to my girlfriend, asshole. Who the fuck are you?”

“I’m Taegan’s friend. Name’s Casey. May I ask your name, bud? Bailey didn’t mention another boyfriend before she and Taegan left with her real boyfriend and baby daddy.”

“Who the fuck are you calling her baby daddy? I’m her mother fucking baby daddy, and her fiance. Don’t worry about my name, just give her the phone.”

“Oh, we upgraded from boyfriend, huh? No can do, mister fake fiance guy. Like I told you, she’s not here. And, Unless she has another child besides my best friend Taegan, you are for sure not her fucking baby daddy, asshole. Levi, correct? Yeah, Taegan told us all about you. Like to put your hands and spoons on little boys and their mommys, huh? I tell you what, mother fucker, if you keep trying to fuck with my best friend’s mom and my buddy’s woman, I’ll be whooping your own ass with more than a fucking wooden spoon. I’ll tear your ass to shreds. You’ll be walking around like Kermit the fucking frog in spandex if you ever lay a fucking finger on either of them ever again. They are now out of your fucking reach, and your lucky as shit I’m the one who answered Bailey’s fucking phone and not Taegan’s real daddy. What I can do to you is nothing compared to the ways my friend can fuck you up. Bailey is no longer your concern. Leave her the fuck alone if you know what’s good for you.”

My nostrils flare and my face heats as my anger builds. Who the hell is this shithead and where the fuck does he get off thinking Bailey belongs to any other man besides me.? She’s mine. Always has been and always will be. I’m the one who takes care of her. I’ve gone to extreme lengths to be sure I’m the only damn man in her life. Taegan’s real daddy? Give me a fucking break. There is no fucking way. Unless...

“I’m going to kill her,” I murmured so low there’s no way he could have heard me, but somehow he did.

“What?” he growls.

“Nothing, asshole. You have no idea who you’re talking to. Tell Bailey I’ll be talking to her soon. If she knows what’s good for her, she will come home before I come to find her.”

“You dirty cunt. Have you not heard a word I’ve-“

I cut the call, not willing to tolerate any more of this douchebag’s bull shit. He’s spewing nonsense.

What if she wasn’t just trying to piss me off. What if she really did fuck around? When would she have gotten the chance? I have eyes on her all over this city. In college, I literally paid people to follow her around and ward off any other men. There is no fucking way she could have cheated on me.

Taegan’s real dad? Give me a fucking break. There is no fucking way.

I look over at the court summons still sitting on my passenger seat. I haven’t gone in yet to get my DNA swabbed because I figured she was just starting shit to get back at me. I thought after talking to her in person, I could get her to drop the whole paternity bullshit case. What if she really did sleep with someone else and got pregnant though? That would explain why the brat looks nothing like me.

My father and I look the same. Same chin, eyes and face structure. Same coloring. Everything. There is nothing that looks like me in that little boy. What if he really isn’t mine.

I’m going to fucking kill the kid. I may have said it in the heat of the moment yesterday, but if he isn’t mine, she doesn’t need him. She needs nothing but what I can give her, and if I didn’t give her that brat, he’s gone. I won’t have someone else’s spawn coming between me and Bailey. She will not be putting someone else’s child before me.

I grab the papers, rifling through them until I find the address of where I need to go to get my side of the paternity testing done.

Bailey, you better fucking pray that boy is mine, and if this other guy touches you, he is dead too.

20 Family Troubles

Chapter 20 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

“Where are we going?” Taegan asks from my backseat. I keep looking back at him in my rearview mirror, smiling at how right he looks sitting back there in his car seat fastened to the middle of the back seat of my truck.

Courtney and Calum are following behind us in her car on the way to the packhouse right now. I go to tell him that, but Bailey beats me to it.

“To Brother Axel’s cult house.” Bailey smirks over to me.

“Pack house, baby. It’s a pack house. Not a cult house,” I tell her, reaching over to rest my hand on her knee. I can’t stop touching her now that she isn’t fighting me. I don’t even mind all her cult crap as long as she continues to let me touch her.

“Same thing,” she mutters, turning away to hide her face, but not before I catch her cheeks turning a beautiful pink. She likes me touching her too, she is just not ready to admit it yet.

“Why do you call mommy baby?”

I chuckle, “Because I like her.”

“Mommy calls me baby sometimes. Is that because she likes me?”

“Yep! Same thing,” I smile at him in the rearview mirror.

“Is it though?” Bailey murmurs.

No, it’s not the same. My son doesn’t need to know that though.

My son.

I can’t believe I found my mate and gained a son all in one day. I’m finally getting the chance to bring my mate home.

My hand unconsciously starts to knead and rub her leg up to her thigh before she stops my upward pursuit by clenching her thighs. She tries to glare at me, but the little dimples in her cheeks and the way she bites into her bottom lip have the opposite effect on me. She’s so fucking adorable. And sexy. I love the way her soft thighs envelop my fingers. It makes me imagine other parts of me buried between them...

“Brother Axel,” Taegan calls out to me, taking my thoughts out of the gutter.

“Axel. I am not your brother, Taegan. You can call me Axel. For now, anyway.” He will be calling me daddy soon. It’s just a matter of time. I don’t want to push Bailey any further today than I already have, though.

“So you are mommy’s brother?”

“Most definitely not,” I growl.

“But mommy calls you brother.”

“She’s joking, honey,” I tell him.

“Mommy doesn’t joke.”

I look over to my mate. She is still biting that bottom lip, but this time it is to keep from laughing.

“Everyone jokes,” I state.

“But mommy always tells dad, ‘I’m not joking with you, Levi’. She doesn’t joke.”

I growl at that bit of news. What is she not joking with him about? Taegan seems to be a lot more forthcoming with information so I decide to ask him and not his mother, who is looking back out the window after glancing at him with sorrowful eyes.

“So, what was mommy not joking with this Levi about?” I refuse to call the man his dad.

Bailey turns like she is going to stop him from responding, but before she can, Taegan pulls a face like he’s mimicking his mom, “I’m not joking with you, Levi. I’m done. Stay away from me and my son.”

“Axel. I don’t want him thinking about that stuff. I am done, and Taegan is too. Levi,” she bites her lip, looking back at our son, then back at me. “Levi can’t find us here. Once I can get my grandma out of there and win the custody battle, we will never have to see or hear from him again.”

“Your grandma?”

“Grandma Lucy! We are going to make a new home and Grandma Lucy is going to come live with us!” Taegan said full of excitement. I look to Bailey for her to explain.

She rubs the peach fuzz on the back of my hand, staring down at her lap where my hand is still gripping her thigh. “My grandma is the one that raised me. I need to start over for my son, but I can’t leave my grandma behind. We were supposed to find a place to start over and she was going to come join us when she could.”

“Oh, baby,” I rub her leg again. I can see the anguish on her face thinking about leaving the woman who raised her behind. If she’s important to my mate, she is just as important to me. I love Grandma Lucy already for the simple fact that she raised the most important person in my life. “I can send a team out to bring her here. I can have her moved here by tonight.”

Bailey looks at me wide eyed, then huffs out a laugh without any humor, “I live 7 hours away from here, Axel. I doubt you could get my grandma here by tonight.”

“I could do anything for you,” I smile at her, hoping she can tell how genuine I am being right now. “I’m serious. Give me your address and I’ll have Casey or my Beta, Farak and a couple of warriors go to pack her up and bring her here to live with us. I can even organize the selling of her house and get all the court stuff with the prick...I mean, Levi taken care of.”

She scrunches her little nose. “Beta? Warriors? You keep saying you’re not in a cult, but then you use terms like that. How do I know I can trust you or your Beta warriors with my grandma?”

I laugh heartily at that. Oh, having a human mate with no knowledge of our world is fun. “Not Beta warriors. I have a Beta, who is my second in command. He helps run the pack, not cult, and deals with a lot of the diplomatic stuff between us and other races. He is like the vice president. My warriors are the werewolves that fight and defend our pack.”

“Like secret police,” she smirks. “I thought Casey was your second in command?”

“No, he’s my Gamma, which is 3rd in command. He is in charge of all our warriors and training them.”

“Oh yeah. You told me that already.”

“I did,” I smiled at her.

“So other races? Does that mean, like, the Russian community, or do you guys do trading with China or something? I know you said your pack was big in the lumber and mining industry.”

I chuckle, shaking my head. She is going to think I’m even crazier if I tell her about the other supernatural races. Luckily, Taegan interrupts us before I can answer her.

“Brother Axel. Calum said we can ride wolves later. Where do we ride wolves? Mommy said you can’t ride on doggies. Why can we ride on wolves?”

“Don’t!” Bailey presses her finger to my lips before I can answer him. I chuckle around her finger before kissing it. “Taegan, baby. You can’t ride wolves either. Not today.”

“Tomorrow?”

I lick Bailey’s finger so she moves it away from my face with a squeal, her cheeks heating as she wipes it on her pants.

“I can take you tomorrow, Taegan. Or maybe the next day. We have to figure out how to get your Grandma Lucy here first.”

Taegan's eyes light up and he bounces with excitement as his mother glares at me. Those adorable dimples are back and I can't help myself. I let go of her thigh to poke one, resulting in her swatting my hand away.

"You are really going to go get Grandma Lucy!? Do we have our new home already?"

"You do, little man. Your home is now with me," I smile up at him in the mirror.

"Can Calum and Cousin Courtney be in our new home too? I like them. I don't like Casey, though. He made mommy mad."

"I thought you liked him after spanking him with the spoon?"

"You what?!" Bailey squealed. "You spanked him with a spoon? Where did you learn to spank people with spoons?"

Taegan looks panicked for a second, then I remember him saying not to tell Bailey about the time Levi spanked him that way. This kid. He does everything in his little bit of power he has to keep his mom safe and protect her peace of mind.

"Courtney brought the spoons to punish Casey for kidnapping Taegan from you," I tell her, pacifying Bailey with a half truth. I look up in the mirror in time to see Taegan breath out a sigh of relief. I wink at him when his eyes meet mine, then turn my attention back to the road, hoping Bailey didn't see the exchange.

"I don't want you hitting people with spoons, baby. It's not nice," Bailey tells him.

"Okay, mommy," he replies, looking at the ground solemnly, but I can see the hint of a smile at the corner of his lips.

This kid can play his mom. I need to keep that in mind. This time, it's for her benefit, so I'm not going to make it an issue yet.

I smile to myself, thinking about how fatherly I already feel towards Taegan. I'm proud of the ways he has tried to protect his mom in his short life, and I'm looking forward to continuing to build his trust so he can open up to me and allow me to protect her with him.

"So, Grandma Lucy?" I ask, gripping Bailey's thigh again.

She bites that pillowy lip, making me adjust in my seat from the effect it has on me. "Let me call her and see what she says. She may not want to move up here and join your cult."

"Pack," I corrected her.

“Same thing. I’ll have to call her and see if she is open to moving now. We were going to make this a several week process. Honestly, though, her health isn’t the best, and I would feel better having her with us sooner rather than later.”

I smile hearing that. If I can get her grandmother here, that makes her stay that much more permanent. I mean, it's already pretty damn permanent, as far as I am concerned, but it will make it feel more permanent for her. She would have no reason to leave me again.

“I’ll have Casey get a moving van and be ready. All I need is your address.”

We pull onto the road that leads to the packhouse, hidden and warded so human eyes can’t easily find it. Bailey gasps in surprise, thinking we are about to run into a thick tree, but it’s just a cloaking ward to hide the road. After we pass through, her eyes go wide as she takes everything in. Wolves are everywhere, our warriors doing drills and younger wolves going for runs.

I’m the largest wolf among our pack, but werewolves in general are still fairly large creatures. Much larger than a normal wolf.

“Wow, look at all the doggies! Can we ride those ones?” Taegan asks, pointing to the group of warriors doing formation drills.

“No, sweetie. That would be...rude,” Bailey murmurs, still looking around in surprise.

The pack house is very large. Much bigger than the apartment building we keep in town. The alpha wing is on the first level, detached from the main building with a long hallway connecting it to the main offices.

This will be my first time living back here in a long time. Mom made it too hard for me.

I pull my truck up to the designated parking spot for the Alpha beside the alpha wing. As if on queue, my mother comes strutting out of my fucking home, that annoyance, Stephanie, following behind her.

In my excitement at finding my mate, and the knowledge of gaining a son, I completely forgot about the problem my mom and her ambitious shadow could cause for us. Mom is not going to be as thrilled at me finding Bailey as I am.

Courtney pulls into the spot beside me, and I’m eternally grateful for her being with us. Courtney is my biggest support against my mother.

“Who’s that?” Bailey asks, staring at mom and Stephanie.

I sigh, dreading what might happen when we get out of the car.

“My mother and her friend. Stay here for a minute. Let me get rid of them.”

“Get rid of your mother?” Bailey looks at me in surprise, then looks back at Taegan before turning a grimace out in the direction of my mom. “Do you not want her to see us? Is it going to be a problem for us staying here? Because I have no problem getting my car and going back on my way.”

“No!” I say much louder than I intended in my panic. “No, baby. It’s not a problem. Me and my mom just don’t get along right now. I don’t want her to make you feel uncomfortable.”

“Hmm,” she hums, looking between mom and Stephanie. Mom is just waiting for me to get out of the truck, glaring in my direction.

Fuck. I really don’t want to deal with her shit right now. Not the moment I am finally bringing my mate home where she belongs.