

Chapter 21 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Stephanie POV

“Wake up. Wake up, child!” Luna Harriet pushed me over in my bed. I groan in protest before I wake up enough to realize it's Luna Harriet. I can't protest.

I got home barely an hour ago after spending the whole night out with Addison at her place. I had to sneak out at midnight and barely made it back by breakfast. I didn't want to raise suspicion with my dad or Luna Harriet, but it's getting harder and harder these days. I hate that I have to sneak around.

“Luna Harriet? What's going on?”

“You need to get up and get ready,” She pulls back the covers of my bed and then walks over to my wardrobe and starts rifling through my outfits. “Here. Wear this,” she throws over a red lace top, far too low cut to wear on its own. I guess I'll be wearing it on its own anyway, since she doesn't provide me with an undershirt for it. “This with it,” she tosses over a pair of high waisted black skinny jeans.

I resist the urge to huff or roll my eyes. If I disrespect Luna Harriet in any way, my father makes me pay for it. He is already harsh enough to me because of who my mate turned out to be. Not only did I find out when I turned 18 that I was mated to a woman, she happened to be a vampire as well.

My father, someone who has suffered with an inferiority complex his whole life, and treated our Luna like the freaking moon goddess herself, went mad when he learned about Addison. He sought out Luna Harriet and had her command me not to accept and mark my mate.

Once Alpha Axel took the title from his father, Luna Harriets command weakened since she was no longer the official Luna of the pack, so I was able to see Addison again, but I'm still not able to fight the command enough to mark her or claim her. We just have to settle for our secret rendezvous, but I'm not going to complain. I'm just happy she has stuck around this long and continues to wait for me.

4 or 5 years ago Luna Harriet started pushing me on her son every chance she got. I know it was for my father's benefit in some way, but I don't know why she is complying to his demands. It doesn't make sense to me.

I don't want to be Luna. I sure as hell don't want to be with Axel, the rude roughneck jerk, but if I become Luna, I will finally be free from Luna Harriet's command and my father's dominance he holds over me.

I could find a way to finally be with my mate.

The issue with that is, I would have to be mated to the jerkface first. I want to be with my mate, but I don't want to mate my asshole alpha to get to the point where I can do that. I've been in this weird limbo; a tug-of-war between acceptance and fighting my father and Luna Harriet. It has left me numb.

The only time I ever feel alive any more is when I sneak away and get those precious moments with Addison. She is the only happiness in my life. All I really want is to be with her.

"What am I getting ready for?" I ask Luna Harriet numbly as I swap my oversized sleeping shirt for the top she threw at me. I wait until her back is turned to pull off my pajama shorts and quickly pull on the pants. I know Addison left a hickey on my inner thigh, and I don't want to risk her seeing it.

"I just got word that my son is moving back home and is going to claim his Luna. The insufferable gorilla he made his Gamma is having warriors unload a car full of his belongings into the Alpha wing right now. This is your chance. He is finally willing to settle down and accept you."

"Are you sure he is moving back to accept me?" I ask. I haven't even seen Alpha Axel outside of training in weeks. He hasn't talked to me in months. I highly doubt the jerk has just decided to accept me now after fighting with his mom for so long.

"Who else would he be accepting? He is nearing 30. It's time he settles down."

I don't argue with her. I just go through the motions of getting ready, following her instructions as she nags and lords over me.

When I'm ready, Luna Harriet leads me through the packhouse, down to the kitchens and dining hall so she can see if there is any gossip or news on her son. This is the only way she can find out what is happening with Alpha Axel most of the time. He rarely talks to her. He actually avoids her like the plague. I think he would be more welcoming of a plague than of his mother or me, actually.

Gamma Casey is standing in the corner of the dining hall talking with Beta Farak while eating a king size package of Reese's cups, a giant bag of skittles tucked in the crook of his arm.

"He really found her?" Beta Farak asks. His back is turned, so he does see us approaching. "She was just pumping gas at the gas station? We've been looking for his mate for years and she just shows up out of the blue?"

Casey, looking up, grimaces and rolls his eyes when he sees me and Luna Harriet walking up to them.

“Good morning, Luna Harriet,” he says loudly, causing Beta Farak to turn around startled. I know that code. What he is implying by saying her name in that tone. It’s his ‘shut up, his mom is listening’ code they have to try and keep Luna Harriet in the dark about what her son is up to.

“Gamma,” she turns her nose up at him arrogantly. I would actually really like our Gamma if it wasn’t for Luna Harriet. He is wary of me because of her always pushing me on Axel, but I think he is funny to watch. Him and Courtney are a hilarious couple.

Just a few years ago, I think I broke a genuine smile, the only one in years away from my mate, watching him bicker with his father-in-law over their son’s last name right before Courtney had the kid. The Childes wanted Calum to have their last name hyphenated next to Lewis, since Courtney was an only child, and the Childes wanted their last name to live on.

Courtney has a cousin in Miami with the last name Childes too, but because she was a Luna and her children would be Alpha heirs she didn’t want to give her kids the last name ‘Childes’. That was going to be Courtney’s burden to bear.

Gamma Nathan and Casey went at it for the entire lunch hour over who’s last name was coming first on the birth certificate. Both men are loud and crude, but hilarious. Gamma Nathan won, and Childes is the first last name on Calum’s birth certificate, followed by Lewis.

The whole time they were arguing, Courtney just sat back with her mom, instigating the fight with a smirk while eating the biggest bowl of mac’n’cheese she could get her hands on. She was saying things like “C comes before L so he would have an advantage being first in school,” or “Lewis is much easier to spell.”

She was fighting both sides with a smirk on her face and enjoying them arguing it out.

“Where is your mate off to this morning?” Luna Harriet asks, eying the candy in Casey’s hands with distaste. I stand behind her, a few steps back patiently waiting for her to dig whatever information she can out of him. I don’t want to be a part of this conversation.

“She’s busy. You know. Got the kid and all. I’m trying to knock another into her, but she’s got this new spoon spanking fetish, making things a bit awkward.”

I bite my lips to keep from laughing at the disgusted look on Luna Harriet’s face. Even Beta Farak is giving him an incredulous look.

“I see,” Luna Harriet manages to say. “Do you perhaps know when my son will be coming in today?”

“Hmm, your son? I’m not sure. I wouldn’t expect him anytime soon, though. He’s got a lot on his plate today.”

“Like what?”

Casey shrugs, “Want a skittle? They’re tropical flavor.”

“No, thank you,” Luna Harriet eyes the bag in his outstretched hand with distaste.

“Welp, your loss. See you later, Rick. I got to, uh, get to work.”

“I better get going too,” Beta Farak says, walking away with Casey. Neither of them bother to tell us bye.

Luna Harriet is losing respect from the pack members as time goes on. The ranked members avoid her, and even her own husband seems indifferent to her these days.

I feel like I’m the only one left she has real influence over, and because of that, she isn’t going to let me go any time soon.

Luna Harriet spends the next few hours walking around the packhouse and even around the warrior building with me in tow, trying to find out what information she can about her son, but no one mentions anything more than the normal “I don’t know” and “I haven’t seen him” to her. I can see she is getting increasingly impatient and angry as time drags on.

I’m exhausted. I don’t know why she made me wake up and get ready to just walk around behind her like her shadow while she did all this digging. No one was going to tell her anything more than she already overheard.

Beta Farak was mentioning someone finding their mate at the gas station this morning. I wonder if that had anything to do with Alpha Axel, but I’m not going to be the one to bring it up with his mom. I’m not feeding the fire in her.

We walk towards the Alpha wing, Luna Harriet letting herself in with her own key. That key is the reason Alpha Axel doesn’t live here any more in the first place.

When we walk in, I notice children’s belongings piled in the living room. Little boy clothing, shoes and lots of toys. Did Courtney leave Calum’s stuff over here? Why is it all loaded in random tote bags and grocery bags?

Headlights beam through the front window, and when I look over, I see it’s Alpha Axel’s truck making its way around the parking lot and to his spot, Courtney’s car following behind.

“Good. He’s back. Let’s get you out there so you can greet your soon-to-be mate properly.

I repress a groan and follow her outside right as Axel puts his truck in park in his spot.

“Who is that?” Luna Harriet mutters, glaring at the passenger side of the truck.

A beautiful, no, gorgeous woman with dark brown hair, deep brown eyes and dimples is sitting there, looking over in our direction apprehensively. She looks nervous as she stares out the window. Axel leans over to her and says something, and when she looks back, she has a deep grimace on her face.

She looks adorable with an angry face. Those dimples. Addison has dimples like that too. Addison's are, of course, much prettier. Addison is by far the most gorgeous woman in the world, but this dark haired beauty is a sight to behold.

By the way Axel is looking at her, I can tell he feels the same.

Movement in the backseat catches my attention. The windows are tinted, but I can still make out the frame of a child in a car seat back there. Why does Axel have a child with him? And who is this girl?

Hope springs in my chest. I had a suspicion based on Farak's question to Casey earlier, but the more I watch how Axel is gazing at the woman the more sure I become; He found his lost mate. By the child in the backseat, it seems he found more than just that.

22 Ruffled Feathers

Chapter 22 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

I hop out of my truck at the same time Courtney gets out of her car.

"Need me to come back you up, or want me to stay with her?" she asks.

"Can you stay with her for now? I'm going to get rid of mom and don't want Bailey getting freaked out. If you're with her, you can explain what's going on if I have to order mom and the skeleton away."

"You really shouldn't be calling her skeleton. It's rude. I'm skinnier than her."

"Yeah, but you don't have a dead personality," I grumbled.

She sighs, shaking her head. I know she thinks I'm unnecessarily rude to Stephanie, but she never had to wake up to the chick straddling her in bed. Stephanie didn't even show emotion then while trying to seduce me. She's just....gross. Dead inside.

Courtney get's Calum from her backseat, then hops in my driver's seat with the kid, greeting Bailey with an enthusiastic and sarcastic "Long time no see."

Goddess, I love my cousin in times like this. She and Casey both know how to lighten the mood.

With an annoyed huff, I start walking towards my annoying mother and her shadow. "What are you doing coming from inside my home, mom. I thought I told you to quit taking my extra key from the office?"

"What are you doing bringing back some random woman to our pack and home and insulting your future Luna like this," Mom waves her hand in the direction of my truck.

"That is my Luna. That is my mate, mother, and you need to leave. I'm not having you make my mate and child uncomfortable on their first day here."

"What?" mom gasps, looking back at the truck then to me, "Child? You are taking a whore for a mate who already has a child? If word got out-"

"MY CHILD," I growled, causing my mom to take a hesitant step back. "And if you call my mate a whore again, you will be banned from ever meeting my child. And all my future children too."

Mom grimaces, but still doesn't know when to quit. "Did she trap you into taking her as a mate by claiming she had your child? If she did, we can-"

"STOP!" I command, making her cringe and wince from the pain of me imposing my will over hers. "She is MY MATE. My mate. That woman is the gift the moon goddess gave me, and you will not disrespect her like that. Bailey is her name by the way, since you seem to have forgotten that I have a mate. She got pregnant from our night together all those years ago, and that is my son in the backseat, waiting to be taken into his new home. I finally got my mate back and learned about my son, and you will not be ruining their first day here. You need to leave. Now. And take your stick figure with you," I sneer, waving towards Stephanie.

She doesn't even flinch at the insult. The smallest of smiles is playing on the corner of her lips, confusing me slightly. She almost seems happy about me finding my mate.

"You will regret this," Mom tells me sharply, then starts to stomp in the direction of the packhouse. Stephanie sighs watching as she walks away, waiting until she is a good distance from us before turning back to me.

"Congrats, Alpha. I look forward to meeting our Luna soon," she says, "And I-" she goes to say something more, but her words get cut off as she grimaces, sweat breaking out on her forehead. She pulls a face, then walks off, following after my mom.

Weird. I never saw the skeleton show any genuine emotion, but she really seemed happy for me just then before she had her little weird moment. It was like she was fighting a command, but I didn't command anything of her. She is so freaking creepy.

I walk back to the truck, making a mental note to change the locks of the Alpha wing later so mom can't get back in. I don't need her bugging Bailey while I'm not around.

"Okay, ready to see your new home?" I open the door asking my mate.

"Everything okay? She seemed really mad."

"She's fine. We just don't get along. I haven't lived at the pack house in a long time because we don't get along."

"Are you sure it's okay that we are here then? I don't want to ruffle any feathers."

"I'm positive, baby."

"Brother Axel, who was that pretty girl? The one with the grumpy old lady?" Taegan is straining in his seat watching Stephanie walk inside the front doors of the packhouse.

"Brother Axel," Courtney chortles, spewing spit from her lips as she covers her mouth. Real lady-like Court. Glad she can find the humor at my expense.

"I don't know about pretty, but that other girl was Stephanie."

"Stephanie," Taegan says the name, testing it out.

"Do you think Sister Stephanie is pretty?" Court asks Taegan, getting out of the truck and opening the back door for Taegan as I help Bailey out of the front seat. Taegan nods confidently, not shy at all at admitting that he found a girl to be pretty, then hops down before makes a face at Calum, who plopped his chubby butt down in a puddle of mud.

"Mommy says you can't do that," Taegan grabs Calum's hands and helps to pull him up while Courtney just stands back and laughs.

"Daddy said mud is fun," Calum replied, bending over to grab a handful, tossing it at Taegan like it's a dirty snowball.

Taegan growls at Calum as Calum laughs, then tackles him back into the mud puddle. Calum, the little turd, thinks they're playing the funnest game in the world and starts grabbing handfuls of mud, coating Taegan's face and chest in the stuff.

"Mommy says no!" Taegan growls at him, grabbing hold of Calum's arms and holding them behind his back.

Calum laughs uncontrollably, and it doesn't take him long to get out of my son's slippery hold. He wrestles with Casey all the time. Taegan isn't a challenge to him yet at all. He will be soon, though. He's my son. I whoop Casey's ass all the time at training. A few days learning the basics with me, and Taegan will be dominating his little cousin.

"Boys, stop!" Bailey yells, "Oh my gosh, you both are a filthy mess."

"We can just hose them off," Courtney points to the spout on the side of the building. "Sorry. Casey and him wrestle in the mud after it rains. My mate teaches him bad habits. I don't fight it anymore."

Taegan sits on top of Calum, pressing his little feet on his arms to try to prevent him from moving. "Quick Cousin Courtney! Give me the spoon!"

"No, no, no." Bailey grabs him, picking him up and holding him out at arm's length. "No spoons. We don't hit our friends."

"He's bad like his daddy though!" Taegan growls, glaring down at the laughing Calum.

"No. Spoons," Bailey says again, much more sternly. He lowers his head solemnly and glares at Calum from the corner of his eyes.

"Come on, babe. Let's get him hosed off and I can show you the house." I grab the muddy kid from her and throw him in the air, earning me a smile and squeal. I didn't like seeing my son sad, even momentarily while he was getting scolded by my mate.

Bailey POV

Courtney and Axel hose off the boys and I rinse my hand in the water. Courtney runs inside to grab a few towels and while we wait for her on the porch, I look around and notice people everywhere are staring at us.

Great. Me being here is going to ruffle some feathers, I'm sure. Axel's mom definitely didn't look happy to see a stranger in the cult. I couldn't make out all the words he was yelling, but he sounded pissed too.

I'm still not sure us being here is a good idea.

"What are you thinking about, babe?"

He's so liberal with that nickname now. It makes my tummy tingle every time I hear it.

I shrug, trying to remain nonchalant. "I think we have an audience," I murmured.

Axel looks around and waves to a few of the people walking around looking at us. "They're just curious. I'm sure Casey and Courtney told people about me bringing my mate home. They are

going to want to meet you soon. You will be their Luna and they know how long I've been searching for you."

I blush hearing that. I look down shyly and notice that Taegan is still glaring at Calum. Calum doesn't notice, though. The kid found a pinecone on the ground and is working at pulling it apart and littering its pieces all over the porch.

"So, your cult, what should I expect? Is it going to be like sister wives and you have beautiful women coming in and out of your house like that all the time?"

Stephanie was gorgeous. Tall and thin, but with attractive, more toned curves. She is what I always wished my body looked liked, and seeing her coming out of the home I am sharing with Axel, tagging behind his mother that seems to already hate me is making ugly emotions eat away inside my chest.

"Nope. No sister wives here. We are monogamous in our relationships. Well, unless you are an identical twin or something, then they usually share a mate. I'm an only child so you will not have to worry about that," he grins.

Okay, I don't even have the brain capacity to take on that bit of information yet. I couldn't imagine dealing with two Axels. Well, maybe....

No. One weapon of mass destruction is enough for me. Gawd, why am I thinking of his weapon now? Mind out of the gutter, Bailey. Get your mind out of the gutter.

"What was your mom doing in your house?"

Axel grimaces at that question, "I don't know but I'm having the locks changed. She isn't supposed to be here. She knows that."

"Brother Axel?" Taegan looks up at him.

"Axel. Just Axel," Axel groans.

Taegan wrinkles his nose, but complies, "Axel, can the pretty girl, Stephanie come back to play?"

"Goddess, I hope not," Axel grimaces.

"You don't like her?"

"Not at all. She is like my mother's shadow. I find her repulsive."

I try and fail to conceal the small smile hearing that brings to my face. "She was pretty though," Taegan whines.

“Pretty gross.”

“Hey, I told you to not be rude,” Courtney says, coming back out with the towels. “Just because you don’t like her doesn’t mean you can be rude to her, Ax. You avoid her like she’s a leper but she is actually not a bad person. She has feelings too.”

“If she does, they don’t show,” he grumbles, taking a towel from her and wrapping it around Calum. He picks him up and hands him to Courtney before taking the other towel and wrapping it around Taegan.

There is such a difference in the way he picks up Taegan and Calum. Calum, he was rougher with, and just handed him off like a sack of potatoes. Taegan, he is cradling in his arms with adoration and gentleness, smiling at him like he is precious and treasured.

If he didn’t treat me and Taegan like this, it would be a lot easier not to give in to all this craziness. He has me wanting to believe everything he is telling me is true.

I mean, he did show me his giant puppy side, but some of the other stuff is still hard for me to accept. Like the rapid pregnancy thing....

But it was a rapid pregnancy. Even my doctors were confused by how rapidly Taegan developed.

I hope the paternity test comes back soon. I wonder if Levi went in yet to do his paternity test for Taegan? I need to see, and I also need to check on my grandma. She is probably worried sick.

“Hey, Courtney? Do you know where my phone is? Did you see it while unloading my stuff or is it still in my car?”

“Hmm, I don’t remember seeing it. I didn’t actually get in your car, though. Casey drove it over here and a couple of the guys helped to unload while I just worked on getting the place livable. I can ask Casey.”

“It’s okay. I’ll go check in a bit. I’m sure it’s with all my stuff.”

“Worried about your grandma?” Axel asks. I nod. “Please let me at least have your address and I’ll send some men to watch out for her at the very least. She doesn’t have to move here right away, but I want to at least help to keep her safe, especially if she has health problems.”

I gnaw on my bottom lip. “Okay,” I say, softly smiling up at him. “Thank you.”

“Anything for you, baby,” he tells me, wrapping an arm around my shoulders and kissing the top of my head.

“Axel, can I call mommy baby too?” Taegan asks, resting on Axel’s hip.

Axel and Courtney laugh at his question. “No. You have to be bigger than the person you call baby.”

“I’m smaller than Casey and call him baby sometimes,” Courtney states.

“Mommy baby,” Taegan smiles shyly at me. I chuckle at his playfulness. I love how free and relaxed Taegan is here with them.

Axel leads us into the house, and I stand amazed at the size of it. It’s open concept, and gorgeous. It has open beams along the ceiling and a rustic cottage vibe to it.

“Do you like your new home, baby?” Axel asks me, after setting an excited Taegan on the ground to explore.

“It’s beautiful! I’ve never lived anywhere this nice before. I think we could fit our entire house in your living room.”

“Our living room. This is your home too now. If you want to change anything, feel free. Courtney is going to be staying with you when I can’t be for the next few weeks and she can help you redecorate anything you want.”

“I have his credit card saved in my phone,” Courtney smirks.

“I’ll get you a card too,” Axel tells me, wrapping his arms around my waist and kissing my neck.

My face heats from embarrassment that he is this touchy feely in front of his cousin, but Courtney ignores it, going to chase Calum who just ran down the hall, stripping out of his wet clothes.

“Welcome home, baby.”

“Thanks,” I turned in his arms to hug him back, truly feeling at home with him.

23 Little Visit

Chapter 23 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

The next morning, Casey comes over with Calum to check on us and fill me in on all the pack business from yesterday. He and Farak had to cover for me while I got Bailey and my son settled in.

Bailey refused to share the master bedroom with me, and opted for a guest room with Taegan. Courtney is out with her dad right now getting furniture for a proper boy room for Taegan. I wanted to go out and do that with Bailey today, but she said it wasn't necessary, insisting that until the paternity test came back, there was still the possibility of them leaving.

There is no possibility of them leaving. Taegan is getting a proper bed room today.

Courtney swabbed mine and Taegan's cheeks and is having the hospital send the samples out to her cousin's and sister-in-law's pack in Florida for the testing. She showed Bailey the company and how legit it is online so she had no suspicions of us altering the test. She left out the fact that the company it was going to is run by a vampire, the vampire that rules over the coven in Miami, but I don't think Bailey is ready to learn about vampires yet. She is barely processing werewolves.

"Hey, man, I was meaning to talk to you about this last night, but I didn't get back until late from the lumber yard. I talked with your Luna's fake baby daddy yesterday."

"That Levi fucker? How?!"

"He called her while I was driving her car over here. She left her phone in her car. I blocked his number after the call, but I wrote it down to give to you in case you needed it. I may have accidentally snooped and got his address and email from her contact list too. I rather her be mad at me for snooping than you. I think he is going to be more trouble than we anticipated. The fucking bitch had the nerve to say he was going to kill Bailey to me when I told him to back the fuck off because she was with her real baby daddy now. He sounds fucking psychotic."

"After hearing everything that Taegan and Bailey said yesterday, I feel like he's psychotic too. Bailey actually fought with him and left him the night she first met me. She thought Taegan was his and that's the only reason she went back to him."

Casey smirks at me.

"What?"

"You were totally her rebound, dude."

"Shut the fuck up," I push him, "She felt the bond too. She just thought I was married to YOUR wife," I cringe. His wife is my cousin. The thought is disgusting.

"Don't forget, she thought I was your child too, daddy," he wiggles his eyebrows.

"Don't do that."

“Do what, daddy.”

I punch him in the side, making him buckle over in pain, then go back to nonchalantly drinking my coffee.

Just then, Taegan walks out of the hallway with a packet of balloons. He moves a dining room chair to the sink, then climbs up. He fastens one of the balloons over the water spout with total concentration, then gently turns the water on, filling the balloon to be the size of a baseball before he turns off the water. He clumsily ties it off, then begins the same process with another one.

Casey, still recovering from the punch, and I just watch in bewilderment.

“Hey, Brother Taegan, whatcha doing over there?” Casey eventually asks.

“Getting ready to pay a little visit to my cousin.”

I look over to Calum in the living room, minding his own business watching a kid’s show on TV.

“What do you need the water balloons for?” Casey fights back a smile.

“None of your business. Keep your mouth shut or I’ll be visiting you next.”

I spew my coffee all over the kitchen island. Casey’s mouth drops from Taegan’s threat. Taegan is still holding a grudge over the mud incident yesterday, and at Casey for trying to kidnap him. I want to know where he got the balloons in the first place. I doubt Bailey would be okay with this stunt, but I think it’s hilarious. That’s how me and Courtney were growing up together.

“Where’s your mom?” I ask him, wiping up my coffee and spit from the island with a dishrag.

“In her room talking to Grandma Lucy. Grandma Lucy doesn’t like the friends you sent to her house.”

“Oh no,” Casey murmurs, “We sent the two friendliest ones available, though.”

Taegan ties off his fifth balloon, then takes all five, cradling them gently in his arms, and walks toward Calum on the couch.

He aims and throws with a devious smile, Calum too distracted by the show to see the attack coming. Taegan gets him right in the face. Calum sputters and squeals as my son rains blow after blow. Damn, my son has a good arm. I’m watching on proudly, not at all upset that he just soaked my couch and half the living room.

When he’s done, Calum growls as Taegan sticks his tongue out at him. Calum lunges off the couch and Taegan sprints for the front door laughing. He flings it open and runs outside.

“Daddy said no!” Calum yells out, chasing him.

“Mommy said to not be a big baby!” Taegan taunts him.

“Did I say no though?” Casey asks, going around the kitchen to get a stack of hand towels to clean up the mess.

“I doubt Bailey said to not be a big baby,” I laugh. “I’ll clean that up after I talk to Bailey if you go chase after the boys,” I tell him.

“Deal.”

He hands me the stack of towels then jogs out the door to catch up with our sons.

I set the stack of towels on the coffee table then walk down the hallway to find Bailey. I found her in the guest room she shared with Taegan last night. I’m not going to call it her room. Her room is my room, she just hasn’t accepted that fact yet.

I lean against the door, watching her stress as she talks on the phone.

“I’m okay, grandma...Really.....No, he isn’t dangerous.....Grandma, really?....No, he is not like Levi he-”

I couldn’t stand to listen to my mate trying to figure out how to explain to her grandmother who I am and comparing me to Levi, so I lifted the phone out of her hands.

“Hello? Grandma Lucy?” I say in my most friendly voice I can muster. Bailey whips around, glaring at me. She agreed to me sending a couple warriors back to her grandmother’s house to watch over her, but I can sense she is having a hard time explaining to her why they are there and who exactly they are.

“Hello? Who is this?” The elderly lady worriedly asked.

“My name is Axel Kissinger, ma’am. I am Bailey’s future husband.”

Bailey sighs and rests her head in her hand.

“Future husband? Young man, my poor granddaughter doesn’t need another man trying to lay claim to her or bully her into being with him. If sending these gentlemen over is your way of putting pressure on her to stay with you, you need to tell them to leave now because I’m calling the police.”

“Grandma Lucy, that is not the case at all. Bailey told me about Levi, and how he tried to manhandle you to get to Taegan and her. I couldn’t sit by and do nothing when I had the power to help. I have taken Bailey into my timber company’s community of workers and am going to keep her and Taegan safe here until the court case with Levi is finalized.”

“And that makes you her future husband?” she snaps. I smile at her feisty attitude. I can see where Bailey gets it.

“No, the fact I know Taegan is my biological son and I have been looking for Bailey for the past several years is how I know she is my future wife.”

“What? That’s not-”

“Possible? It is, ma’am. I don’t mean to be crude, but I slept with your granddaughter when she visited my town several years ago. I know I am his father and I know without a doubt that Bailey’s future is with me. You are the woman that raised her, and that makes you just as important to me as you are to her. What kind of future husband would I be if I left you there unprotected when that asshole, pardon my language, already tried to get to Bailey through you once? Those two men with you now work security at the business. They will keep you safe and protected until you are ready to move here.”

Grandma Lucy huffs loudly, “Well, you definitely have Taegan’s commanding little attitude.”

Oh, she has no idea. “I have his eyes and ears too.”

She laughs heartily at that. “Oh, child. You are a handful, aren’t you. Fine, but you keep my Bailey safe. I would love to be there with her now, but it will take some time to settle everything with my house. I need to be here until the court case closes too. My lawyer friend said I had to keep the house until then.”

“I don’t know if that is the case, Grandma Lucy. I am having my lawyers look into it and I will let you know what they say. Also, my guy with you, Dusty, has paperwork for your house that I want you to look over. I will be purchasing your home so you can go back and visit your home whenever you want.”

Bailey’s mouth drops hearing that and her grandma is silent on the phone for several seconds.

“That is, uh, very generous of you, Mr. Kissinger-”

“Call me Axel.”

“Hmm. Okay, Axel. That is very generous of you, but I don’t know how to feel about that. Why would you want to purchase a stranger’s home you haven’t even seen?”

“It’s the place you raised Bailey and Taegan spent the first few years of his life. It’s an important part of my most important people’s past, and I rather cherish it than throw it away. Just let me or my men know when you are ready, and we will get you moved here to be with us.”

“Bailey said it was a cult,” she deadpans.

I sigh. “It’s a community. It’s a, uh, small town and a logging town at that. Kissinger Log and Timber Ltd is my company if you want to see its legitimacy. We are not a cult.”

I give Bailey a pointed look when I say that.

Grandma Lucy sighs, “Okay, Mr. Kissinger-”

“Axel.”

“Axel. You better not hurt my babies. Either of them. They have been through enough.”

“I plan on protecting your babies for the rest of my life, because they are my babies too.”

“Smooth talker, aren’t you?” she chuckles. “Okay. Let me talk to my grandbaby now. She has more explaining to do. She didn’t mention you being Taegan’s father or her future husband.”

I laugh hearing that, “Here you go. I look forward to meeting you soon, Grandma Lucy.”

I hand the phone back to Bailey, who is pressing her mouth together angrily, making those adorable dimples stand out.

I kiss her lips and whisper, “Come out when you are done talking, future wife. I need to show you around the cult lands.”

“I’m going to kill you,” she whispers back, covering the phone’s receiver.

“That’s no way to talk to your future husband,” I tell her, pecking her one more time before jumping out of the way as her hand swings at me. “Missed.”

She growls adorably and I walk out laughing, going back out to the living room to clean up my son’s mess.

24 All The Mates

Chapter 24 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Casey POV

Taegan and Calum run past the packhouse, straight for the warrior center. Calum goes to work with me all the time, so he is familiar with the area and everyone who is loitering about. Many of

our warriors laugh as they run by, giving Taegan curious glances. Most likely because they didn't expect him to look so much like his dad.

I can't believe how spunky Taegan is. The little alpha has no reservations in asserting his dominance and he has absolutely no fear.

He's the spitting image of Axel.

The alpha from my hometown, Parker, and his father who was alpha before him were much more reserved and chill. Alpha Jared, Parker's dad, was a straight up pussy. Parker, though laid back and chill, was freakishly fucking strong and incredibly smart. His relaxed personality paired perfectly with his mate's headstrong ass.

Carli, one of my childhood best friends and Court's cousin, was a fucking fierce warrior. She was the strongest woman I had ever met and laid me on my ass all the time. I grew up thinking I was in love with her and we were going to be mates, until we found out she was mated to Parker.

That was a fucking shit show.

Courtney came down with Nate to see her cousin graduate and I actually found her to be my mate at a beach party my twin sis and I were throwing for our birthday. Courtney was my everything from the moment I saw her, and I will be eternally grateful to the moon goddess for giving her to me.

Courtney keeps me level, since I seem to be a little headstrong myself. She is beautiful, perfect, has the tightest, most amazing ass, and her pussy tastes like skittles. I could just live with my head between her legs, but she told me no.

Coming here with her was a cultural shock at first. Miami had its trials for our pack there, like witch covens and bloodthirsty sirens, but it couldn't compare to this feral land in the Canadian wilderness. The wilderness in Canada can be harsh, making the wolves here much tougher than Miami.

In Miami, only the warriors were trained to fight. Here, it's mandatory for all werewolves to train. The dangers of rogue vamps, disgraced fae, and all other issues that arise with living in a secluded area are too great to leave any member of the pack vulnerable.

Axel scared me shitless when I first came here. Maybe it was because I was used to laid back Alphas who gave orders from behind a desk, but Axel's take charge, domineering attitude had me shitting bricks my first days here.

Him being Courtney's cousin, and the dynamic of their relationship where they were like each other's best friend is what led me and Axel to becoming best friends too. Sure, he had Farak and a few other warrior buddies, but I think my ability to be relaxed and joke around him is what led us to getting as close as we are.

No one else besides Courtney jokes with him. No one really feels relaxed enough to let loose around him and give him a hard time.

His father, who is running the mining camps now for the mining season on the other side of the country, was not a joking man. He was a play-by-the-rules guy, not tolerating bullshit or joking around.

With the pack's line of work, that is understandable, since you could die or kill someone fucking around while working the heavy machinery. I know he and Luna Harriet were not impressed by my flippant mouth and joking nature, but Axel appreciated the change.

"Is that the little alpha?" Farak jogs over to me. I nod and laugh at the surprise on his face. "Holy hell, he looks just like Axel."

"Acts like him too. Don't piss him off. He will attack you with water balloons when you're not looking."

"Huh?"

I laugh deeply. "Just don't make him mad. He will beat your ass with spoons."

"What the hell is wrong with you?" Farak makes a horrified face at me. "Spoons? That's the same shit you've been saying about Courtney."

"I'm just teasing about her, man. She likes it when I spank her, not the other way around." I bite my lip, thinking about the fun I had with her last night.

"Sick, man. She is like my sister."

"Last night, I had her tight, firm ass in the air and-"

Farak punches me in the side. The same spot Axel hit me earlier. I laugh breathlessly while bucking over. Farak and Axel are the only people I would talk to like that about my mate because I know it gets them mad and they won't think about her in any way. Well, I say that shit to Nate sometimes too when he is being his overprotective self and acting like he has more claim to his daughter than I do.

I like to tell him all the ways I claim Courtney in those situations. He is getting to where he can't beat my ass for it anymore. Old man.

"Is the kid going to be okay around us in wolf form? The women's group is about to come back from their run."

"Yeah, he's cool about it. We want to ride Axel later," I chuckle.

Taegan and Callum are in the middle of the training field now, wrestling on the ground. A men's training class should be going on, but it seems the whole class has stopped to stand around the boys and watch them. Courtney told me that Calum was dominating Taegan yesterday when they were wrestling in the mud, but that is definitely not the case today.

Taegan, being an alpha, is going to have better instincts and a higher learning capacity than all the other wolf children. He probably memorized Calum's movements yesterday without realizing it.

Calum is squealing and laughing, not at all minding the fact he is getting his little chubby butt kicked, and Taegan just has this devious smirk on his face, enjoying the fact he is winning.

Just then, The women's group breaks through the trees, all in wolf form. Farak's mate, Quinn, is the one leading the group.

Seeing the commotion on the training field, she walks over, the other women following her as they begin to shift.

Nudity is common in werewolf packs. It's something we grow up with and are comfortable being around.

Taegan has not grown up in a werewolf pack, though.

I quickly mind link the women to go get dressed. I can only imagine how Bailey will react when she hears about Taegan seeing our naked warrior women. She is human. She can barely understand us being werewolves and how a pack works. She isn't going to like the nudity part of shifting and how open we can be with it. All the women start sauntering off to their piles of clothes at the edge of the field. Tarak throws Quinn a shirt which she quickly throws on.

They chuckle at me through the mind link, calling me a prude and all kinds of names. I mean, we are part animal. We don't think twice about being naked in wolf form. Being naked in human form isn't a big deal to us either.

Taegan catches sight of the dressing females causing him to freeze, his eyes going wide in surprise.

"There's more of them..." he mutters before Calum breaks free from his hold, rolling over and leaping on top of Taegan's back.

"More what?" Calum asks gleefully, enjoying his momentary victory while Taegan is distracted.

"Pretty girls...."

Okay. That's enough. I implore the females to dress in more than just their shirts and underwear. Bailey is going to kill me.

“This little Axel clone must be his son?” Quinn asks.

“That he is. His name is Taegan.”

“Cute,” she coos as Taegan pushes Calum away then walks over to us. Calum, unfazed, turns and starts running for a couple of the warriors that usually fake spar with him when I bring him to work with me. Taegan smooths down his shirt as he saunters over.

“You’re pretty,” Taegan tells Quinn, offering her a big smile.

“Back off, little guy. She’s my mate,” Farak laughs.

“Mate?” Taegan tilts his head, earning him an “aww” from Quinn and a few of the other women watching. Little alpha is gonna be a heartthrob. And a lot of trouble. I can already see it.

“That’s like a husband and wife, but more powerful. The moon goddess gives us our mate, and they are the person most perfect for us, that will make us happier than anyone else in the world.”

“Do I have to turn into a big doggy too to have a mate,” he looks around at all the other females, a smile playing on his lips, “I want a mate. Lots of mates.”

“Uh oh,” Quinn laughs.

“That’s not like Axel,” Farak shakes his head with a smirk.

Axel is not a ladies man at all. Maybe because his mom was always so controlling and manipulative he just wasn’t interested in playing around. He had enough drama with one woman, he didn’t want to add more to it. Then, after he found Bailey, he was fully devoted to her, even over the years she was gone.

All he wanted to do was find her.

Here is his son, his spitting image, looking at all the women in the pack like they are a buffet.

“You will turn into a big doggy one day and get ONE mate. One,” Quinn told him, squatting down to get to his level.

“Okay,” Taegan looks down and pouts.

“You’re going to be trouble, kid,” I smirk at him as he plays up the pout the more the women around him coo and aww at him.

He glares at me, “You are trouble, old man.”

“Ouch,” Tarak laughs, patting me on the back. “So you really did know from experience to not get on his bad side.”

“Naw. We are best friends. Right Taegan?”

He growls at me, “Mommy is my best friend.”

“I’m your second.”

“Grandma Lucy is my second.”

“Third?”

He seems to think about that for a few seconds, “Brother Axel.”

“Brother Axel?” Farak and Quin both ask as I laugh.

“Don’t ask,” I snicker. “So what spot am I in?”

“Zero!” he sticks his tongue out at me.

“Zero comes before first,” I stick my tongue out back.

“Geez, how old are you?” Farak mutters.

“Hey, Taegan, want to go to the dining hall with me and get some ice cream?” Quinn asks him.

“Yes!” He stops glaring at me and turns a brilliant smile to her.

I call Calum over and the 5 of us head inside to get them more sugar. They obviously need it.

25 Walk

Chapter 25 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

4 years ago, when I visited the town outside of this pack with Levi, I was blown away by how attractive everyone was that lived here. That was nothing compared to now, looking around this pack of half-naked men and women.

Though Axel is by far the best looking man alive, and I truly don't think anyone else could compare to him, these other men are insanely attractive as well. Like, muscle on muscle, mouth-wateringly attractive.

The women are beautiful, and all fit and perfect. They are all tall, toned and gorgeous. The more Axel shows me around the pack and introduces me to people, the more self-conscious I become.

I will never fit in here.

I was starting to believe Axel's words and was letting hope bubble up in me about staying here with him, but I don't think my ego could take it.

There are so many better options for him here than me. All of them seem so much more fitting to be with someone as perfect as him. If Levi does end up being Taegan's father and not Axel, I don't know if I can stay. I don't want to burden Axel more than I already feel I am.

The way he took charge of the situation with my grandmother, and the gentle yet possessive way he claimed me to her had me swooning inside. Even without his insane good-looks, just the way he treats me, the way his eyes trail after me, taking me in like I'm this great miracle, or one of the wonders of the world, would have me falling even more for him.

He's perfect.

Too perfect.

He's so perfect with the way he treats me and Taegan, with the words he says and then there are, of course, his looks, that I feel more and more inadequate the more time we spend together.

Every kiss, every touch and every stare has my body buzzing for more of him, but my head keeps getting in the way.

I lived in a constant state of stress and anxiety because of my situation with Levi for years. It's hard to just turn that off now.

I wish he would do that weird voodoo thing with me again and help me to get out of my own head. I'm too scared to ask him, but that calmness and comfort that washed over me took away all the feelings of anxiety and fear. It made it easier for me to focus on just him. Just when my body and heart were feeling for him.

I'm in my head again, filled with doubt and worry. I want this. I want all of this to be real, but I can't get out of my head enough to believe it can be.

"What are you thinking about babe?" Axel asks, wrapping an arm around my shoulders, walking me back towards his packhouse. I hesitantly smiled up at him. We ventured into the forest so he could show me the river he wanted to take Taegan to fish soon. It was a short but beautiful walk. All of his packlands have been so picturesque and breathtaking.

“It’s a little overwhelming how many people are here. Well, werewolves. Can I call werewolves people?” I asked, confused about the terminology.

Axel chuckles, “You can call them people. We have more than just werewolves here, so it’s the most collective term.”

“There are more than just werewolves? Are there other humans like me?”

“Humans, witches, and even a fairy. Well, half-fairy. His mom was seduced by a fairy and left her with him. He didn’t even know what he was until one of my warriors ended up finding him on vacation working at a hotel in Vancouver.”

Fairies? Witches? “So, there are more than just werewolves?”

He gave me a worried glance, “Yeah. There are many other supernatural races.”

I bite my lip, thinking about Courtney and Casey’s little Twilight thing. “Is Courtney a vampire?” I end up asking.

Axel burst out laughing, “No. Of course not. She’s my cousin. Why would you think that?”

I shrugged shyly, “She had a team Edward Twilight shirt on in that picture Casey showed me.”

“Oh that,” he chuckles deeply, shaking his head, “Casey’s twin sister back in Miami is mated to a vampire.”

I scrunched my nose, “Then why wasn’t Casey wearing a team Edward shirt too? He was wearing a team Jacob one.”

“Casey and Vincent, his sister Simone’s mate, didn’t get off on the right foot. Casey is protective of Simone and thought Vincent was bad news. There was a bad history there between Casey and Vincent over a girl they both liked in high school. It didn’t help that Vincent attacked Casey thinking he was one of Simone’s exes last time Casey went down to visit. They’re on better terms now, but there is still a little bit of bitterness there. Overprotective brother stuff. The team whatever and team whoever crap is Courtney teasing Casey.”

“Team Edward and team Jacob,” I laughed, “Have you never seen Twilight?”

He shrugs, “Courtney tried. I wasn’t interested. Not my thing.”

“Mine either,” I smiled. “To be honest, all my knowledge of werewolves and vampires comes from horror movies.”

“You like horror movies?” he asks, his face full of surprise.

“More than sappy, unrealistic soapy dramas,” I shrug shyly.

“Hmm, I like that,” he pulls me close and kisses my cheek, “Horror movies are better for cuddling.”

I quirked a brow at him, “You sound like you know from experience.”

Now it is his turn to look embarrassed. “Um, no. Not really.”

Hmm, interesting. “You never watched a scary movie with a girl before?”

He rubs the back of his neck shyly, “Honestly, I haven’t had much experience with women. I mean, I wasn’t a virgin before you, but werewolves, having fated mates, don’t typically mess around with members of their own pack unless they end up being their mate. If we do, it could create problems later. I’m alpha and that means I didn’t want to have any misunderstandings for my future Luna, you, to deal with.”

My cheeks heat at his confession. Here I was worrying to death about the beautiful women in his pack, but knowing he never messed around with any of them because he was waiting for me makes me feel empowered.

That beautiful girl from yesterday coming out of his house, the negativity and hatred I saw from his mother, and then the fact that he grew up surrounded by all these beautiful, perfect women had me feeling uneasy about being with him, but all it took was one statement to make me feel at ease with him once again.

I tentatively took his hand. He squeezes mine back, lacing our fingers together, then brings it to his lips to kiss tenderly, looking down at me with that adoring look that is becoming more and more familiar the more time I spend with him.

We finally reached the packhouse, the last place Axel had to show me. Axel holds open the door and ushers me through.

“Casey mind linked me and said he and the boys were with my Beta Farak and his mate in the dining hall not too long ago.”

Mind link. That is still such a freaky concept to me.

The packhouse is rustic and beautiful, though maybe a little dated. The drapes on the windows are a golden floral pattern that reminds me of an old couch my grandma had. The walls are a forest green with a floral wallpaper striped every other foot. The accents are dull gold and pink.

The architecture is beautiful, though. It has the same vaulted ceilings as Axel’s home, and even with the grandma decor, you still get that rustic design in the architecture.

“You like it?” Axel asked me as I looked around.

“Of course she doesn’t,” a beautiful woman came from around a dividing wall past the foyer. “Your mom insists on keeping this place decorated like a nursing home.”

Axel scoffs, then looks down at me. “You can redecorate. I know everything is old-fashioned.”

“I can redecorate?” I asked in confusion.

“Of course! You’re the Luna now, right?” The beautiful girl brushes my hair off my shoulder, then frowns, looking at Axel perplexed. “Or you will be, I guess.”

“Hey Quinn. This is Bailey. Bailey, this is my Beta’s mate, Quinn. She’s one of our strongest female warriors.”

I smiled hesitantly back at the radiant woman. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“It’s so great to finally meet you too. I met Taegan earlier. Cute kid,” she chuckles, “he looks just like his dad.”

Axel smiled widely. I can’t seem to find the ability to do anything other than sputter and blush furiously. Axel wraps his warm arms around my waist and rests his chin on my shoulder. The smell of him, that delicious musk that makes my core tighten and relax all at the same time, fills my senses and helps to calm a little of my anxiety at hearing someone else refer to Axel as Taegan’s father.

“He does, doesn’t he?” Axel boasts.

“He is a lot smoother than you, though. You were never one for the ladies.”

“What do you mean?” I pushed down the distracting desire that builds in me every time Axel touches me and managed to ask.

Her eyes twinkle as she presses her lips together, as if to hold back laughter. “Go take a look. He’s in the dining hall with the Gamma.”

Axel takes my hand and the three of us start to walk towards the left of the building, passing curious onlookers along the way.

Besides Axel’s mom, everyone else has been kind and welcoming. They stare curiously, but always smile like they are pleased to see me on their leader’s arm. Axel seems almost boastful, like he’s trying to show me off. When you feel inadequate and unworthy, it’s a little unnerving.

Levi used to try and show me off in a sense, like he was showing off his property. It’s different with Axel. The possessiveness is tender and full of endearment and adoration. With Levi, it was more controlling and domineering. I never felt that he truly cared about my well-being.

I stare up at Axel as he talks to Quinn about border patrols or something like that, and I have a moment of true awe of the beauty in the man.

Even the direction his eyelashes curl is beautiful. The strain and flex in his neck as he talks, the luminous healthy glow of his skin, and pinch between his eyebrows is fascinating to watch. His strong jaw and smile lines create this urge in me to run my tongue over them.

He catches me looking at him, and a slow crooked smile spreads on his face. I can't even look away from embarrassment because the way his eyes are locked on mine has me caught in a spell.

He leans his face into mine, then nuzzles his nose against my nose before tenderly kissing my lips.

"Awe, look at you two," Quinn coos. "I'm so excited for you, Axel. I've never seen you this happy."

"I've never been this happy," he laughs.

I make him happy, and he is definitely making me happy. If this tingling warmth I'm feeling is the mate bond, I wonder how much more powerful it will feel if I let him mark me like he explained last night?

We reach the dining hall, and inside I see Casey and another man sitting across from Taegan and Calum, who have huge banana splits in front of them.

What throws me off is not that they are eating at least a pound of ice cream each this soon before lunch, but that the pretty girl that came out of Axel's home yesterday, Stephanie, is the one hand feeding Taegan bite after bite.

Axel growls deeply, "What the hell are you doing, Stephanie?"

26 Hurt Hands

Chapter 26 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Stephanie POV

I was on my way back to my room after being summoned by my father to the omega staff room where he was clocking out from work. He had berated me for 30 minutes about how much of a failure I was as his daughter. At least he didn't hit me today. Walking past the kitchens into the

dining room, I came face to face with an adorable little boy with bright blue eyes and an easy smile.

The way he smiled up at me had me instantly smiling back. I never smiled away from my mate, but this little boy was looking at me like I was someone worthy enough to be around. I never get that feeling in my pack any more. Only with Addison.

“Hi,” the little boy smiled up at me, “You’re pretty. You are the really pretty girl from yesterday at Brother Axel’s house.”

“Brother Axel?” I asked in confusion. Axel is an only child.

“It’s an inside joke,” Gamma Casey mutters gruffly, coming out of the kitchen’s buffet line with his son on one hip and a giant bowl of ice cream in his other hand.

Beta Farak walked out behind him with another giant bowl of ice cream, bananas, cherries, nuts and whipped cream mixed in, making it seem like it was going to overflow.

“No it’s not. Jokes are funny. Mommy said you can’t laugh at names because it hurts feelings,” the little boy looked back up at me. “I remember your name. It’s Stephanie. It’s pretty just like you.”

“Oh my,” I murmured, trying to fight back laughter. This little boy is a smooth talker. Too smooth for his size.

“That’s enough, Taegan. Your mama is going to have my balls if you don’t knock that shit off,” Casey tells him gruffly.

“Mommy said-”

“I know, I know. No bad words. Put away your spoons, kid. Jeez.”

Taegan, the little cutie, growls at him, and I can’t help but to laugh. Taegan looks back at me and a brilliant smile replaces his sneer directed at Gamma Casey.

“Um, Stephanie? My hands hurt from fighting with my cousin. I won, but they still kind of hurt. Can you help me eat my ice cream? I’m so hungry, but....my hands,” the kid pouted out his bottom lip and looked down at his small hands sadly.

Beta Farak and Gamma Casey both scoff and snicker, rolling their eyes at the kid's dramatics. Calum was too busy reaching for the ice cream in his father's hand to care about the conversation going on around him.

“Um, can’t one of them help you eat it?” I asked, pointing to the two full-grown men standing behind him.

Taegan looks back with a look of disgust. "It won't taste as good if they help me. They're boys."

"Oh my goddess, this kid," Beta Farak shakes his head.

Casey just smirks, rolling his eyes. "I've got my own hands full," he huffs, walking away to a nearby table to deposit his son, setting the ice cream in front of him. Calum wastes no time in digging into it.

Beta Farak laughs softly, following the gamma and putting the ice cream in the empty chair across from him. "Come on, Stephanie. The little alpha can't feed himself apparently."

Taegan reaches up and grabs my hand, pulling me to the spot beside him at the table. He even pulls my chair out for me, patting the seat for me to sit.

"Is this okay?" I asked the two men.

"It's fine, Steph," Quinn Anderson, our Beta's mate, comes out of the kitchen with an ice cream cone of her own. "I have to go check on something in the office real fast. You should stay with them for me and help keep an eye on them all. I can see a food fight coming if a real adult isn't present to defuse tensions when needed." She leans in and whispers to me, "The little alpha isn't Casey's biggest fan."

"Oh," I murmured, a little disarmed by how familiar Quinn was acting with me. She has never been rude or dismissive, like Gamma Casey and Alpha Axel, but I always felt like there was a wall between me and the rest of the pack because of Luna Harriet's actions and agenda involving me.

Maybe Alpha Axel's fated mate returning to him will help to ease my exclusion from my pack, since I am no longer able to be pushed upon him by his mother.

"Take a seat," Beta Farak gestured toward the chair. Taegan is pouting up at me, and I finally cave. His puppy dog eyes are too much to refuse.

He does a little happy dance, then hands me the spoon, opening his mouth wide for me to give him his first bite while the men laugh and Quinn shakes her head.

"Pure trouble. That's what he is," she mutters, walking off.

I awkwardly started to feed Taegan.

"So Stephanie, what are you up to today?" Beta Farak asks me.

"Um, I was just heading back to my room after speaking with my father."

"Your father is one of the maintenance omegas, right?" Beta Farak asks. I nodded in answer.

“You’re not hanging out with Luna Harriet today?” Gamma Casey asks.

“No. She hasn’t called for me. She probably won’t today.” Luna Harriet was pretty upset about her altercation with Alpha Axel yesterday. She left early this morning to see a friend she said lived a few hours away, and when she leaves to see them, she is usually gone for a couple of days. Coincidentally, my dad is also off for the next few days...

“Why not?” Casey asked.

I shrug, “She left this morning to see a friend. She is usually gone for a couple days when she does that.”

“Where does she go?”

I shrug. Even if I knew, I probably wouldn't be able to tell them.

“Hmm, weird. Why does she stick to you so much anyway? I always wondered.”

I try to answer, but my throat swells up and my body tightens as I fight past the command from Luna Harriet. Beads of sweat form on my forehead before I give up trying to talk and just shrug.

Gamma Casey is staring at me with a curious look on his face, tilting his head while observing me.

“Stephanie, do you like the alpha?” he comes straight out and asks me.

I tried to tell him no. I really really don’t like Alpha Axel in any way, and want to tell them that, but the command still prevents me from saying it. I hate this. I hate not being able to control my own responses. With Allison, since she is a stronger vampire, a 2nd generation, and has certain abilities, she can repress enough of my wolf side to ward off the command for us to be together in those moments. It helps that Luna Harriet is not the true Luna any longer. Away from my mate, I am powerless. If Axel were to command me, even Addison probably wouldn't be able to help me to fight the command.

I just sat in my seat in silence, sweat pouring from my hairline.

“Hmm,” Casey murmurs, “Well, not like it would matter. With Bailey here now, you won’t have to worry about that anymore.”

The way Casey said that, it made me think he understood the control Luna Harriet had over me. I don’t feel the hostility from him I usually feel, it makes me take a deep breath of relief.

I continued to feed Taegan, Beta Farak and Gamma Casey continued to chat, and for once, included me in the conversation. Taegan will ask me questions every once in a while. He asks me about my mate, and the command prevents me from telling him I found her. Casey stares at

me oddly again, then quickly changes the subject to the difference between frozen yogurt and ice cream.

I feel less of an outcast than ever before. That is until 10 minutes later, when I could feel a hateful glare boring into me.

“What the hell are you doing, Stephanie?”

Taegan looks at his dad and growls, “Not nice. Mommy says we don’t growl at pretty friends.”

“I growl at Courtney all the time,” Gamma Casey mutters under his breath.

Alpha Axel’s mate, the beautiful woman from his passenger seat I saw yesterday, is looking worriedly between me and the Alpha.

I put the spoon in the ice cream, push myself away from the table to stand, but Taegan’s little hand grabs mine and stops me. “I’m not done eating.”

“You can stay, Stephanie,” Gamma Casey says, “I need to talk with Alpha about something anyway. Stay and help Taegan with his hand injuries eat his food.”

27 Healing Hands

Chapter 27 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

When Casey said hand injury, both Axel and I stepped forward to grab Taegan’s hands and check them.

“They’re not really injured. He just wanted help from Stephanie with his ice cream. Kid’s got game, I’ll give him that,” Casey laughs. “Come on, Alpha. It will only take a second. I just need to go over something really fast with you. Rick, Quinn, can you come too? Bailey and Stephanie can watch the boys for a second.”

“Casey, I don’t think-” Axel starts to say, but Casey’s eyes glaze over creepily and Axel stops that train of thought. “Okay, fine.”

Axel circles his arm around my shoulder and kisses my head, “I’ll be right back, baby.”

“Okay,” I smiled shyly. When I look back at my son and Stephanie, she is giving me and Axel the same approving look everyone else in the pack has been giving us. There is no jealousy or rage. Just approval and a small smile like she was happy for him and for me. I bit my lip, smiling shyly back as the men and Quinn walked off in the direction we had just been.

I took Casey’s seat, grabbing a napkin he left behind and wiped away a big glob of chocolate sauce about to drip from Calum’s chin. Courtney is not going to be happy with Casey for the amount of sugar he is allowing the kid to eat right now.

“Jeez, Calum. How did you get chocolate on your eyebrow? How can you miss your mouth that much?” I muttered, mostly to myself. Stephanie laughs, though, having heard me.

“He bent over to lick a drop that fell on the table and his forehead went into the bowl. Gamma Casey got most of it off, but I guess he missed a spot.”

“Oh,” I giggled, causing Stephanie to smile wider in my direction.

“I like your dimples,” Stephanie says. “They remind me of....of someone important to me.”

“Thanks,” I smiled shyly at her, I’m sure making my dimples stick out more. “Um, I’m Bailey. We haven’t been formally introduced.”

“Stephanie,” she reaches across the table to shake my hand. “I’m very happy to meet you. You and the alpha are very cute together. I have never seen him so happy.”

“Thanks,” I muttered again shyly. “Um, so you are a werewolf too? You aren’t a fairy or....what is the other one he said?...Oh, a witch?” I stammered, feeling a little self-conscious and awkward.

“I’m a werewolf, Luna,” she chuckles.

“Sorry. That may have been rude of me to ask. I’m not used to all this yet. It’s nothing like what I’ve seen in movies.”

“No, it’s not. We are a lot more normal than you would think from watching movies and reading books. Most races are.”

“Even vampires? I can’t imagine sucking blood being normal,” I asked curiously.

She laughs lightly, “Most vampires don’t need much blood to survive. They use blood bags when they do need it and it’s only once or twice a month. They live more normally than werewolves most of the time. Only pure, first generation vampires need blood more often, but they all have sires to feed off of, they leave regular humans alone.”

“Sires?” I asked, not understanding what she was talking about.

“Sires are humans bound to a vampire that lives their entire lives bound by them. Only the purer vampires can have sires. I think up to 3rd generations. I haven’t heard of anyone past a 1st generation keeping sires, though, since only first generation vampires live eternally.”

“Oh wow. You know a lot about vampires,” I commented.

“I guess I do,” she smiles crookedly, popping another spoonful of ice cream into my son’s mouth.

“Are you close to a vampire? Axel told me that you guys can have different species as mates. Do you have a vampire mate?” I ask just to make conversation, as I am still nervous and feeling slightly awkward being left alone with a person I don’t really know as she feeds my blissfully happy son. Stammering when I’m nervous has always been an issue for me.

When I ask her, though, her hand freezes mid-air, a big glob of ice cream falling and landing on the table.

“Oh, no,” Taegan exclaims, grabbing a couple of paper napkins from the dispenser in front of him to clean up the mess. Stephanie continues to stare at me, frozen, small streams of sweat running down her face.

“Are you okay?” I asked her, coming around the table to dab her face with my sleeve. She looks like she is in pain.

“I’m...I’m fine,” she mutters. “I just....I want to....” She is straining to speak, and the sweat is forming on her face again.

“Stephanie!” Quinn rushes back into the room and to Stephanie’s other side. “My gosh, it’s true.”

“What? What’s true? What’s wrong with her?” I asked in a panic.

Axel comes in with the other men, and gently moves me aside to crouch beside Stephanie on the ground. Looking up at her, he says, “This will hurt for a second, then hopefully it will be over. Okay?” He is asking her for permission for something, but I’m not sure what.

She nods at him, a tear spilling from her eye, “Please.”

Please? Please what?

“I command you to tell me what my mother, former Luna Harriet Kissinger ordered of you.”

Stephanie cries out, and Taegan jumps out of his seat, running to me as her cries turn into a deep rawr. I cradle him in my arms, but he is the one soothing me in my frantic confused state instead of the other way around. Calum just continues to eat his ice cream like this is an everyday occurrence.

“She commanded me to leave my mate and seduce you. She and my dad wanted me to be made the next Luna, and she told me to keep all of it a secret from you and everyone else. I didn’t want to, but my dad...he hit me and shifted, then his wolf tore at my body until I couldn’t fight back. Luna Harriet came and commanded me to not accept Addison, but she never made me reject her. Instead, she just started to order me to go after you. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. I didn’t want to. I didn’t. I love Addison.”

“Shh, shh. It’s okay, Steph. Where is Addison now?” Quinn cradles Stephanie in her arms.

“Her coven. Blue Falls Coven,” Stephanie buries her face against Quinn, “I didn’t reject her. I couldn’t. I just wanted to be with her. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“Addison Baptiste? The head’s daughter?” Axel asks. Stephanie nods. “Shit. How long? How long have you known she was your mate?”

Stephnie looks up at him, eyes full of sorrow, “6, almost 7 years.”

“Does her father know? Does Lord Antonio know you are his daughter’s mate?” Casey asked. He and the other guy are standing with their arms crossed over their chests, faces full of concern.

Stephanie shook her head. “No. She has kept me hidden from her father like I am keeping her hidden from mine.”

All of them breathe out a sigh of relief. I don’t know why that would matter, but they all seem happy to hear that this Lord Antonio guy isn’t aware of Stephanie and Addison being mates.

“I think we should continue this talk somewhere more private,” Quinn murmurs. She looks around the room, and several people are watching the scene curiously while going about their business.

Axel stands and nods, walking over to me. He lifts Taegan from my arms and wraps a hand around my shoulders. That soothing feeling that he cast over me yesterday comes back. It’s not as strong as it was before, but it takes away my anxiety about Stephanie and what is happening right now. I’m still confused, but no longer scared.

“My house,” Axel says, “Let’s go there to talk. Courtney and Nate will be there soon, and Nate will be able to help.”

“Help what?” I asked.

He gave me a nervous look. “We aren’t on the best terms with that coven. If my mother and Stephanie’s father have been denying the head’s daughter her mate, then it could create more problems for us.”

“How?” Taegan asks.

Axel kisses his head, "I'll tell you later when you are a bit older. Right now, your friend Stephanie is sad. Do you think you can help me to make her feel better at home?"

Taegan nods, "I can feed her ice cream!"

That makes everyone chuckle, even Stephanie, who gives him a grateful smile with tears in her eyes.

"Thank you, Taegan. Thank you for inviting me to sit with you today. You don't know how long I have been waiting for this day to come."

"Aww, you can feed me ice cream anytime," Taegan smiles shyly.

~~~

Axel and I were standing outside the bedroom that he decided to convert into Taegan's room, even after I fought him and told him that Taegan didn't need a bedroom here.

Taegan is in heaven right now, sliding down his new bunk bed and then climbing back up the ladder to do it again. The bunk bed is shaped like a fire truck, and there is a fireman's pole at the end of it with a slide on the side. There is a matching dresser and desk, and Courtney even bought a bunch of toys, a TV, and a Wii for Taegan with Axel's credit card. He has never been spoiled like that.

Stephanie had just left with Courtney and Quinn. They were going to help her pack up her belongings at the packhouse and move into the annex of Courtney's grandparent's house until they could figure out how to handle the situation with her mate.

Casey and his father-in-law went to arrest Courtney's dad, but he was nowhere to be found, and his block was up in the mindlink, something they all seemed very concerned about.

"So your pack has killed many vampires from Stephanie's mate's coven over the last few decades?" I asked Axel. I was trying to wrap my brain around the whole situation and the concerns they had about her being mated to Addison.

"Not really his coven, but we have to kill rogues often. Lord Antonio isn't fond of us for that. Vampires and werewolves up here in Canada have kind of a tense relationship."

"Is it safe for Stephanie to be mated to one?"

"Yeah, but Antonio will not be happy if he hears our pack was withholding his daughter's love from her. They have a bond they form that is a lot like the mate bond and they won't be able to move on from that. My mother has kept not just Stephanie, but Stephanie's mate in limbo for several years."

"Poor Stephanie," I murmured. Axel comes and wraps his arms around me.

“I know. I know how hard it is to have to live without your mate after you found her.”

I buried my face in his chest, wrapping my arms around his waist. Guilt and shame are eating at me with that statement. I have been fighting so hard against him since coming here, but he had been fighting for years to get to me.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper.

28 Grandpa

## Chapter 28 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

“I’m sorry,” Bailey whispers in her beautiful, melodic voice. “I haven’t been very fair to you, have I?”

The sorrow in her sweet voice tore at my heart. “You were more than worth the wait, baby.”

She shook her head, “It’s not just that. Ever since the gas station, I have been fighting you about everything.”

“That’s expected. You knew nothing about my world, and I kind of just dropped it on you. I should have told you in a better environment. Not while you were pumping gas and my Gamma had our child.”

She quirks her lips to the side, and I know she is fighting the urge to say “my child”. She doesn’t fight me for once. I chuckled deeply, “I like you all fierce and feisty too. I’m your big puppy, remember. But only for you.”

She smiles coyly, “What are you for everyone else?”

“A big, bad, scary wolf,” I smirk.

“Mmh, I’d like to meet the big and bad side of you sometime,” she tilts her face up, biting her pillowy bottom lip.

I can’t resist the urge to take that lip between my teeth as well. I lean down, pressing my lips to hers, running my tongue over it before sucking it into my mouth, nibbling on it, causing her to moan.

We have kissed plenty, thanks to my persistence, but she hasn't opened up to me enough to really allow me to kiss her the way I've been wanting to.

I'm not going to let the chance slip by now.

My arms are wrapped around her, molding her soft body to mine as her hands run up my chest, her fingers flexing against the firmness of my muscles. Her soft moans fuel my desire for her, and soon my hands are wandering all over her body as well as I back up and away from Taegan's door, Bailey in tow.

Her ass. Fuck, it feels amazing in my hands. I'm going to bite it, munch on it and mark it up, branding it as mine. All of her is mine. This ass though.... Mmmh, I'm looking forward to getting up close and personal with it in the very near future. My dick is straining in my jeans, pressing firmly against her lower belly at the thought.

"Why are you grabbing mommy's butt?"

Shit.

Bailey jumps away from me, and I instantly drop my hands, hiding the evidence of what touching her butt did to me. I'm not hiding it very well though.

Bailey is bright red, beautifully so, and looking absolutely mortified.

"I, uh, was...." I tried to think of an acceptable thing to tell a child as to why I was grabbing his mother's butt. Is there an acceptable answer?

"Did mommy have a wedgie? I pick my butt when I get wedgies. Mommy said not to do it in front of other people. Is that why you were doing it for her?"

"Yes!" Bailey exclaims a little too enthusiastically. "Yes, baby. He was just helping mommy. That's all."

"Oh," he shrugs, "okay. Can I have the chips? I'm hungry."

I'm hungry too, kid. Not for food, though. Just another minute of making out with his mommy and he could have walked out on a lot more than butt grabbing.

"No chips, but you can have an apple or some popcorn," Bailey tells him, grabbing him by the shoulder and leading him out to the kitchen, throwing me a sympathetic glance, seeing how strained my pants have become.

I can smell her arousal too. I know I'm not the only one disappointed with our son's sudden appearance.

Tonight.

I had Courtney get Taegan a bunk bed so he would want to sleep alone. Tonight, I'm getting Bailey in the room she belongs in as well, my room, and that juicy ass of hers is mine.

~~~

Casey POV

When I told Axel and the others about my suspicions that Stephanie was being bound by a command, I didn't think it would be confirmed as soon as it was.

When we told my father-in-law and my mate, they were both livid. They had every fucking right to be.

Carli, Court's other cousin and my sister's best friend, had a horrible childhood, all because of a Luna's command.

Nate and Courtney took it personally, finding out that Luna Harriet had abused her power the way she had with Stephanie. They were both quick to help her in any and every way they could.

Both of them wanted Luna Harriet to be held accountable, but that was easier said than done.

First, the command was given before Axel's leadership, so she was within her rights to command anything she deemed necessary for the safety of the pack. She could very easily use the argument that she was trying to protect us all by not letting the vampire coven leader's daughter become a member of the pack.

Many of the elders would support this decision. Even Axel's father, the previous Alpha Max, may have even supported that decision. He was never a fan of vampires. I suspect there was a deeper, more sinister reason for her giving the command that had to do with Stephanie's father, but we need him to confirm that.

We have more than enough grounds to arrest Stephanie's father. Eric Collins does have a history of violent behavior and angry outbursts, and now with the accusation of him beating and abusing his daughter, he is subject to disciplinary action.

When we went to arrest him, he was nowhere to be found. Even Stephanie said she had no idea where he could be.

Now, Nate and I are stewing in my office at the warrior center with Rick, trying to decide what to do next.

Axel is allowing Nate to take the lead on this for now. His mother is the one in question, and though he will get the final say, we all thought it would be better during the investigation if he was left out as much as possible.

“We may have to call Alpha Max. He might know more about why his mate would command Stephanie to do all that shit,” my father-in-law groans, running a hand down his face. “Fucking a, I don’t want to call him, though. He is always such a fucking grouch while out at the mines,” he looks at Rick, “You call him.”

“Me?! Why me?”

“You’re the Beta, big boy. It’s your job,” Nate tells him.

“I thought Axel told you to take the lead on this. Doesn’t that make it your job?”

“I’m delegating,” he huffs.

“Delegating my ass. You’re such a fucking pansy. Want me to call him for you since you’re too scared? I can go get you a tampon and some midol while I’m at it,” I taunted him.

I don’t want to call Alpha Max either, but I know if I push my father-in-law like this, he will usually cave.

“Who are you calling a pansy, you pussy?” he growls, “I’m not scared. I’m just too busy.”

“Sure, sure,” I nodded theatrically. “*COUGH COUGH*, pansy, *COUGH*”

“Listen here, you cunt-faced douchebag prick, I’m not fucking scared. Give me the damn phone.”

Farak and I smirk at each other briefly, looking back at Nate with all seriousness before he notices. He is staring down at the landline phone, scratching the back of his head while dialing the number for Alpha Max.

We listen intently, our ears perking up as he answers.

“Hey, Alpha. Um, how are things going there?”

“How the hell do you think it’s going over here you asshole? Why don’t you bring your ass over here and find out? Come shit in a hole in the ground and shower with water bottles once a week and let’s see how things are going for you.”

“No. I’m good. Last time I went there, there was nowhere to plug in my blow dryer,” Nate had the nerve to say, making me choke in laughter.

“What the fucking hell do you want?” Alpha Max growls.

“Oh, yeah. So, we have an issue with your wife, and were hoping you could shed some light on our current situation.”

“What situation? What did Harriet do now?”

“Well, we just found out she passed down a pretty harsh command to one of our members, Stephanie Collins. We need to find out why, but she is nowhere to be found right now, and Stephanie’s father is MIA too.”

“What kind of command? Is Stephanie that red-haired young woman always trailing after her?”

“Yes, that’s Stephanie. Well, it turns out that Luna Harriet commanded Stephanie to stay away from her fated mate and pursue your son instead. Stephanie didn’t want to do either of those things, but your wife has been forcing the command on her for the past several years. She even prevented Stephanie from telling anyone else.”

“Then how the fuck did you find out?”

Nate looked up at us, wondering if he should say anything about Bailey. He doesn’t have to tell us that Bailey and Taegan are his concern, we can just tell.

“Um, the new luna and.... And Axel’s son kind of helped us figure it out.”

“WHAT?!” Alpha Max roars, “Son? How the hell does my son have a son? And who is this new luna? What the actual fuck, Nathan?!”

“Alpha, your son found his mate. The human girl, Bailey, that he lost years ago through a misunderstanding. Well, it turns out she left him pregnant with his kid after their night together. She had a son. He is undeniably Axel’s. Looks just like him and smells just like him too.”

There was a long pause on the phone.

“I’m a grandpa?”

Nate laughs lightly, “Uh, yeah. I guess you are, Alpha. Congrats.”

“I’m a fucking grandpa?!” His voice sounded much lighter and happier than before. “Hey, guys! I’m a fucking grandpa! I got a grandson!” He yells out, probably to the poor workers around him. We could hear a few muttered congratulations. “What’s his name? What’s my grandson’s name? Can you send me a picture?”

I nodded to my father-in-law, pulling out my phone to send him a picture of Taegan, Axel and Bailey I took at dinner tonight for a project Courtney wants to do for them as a welcome present.

“Casey is sending you a picture of the three of them now, sir,” Nate tells him after I show him the picture I just sent. “Taegan is the boy’s name. Bailey did a great job raising him alone. Kid’s a fucking fighter. He took on my grandson and Casey several times already, coming out at the winning end with my pussy of a son-in-law each time.”

“Of course he did. He’s my grandson, right?” There is a long pause again, and I just know it’s because he pulled the phone away to check the message. “Fuck, he’s beautiful. Looks just like me. Why didn’t this Bailey woman tell my son about the boy?”

“She didn’t know about werewolves, so she didn’t know about werewolf pregnancies. She didn’t think it was possible for Taegan to be Axel’s. And....I think he looks just like Axel, sir.”

“Don’t fucking argue with me. Fuck. I got to get home. Can you send Archie to replace me? The new foreman isn’t ready to handle this place alone yet.”

Archie is Farak’s father and our former Beta.

“Sure thing, Alpha. I’ll have Rick call his dad now. Now, about your wife...”

Alpha Max sighs “To be honest with you, Nathan, I have no clue what runs through that woman’s mind half the time. If she gave a command like that, I had no idea about any of it. Now, Stephanie? You said her last name was Collins, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Any relation to Eric Collins?”

“That’s her father,” Nate says hesitantly. There is something in Alpha Max’s voice that is making all three of us feel uneasy.

Alpha Max sighed heavily, “Eric was Harriet’s fated mate. She doesn’t know that I know, but I found out a few years after Axel was born.”

My eyes went wide in surprise. I didn’t know that Luna Harriet was a chosen mate. That explains so much, though.

“I remember you telling me that she wasn’t your fated mate. I didn’t know that hers was still around when she decided to take you as a chosen mate. She came from another pack, didn’t she?”

“Yeah. Her father was a Beta of a pack from New York. That’s why I had no idea her fated mate would be in our pack. When her father set up the blind date between us when we were brokering a business deal, he made it sound like her fated mate had died, just like mine. I found out about Eric a few years after Axel was born, because Eric’s chosen mate died during childbirth with his daughter and Harriet kept visiting him to help with the baby. I didn’t know that baby was Stephanie.”

“Shit, do you think that’s why she was pushing for Stephanie and Axel to mate over the past few years?”

“Possibly. There is no telling with her. Get Archie here, and I’ll be home as soon as I can to help. I want to be there when you confront them. If she is fucking with my son’s life for that prick, I want to be the one to deal with them both.” There is a brief pause, “My grandson, Taegan, needs to meet his grandpa too. Shit, I’m a fucking grandpa. I’m going to be the best fucking grandpa in the world.”

“I think that title already belongs to me,” Nate muses, drawing a growl from Alpha Max.

“Fuck you are. Get Archie here. He has until morning.”

The phone clicks off, but Nate still says, “Bye” like the man will hear him.

“Well, boys. I think we may have found our motive,” Nate stands, looking down at us proudly like he had just solved the greatest mystery all on his own.

“Great job, grandpa,” I laughed at him, “I’m excited for you and Alpha Max to be working together again.”

His face falls at the realization, making both me and Rick snicker.

29 Mine Forever

Chapter 29 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

Axel told me that he wanted to put Taegan to bed tonight. I didn’t fight him. There was still that inkling of doubt that he was crazy and all of this was impossible, but I want more and more by the second for all of this to be real.

I want Axel to be Taegan’s father.

My son deserves the world, and I have a feeling it is within Axel’s power to give it to him. Axel wants to give it to him.

I’m standing at his bedroom door swooning at the way Axel is patiently reading to Taegan while Taegan stops him every other second to ask a new question. He never gets frustrated or angry. Axel just smiles, listens intently, and answers to the best of his ability.

I'm trying not to laugh while Axel explains how a toaster works. Taegan saw a picture of a toaster in the background of the page in the book, and decided he couldn't go on reading until he knew how it works.

Each answer Axel gives him raises more questions for Taegan, but instead of getting mad, he just continues answering with a smile on his face. They decide to watch the movie *The Brave Little Toaster* together tomorrow, and Taegan finally lets Axel move on.

I push away from where I'm leaning on the door and walk back out to the kitchen. Taegan and Axel decided the only way they were going to eat popcorn was by throwing it into each other's mouths and it made quite a mess on the floor.

I dig around a closet until I find a broom and dustpan, then start sweeping it all up. I'm bending over to get my pile of dirty popcorn in the dustpan when I hear a deep moan coming from the hallway.

"Damn, Bailey. I think you missed a spot."

I looked back, still bent over, and Axel's eyes were intently staring at my ass, a hunger embedded in his face, making my core tighten under his gaze.

I giggle to hide my embarrassment. "Um, is Taegan asleep?" I ask as I finish sweeping up the popcorn pile.

"Passed out while I was explaining how a lawn mower works," Axel's voice grew closer until I could feel his heat pressed against my back. His heart is thumping steadily in his chest, pulsing against my shoulders.

He places his hands on my hips, his nose skimming the crook of my neck, making shivers spread down my spine. My head lulls back against him and a soft moan escapes me as his lips place open mouth kisses on my skin.

"I need to throw this away," I whispered, lifting the dust pan slightly.

He huffs and took the dust pan from me, and the broom, throwing the debris in the trash and placing both the broom and dustpan at the end of the counter. He strides back towards me, surprising me by lifting me up in his arms without even stopping.

His mouth meets mine hungrily, and I'm too surprised to resist, and then I don't want to. His tongue is dancing with mine. His deep husky groans vibrate his firm chest. His hands are gripping my ass, bruisingly so, making my sex tingle and tighten with need.

Axel walks down the hall with me in his arms, my legs wrapped around him and my chest melting against his as his mouth continues to devour mine, swallowing my mewling moans.

He bends, and I feel the soft mattress on my back, but don't have time to focus on that. My senses are overwhelmed by Axel. His room is filled with his scent, making it impossible for me to focus on anything but him. He is pushing and grinding his girth against me, making my pussy leak to the point my folds are drenched, my nub swollen and throbbing.

His hands roam my body, ripping and tearing my clothes right off.

When I'm in nothing but my bra and underwear, he leans back, his eyes roaming my exposed skin, his blue irises icing over with lust. I usually feel so self-conscious about my body, but the way he looks at me makes me feel sexy and desired. I feel empowered. Even my stretch marks feel like marks of beauty when he bends over me, running his tongue over them.

"So sexy," he purrs, stripping out of his shirt.

"Speak for yourself," I gaped. He is absolute perfection, as always. How can one man be so perfect?

He smiles crookedly, dropping his pants and underwear, revealing his long, heavy excitement. I bit my lip, fascinated with his god-like physique. Every outline of him is hard and defined. His strong arms, broad shoulders and tapered waist would bring any girl to her knees.

"I want you," Axel husks, leaning over me, his hand sliding behind my back to rid me of my bra.

"I want you too," I whispered. I shouldn't. I should be waiting for the paternity test, but I can't fight this need for him any longer. My rationality is lost when it comes to this man. I just want to stay blissfully ignorant of the harsh realities I'm facing outside of his pack when I am with him. He is my oasis.

My panties are the last thing he tears from my body. Before he throws them to the ground, he brings them to his nose, inhaling the wet spot that spread from my core. Fuck, that's so hot.

He growls deeply, throwing my panties on the ground with my bra and shredded clothes, then dips down to my folds, his mouth latching around my sensitive nub. I cry out as he harshly massages my nub, flicking and licking the nerves over and over again as his fingers find their way inside me, curving and pumping in and out of my heat.

My cries become more desperate the more the overwhelming pleasure builds inside of me. He growls deeply, sending me over the edge, making my insides burst like a damn and my legs begin to shake around his neck. He hungrily laps up everything spilling out of me, prolonging the painfully sweet pleasure.

"Fuck, baby. You taste amazing," he grunts huskily, kissing the inside of my thigh.

He surprises me by lifting my legs more, making my ass stick out in his face. He kisses, then bites into my cheek, making me whimper as I feel it in my sensitized pussy.

“Your ass is all mine,” he growled before biting the other cheek. I cried out, gripping the sheets. His teeth release me as his tongue runs over his mark.

He kisses his way up my body, meeting my lips. I can taste my juices and the metallic tang of my blood on his tongue. Fuck, he must have bitten me hard enough to tear my skin. Why does that turn me on even more?

He positions his dick at my entrance. “You’re mine,” he growls, plunging into me. I screamed, his heavy weight stretching my walls to the point of pain.

He stills, kissing and swallowing my cries. “Fuck, you are so tight, baby. So fucking tight. Tell me this tight pussy is mine.”

I nod, wincing and whimpering as I adjust to his size.

“Say it,” he growls, nibbling on my neck.

“I’m yours,” I cried breathlessly.

“Fucking right, you are. I’m going to mark you, baby, and you will never leave me again.”

I feel his sharp teeth against my nape as he violently thrusts in and out of me. His tongue is dancing across my skin, massaging it. I should be scared, but I’m not. I want this. I want him to sink his teeth into me, claiming me as his forever. I don’t want to ever be apart from the pleasure he is giving me. I never want to leave his side, where I feel safe and adored. I feel loved. And I think I might love him too.

My hips take on a mind of their own, meeting Axel thrust for thrust, that aching pleasure building inside of me again.

His teeth slowly sink into my neck, tearing through my skin, making me cry out. The pain is quickly replaced with an intense pleasure, one I could never describe. It is like the feeling of coming home from a long journey, your whole body relaxing in comfort, but buzzing in excitement at the same time. It's like the first heavy rain after years of drought. Like the painful relief you feel, hearing your baby cry out for the first time after a long intense labor. He is my reward after years of trial and tribulation. My lifehouse in a storm.

Axel is my everything.

My orgasm is so intense, my entire body is shaking, like an electrical current is running through my veins.

I can feel Axel’s teeth embedded deep within me, but there is no pain. Just a mind-blowing pleasure, bringing stars to my vision.

His movements become more sporadic until his dick starts pulsing, spilling his seed deep inside me.

My vision begins to fade, and my body feels heavy and sated as Axel releases his teeth from my neck. His tongue licks and massages the wound, my skin tingling and sparking in response.

“You’re mine. Finally, you are mine forever, Bailey,” Axel whispers, his voice thick with emotion.

I tried to respond back, but I couldn’t find the words. I have lost the ability to speak. My eyes will not even open. My body is worn out to the max.

“I love you, baby,” I hear Axel whisper, his lips pressed to mine as I let sleep finally take me.

I love you too, Axel, I think to myself as my mind slips into darkness.

30 Bitter Friends

Chapter 30 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Levi POV

“Levi, you are not the father,” one of my friends snickers as he mimics his best impression of Maury.

Everyone I am drinking with laughs and hollers, rejoicing and making fun of the test results I just got back.

I want to do just about anything other than rejoice right now.

She fucking cheated on me. That bitch not only cheated on me, she had another man’s kid.

My father made some calls and got them to rush the test and get me the results early. I wasn’t supposed to have access to them before Bailey got them in court, but my father knows the judge.

The results are set to be delivered to her grandmother next week, since Bailey’s lawyer insisted she and her kid went into hiding due to threats I made on the kid’s life. Seeing as I am not the boy’s father, I have no grounds to demand for Bailey to come back.

What's even more fucking frustrating is that the incompetent old fuck Bailey was using for a lawyer suddenly got replaced by these big time lawyers from Toronto. I was going to fight the paternity verdict and demand for parental rights based on having an established fatherly relationship with Taegan, but those damn lawyers were able to shoot that down at my lawyers' summons request of Bailey.

I went out tonight with some of the friends that we used to hang out with years ago before she got pregnant; the same ones I caused a rift to form between Bailey and them. I still have a cordial friendship with them, and since Bailey doesn't know anyone outside of this town that I know about, I was hoping one of these people might have heard from her.

They haven't.

I created so much animosity between her and them that none of them have heard from her in years. Not since before our vacation to Blue Cliff all those years ago.

"How does it feel to finally be free of the chubby leech?" one of the girls asks with a laugh.

I forced a smile, taking a swig of my beer to calm my anger before answering. "I still love her. As much as it sucks, I want to be in her life. I mean, I raised Taegan. The court may say he's not mine biologically, but that doesn't change that emotionally, and in the ways that really matter, I'm his father."

The girls at the table all awe at my statement, and the dude sitting next to me pats me on the back sympathetically.

It's all bullshit what I'm saying, but the more they think I'm the victim, the more willing they will be to help me if they hear of her.

"I'm so sorry, Levi. It's horrible what she did to you. I don't think you should waste your time on a slut like her, but if you love the child, I can understand that," Emily, a girl who was once Bailey's best friend, rubs my hand from across the table.

"Thanks. Yeah, it hurts knowing she cheated on me, but she is still the mother of the child I will always see as my son. I can't just not love her, you know?"

"Aww, she doesn't deserve you."

Fucking right she doesn't. That doesn't change the fact that she is mine.

"Man, I don't know how you could stand being with her for so long," another girl says, "I mean, she had a pretty face and all, but she had to have weighed the same as you. No one wants a girl that heavy."

"Fat. You mean fat," another girl says.

“You’re still so jealous of her,” one of the guys chortles. “Guys don’t like stick figures, Lo. She may have been a slut, but with that ass she had every right to be. The bitch had a banging body.”

“Eww, she was like a whale,” Lo grimaces.

I bury down my anger and malice at them speaking about Bailey like this. It’s okay for me to talk about her however I want, but they shouldn’t be saying this shit. Especially the guys, who are now all talking about how much they would want to “hit that” over sleeping with washboard Lo.

“Guys, she is still the mother of my child. Well,” wipe my eyes like I’m tearing up, “The mother of the boy that I will always think of as my son.”

“Awww,” most of them say collectively.

“I’m sorry, bro. You’re hurting enough and we’re not making it any better.”

I nod, then make up some excuse about needing to go to the bathroom. I’m going to go smoke, then come back in and offer some excuse about how hard it is to stay out and have fun when I don’t know where my kid is, then leave. These guys don’t know anything, and I don’t want to waste any more time here. I’m not in the mood tonight.

As I light up my cigarette, an older man approaches me outside, asking to borrow my lighter. I groaned and told him to fuck off.

He growls, baring his teeth in an animalistic way, causing me to jump back. Not out of fear. Of course not. Why would I be scared of this old fuck? I’m just startled by his aggression. That’s right. And I’m not now handing him my lighter because I’m scared. No. If he is willing to growl at a stranger like this, he obviously really wants and needs that cigarette. I’m just being a nice guy and helping him out.

“Thanks,” he mutters, taking a few deep drags before handing me my lighter back.

I nod, then take a few steps away from the stranger, putting as much distance I can between us in the designated smoking area outside.

“So, I couldn’t help but overhear you and your friends talking inside,” the stranger said, causing me to give him an awkward glance. Creep. Was he listening to us talking?

“Bailey was your woman’s name. Correct?”

What the fuck? I’m not in the mood for this shit. What kind of creep listens in to other’s conversations intently enough to pick out the name of the person we were talking about? I don’t even remember saying her name that much.

“Hey, man. I’m not in the mood for small talk with a stranger. I’m a little fucking creeped out hearing that you were listening to our conversation too.” I dropped my cigarette, stomping it out with my foot.

I turned to walk away, but his next question stopped me.

“Don’t you want to know where she is, and that boy you claim to love so much?”

I slowly turned, staring at the man apprehensively. “You know where Bailey is?” I asked.

The man chuckles, and pulls out his phone. “This her?”

He shows me a picture of Bailey hugging some tall blonde mother fucker around the waist, staring up at him in a way that she never looked at me.

The guy looks like Taegan. Shit. Was that asshole on the phone a few days ago telling the truth?

Blonde fucker is huge, I’ll give him that, but muscles aren’t everything. A bullet in my hunting rifle can tear through muscle just as effectively as fat.

“Where is she?” I sneered, grabbing the phone from his hands and zooming in on Bailey’s face.

The look she is giving this guy is like nothing I’ve ever seen from her. That’s how I’ve always, since the day I first saw her, longed for her to look at me. The devotion and adoration is evident. She is looking at him like he is her entire world.

It makes me sick.

How fucking dare she? How dare that bitch look at any man other than me. I’m the one who has loved and taken care of her for the last several years. She was nothing before me. Nothing. How fucking dare she?!

“WHERE IS SHE?!” I yelled the question again, not even caring that I was spraying the guy with my spit.

The man wipes a hand down his face and laughs, “I think we can help each other out.”