

Chapter 41 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Max POV

“Why are you just now showing up to help, you big oaf!” Lucy hits my arm, “And why are you naked?! Is this what my granddaughter and great-grandson are being exposed to right now?”

“I don’t think she minds,” I muttered.

“Oh...you...!” She proceeds to hit and swing at me. I take a pair of shorts from Dusty and slide them on, hoping that will calm her some.

Lucy has always been a spit-fire, and even in her old age, she looks much the same now. Still fire in her eyes, reflecting from her soul. This woman would walk through fire for the ones she loves, and I have always admired that, even when her firestorm was raining down on me.

“Why are you so late?” Lucy questions me.

“I told you I would be fucking late, woman,” I grumbled, “I needed to spend some time with my grandson.”

I took Taegan with me to go for a run in the woods. That annoying mate of my niece and his almost cute son came too, as well as Rick, but I tried to ignore their presence and just focus on the giggling little boy riding on my back. He is already my entire world, even if he doesn't know it yet. Even now, I'm itching to get back home and get even closer to him, building his trust in me so we can get closer and closer. I'm going to be the best damn grandpa in the world. Fuck Nate and his bullshit about being number one. That spot is now mine.

Taegan is going to make a strong alpha one day. Just like me. Everyone keeps saying he is Axel’s spitting image, but I know he actually looks more like me. Acts more like me too. I don’t think Axel was as fierce or protective as this kid. Maybe towards Courtney, who was always his best friend growing up, but Taegan’s protectiveness over his mother is on a different level. Probably learned a bit of that from Lucy here. Lucy threatened me quite a bit back in the day too. Taegan definitely has an alpha's dominance and his possessiveness when it comes to Bailey.

When the kid finds his mate, she will have her hands full reigning him in.

After a few hours of running, Taegan and Calum wanted to go home to watch a dog movie, so I passed Taegan off to Rick begrudgingly, then set straight out for here.

“You beast,” Lucy looks at my body up and down, “Is this how you seduced my sister? Walking around naked all the time? This seems very inappropriate. Maybe it would be best for Bailey and Taegan to just stay-”

“Bailey is already marked by my son, Lucy. She is staying with him in our pack. Same as you. I told you, kicking or screaming, you’re coming.”

She huffs, then starts to march back into the house, muttering something about me having more muscles than manners, making me smirk.

But I’m not smirking for long.

I look around at the work needing to be done, and my eyes land on a car down the street and around the corner in the shadows, away from the street lights. If I was human, I would have missed it, but there was movement inside, and the faint glow from a cell phone.

I looked away, turning my back to the car so I could address Chris and Dusty. “Boys, don’t both look at the same fucking time, but do you see that car over there on the street corner? The one with the engine running you seemed to be completely oblivious to.” I stared coldly between both of them for doing a shitty job on surveillance. I’m sure it was because Lucy was overwhelming them, but that is still no excuse.

They gulp nervously at my stare, then take turns looking at the car from the corner of their eyes.

“Yes, alpha,” Dusty said.

“Use stealth and go check it out, Dusty. You’ve seen what that cunt, Levi Sullivan, looks like, right?”

“Yes sir,” Dusty nodded.

“Good. Quickly and quietly check it out. Go.”

“Yes, alpha,” Dusty says, walking around to the back of the house where I’m sure he is planning on shifting and using the cover of shadows and the trees to see who is in the car. I have my suspicions, but I want to be sure.

If that cunt-faced prick is using vampires to do his dirty work, I want to know how and why.

Chris and I continue to act like we are working, moving more items from the lawn into the moving van.

“Damn, did she leave anything in her house? Why is there so much?” I asked as I took inventory of the inside of the moving van.

“She’s a bit of a pack rat, Alpha. This is what we talked her down to. She originally wanted to bring about 10 dressers filled with random junk. I had to explain to her why she wouldn’t need her collection of grocery bags or 40 empty cool whip containers. She had an entire dresser in her living room filled with just cookbooks she wanted to bring.” Chris shakes his head, eyes wide like he is reliving some horrible memory.

I laughed under my breath, shaking my head. Her sister told me that Lucy tended to hoard random shit like that. She mentioned the dresser thing too. Lucy didn’t like regular bookshelves, thinking no one had the right to be nosy about what she stored and kept, so she only bought dressers, keeping her belongings closed off from public eyes.

I’m going to have to have my sister help Bailey set up a separate cabin for Lucy. Axel will tolerate clutter for his mate, I’m sure, but he won’t be happy about it.

“Alpha, it’s him. It’s that man. Levi.” Dusty’s mind link takes my thoughts back to the task I gave him.

Shit, the fucker has some balls. Pulling that shit to try and get my grandson and then using a vampire to do it.

I need to know where the vampire came from.

I have my suspicions about all this, and Nate agrees with me. We just need to find a civil way to get in contact with Lord Antonio to confirm our suspicions.

There is a reason we can’t mind link Harriet and Eric. They are being protected by someone, and if it’s who I think it is, we will need Lord Antonio to come to our side. Not just Stephanie, but now Bailey too has a stake in the happenings of his coven. It is about time we stopped the petty fights and came to terms with one another.

Nate thinks we can bring Casey’s sister and mate here to help ease the tension. Maybe I should consider it.

Shit, if Axel hadn’t gotten his fucking panties in a bunch and ran out, we could have decided this shit then. I’m going to have to have a talk about the vampires with my son when I get home.

“Stay on him. Follow him, you and Chris both stay behind and watch his every move, reporting back to me daily. I need to know what the fuck he is up to and how he is associating with vampires.”

“Yes, alpha,” they both say through the mind link.

Fuck. A long ass drive alone with Lucy. This is going to be fun.

Taegan and my new daughter-in-law need to be kept safe, though, and that takes precedence over everything else. Even if I'm going to want to blow my fucking brains out by the end of this drive....

42 Daddy

Chapter 42 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

I woke the next morning to kisses on my neck and shoulder, making my whole body tingle with pleasure.

I smile into my pillow. "Good morning," I mumble.

"Good morning, Beautiful," Axel's husky voice caresses my ear just before his lips latch around my earlobe, his teeth grazing on the fatty skin.

His tongue licking behind my ear makes my legs squeeze together, my body involuntarily grinding against his.

"I'm sore," I pout, knowing what this morning's greeting was about to lead to.

"Mmh, poor baby. Want me to kiss it better?"

I laughed breathlessly, "No, it's gross. I need a shower."

"Nothing about you is gross," he moaned. "Goddess, you smell so much like me right now. I love it."

I turned to lay my head on his chest, and stop his mouth's pursuit, "I love the way you smell. Maybe I shouldn't shower," I teased him.

"Maybe we should shower together," he husks.

"I don't think I would get very clean if we did."

"Probably not," he admitted.

We lay together, Axel's hands moving up and down my back soothingly. I feel so content and loved in his hold. After last night, I know without a doubt this is where I belong. He is where I belong.

"How much damage do you think Taegan did to Casey last night?" I wondered after a few minutes of comfortable silence.

Axel laughs out loud heartily at that, "Nothing more than he deserves, I'm sure."

"Taegan wanted Stephanie to have a sleepover with them too," I informed him with a chortle.

"Eww," Axel grimaces.

"Eww?" I looked at him in confusion, "Why eww? She's gorgeous."

Even though I'm saying this, I'm smiling on the inside, knowing that Axel has zero interest in other women. He seems to only have eyes for me.

"She's a stick figure," he says in disgust.

"Um, she's got a thin waist, but she actually has very distinct curves. I would love to have her body."

"No," Axel pulled me up his body and gripped my ass, "I like you just the way you are."

"I'm fat, Axel. I know I am. I should probably start exercising or something, so no one gives us odd looks seeing us together."

Axel growls deeply, "You are not fat, Bailey. You are perfect. I love everything about your body. The only way I would want your body to change is when you are pregnant with baby number two, and then three....and then four."

"Jeez, are you just wanting me to always be pregnant?" I huffed at him in disbelief.

He smiles broadly, "Yes. Please."

I giggle at his eagerness, remembering his chanting for baby number two over and over again every time he came last night.

I somehow made it to the shower on my own, deterring him from joining by requesting coffee and mentioning being hungry. If he wants me to stay the same size, he needs to quit working me out so much and start feeding me.

After showering, I quickly got dressed in comfortable clothes and met Axel out in the kitchen.

He made me a yummy looking omelet, still steaming and waiting for me with toast. He swallows down an egg sandwich he made himself, gives me a quick kiss, then goes to shower himself while I eat.

I call Courtney while eating and she tells me that Taegan is fine, eating unhealthy pancakes with Calum and Casey at the moment, and Casey is planning on taking the boys to work with him for the morning so Courtney can come and help me get ready for my grandma's coming.

Axel had to leave for work by the time Courtney got here, and Courtney had to physically separate him from me, pushing him out the door, much to my disappointment and amusement.

“Dang, you have him whipped already,” Courtney jokes with me when he is officially gone.

I blushed at her knowing smirk, “It was a nice night alone together. Thank you for keeping Taegan for us.”

“No problem,” Courtney nudges me with her elbow. “It will be nice to have someone to go through my second pregnancy with.”

My eyes go wide, “You’re pregnant!?”

She laughs and nods, “Don’t tell anyone yet. Casey wants to do some big reveal to my dad.”

I giggle, “That should be fun.”

“Oh, I can’t wait,” Courtney winks at me.

We work on readying an empty room. Courtney’s mom had new furniture arranged to be delivered for it by mid-morning, then we just had to work to set up the small stuff, like making sure there was toilet paper and toiletries in the bathroom and clean bedding on the new mattress.

I told Axel that my grandma would be fine with the guest room we slept in the first night I was here, but he insisted on my grandma having the room furthest from ours. He said I was a screamer and, even though our room was sound-proof, he would rather be safe than sorry. He wanted to avoid taking a tongue lashing from my grandma for defiling me at all hours of the night. I couldn’t argue about that.

We are just finishing up when Axel and Casey come in with Taegan and Calum on their shoulders, arguing about hot dogs versus cheeseburgers.

“Honey, I’m home,” Casey calls out above the kid’s bickering.

“No you’re not, idiot. This is my home, not yours,” Axel rolls his eyes, walking over to me and pulling Taegan from his shoulders.

Axel leaned in to kiss me, but before he could, Taegan grabbed my hands and pulled me down to his level, throwing his little arms around his neck.

“Mommy, tell Calum that cheeseburgers are better than hot dogs. You says hot dogs not healthy.”

I rolled my eyes and laughed, not just at my son but at Axel’s position, slightly leaned forward having missed my lips, staring down at me in disappointment.

“I think they are both equally unhealthy,” I told Taegan. I may have said off-handed once that hot dogs were unhealthy, and he somehow remembered that and used the small comment to fuel an arbitrary argument with his new cousin. I think he likes having someone willing to argue with him over this kind of stuff, I swear. He and Calum seemed more like siblings than second cousins.

“They having hamburgers and hot dogs for lunch?” Courtney asked the men.

“Yeah, the kitchen staff is keeping it at easy stuff since Luna Harriet isn’t there to lord over them,” Casey says.

“Well, our new Luna here can start taking over those duties soon,” Courtney smiled down at me.

“Duties?”

I looked at Axel in question, picking up Taegan and standing with him.

“Well, the Luna is in charge of the packhouse and its staff. We can wait until after your Luna ceremony to start discussing all that, though. My aunt and the head omega can manage things until then.”

I swallow nervously, having forgotten about that aspect of being Axel’s mate. Quinn explained it to me already, but with everything going on with Stephanie, Axel’s mom, and now my grandma, I hadn’t given it much thought.

“Mommy okay?” Taegan asked, putting his little hand on my face. I didn't realize I was making a distressed face until he asked. I quickly plastered on a smile for him so he didn't worry.

“Yes, sweetie. I’m fine. Moving in with your daddy means a lot of changes for both of us,” I told him, kissing his palm.

“Daddy?” Taegan asked, then turned and looked up at Axel hesitantly.

It slipped out, but I guess this is as good a time as any to tell Taegan that Axel was his real dad. Axel’s eyes are alight with satisfaction, having been called Taegan’s daddy by me. Even if he wasn’t biologically, which I know in my heart that he is, I would still choose this man over and over again to take that role. I know without a doubt he would choose to take it too. He is

Taegan's daddy, though, and now seems like a good time to tell him the full truth. We are a family, and I need to quit letting my insecurities and baseless doubts hinder that. Axel deserves to be called daddy by his son.

“Um, Courtney, do you think we could meet you guys over in the dining hall in a few minutes for lunch? I think we need to have a family moment.”

“Of course,” she beams at me.

“I like family moments,” Casey pouts before Courtney pushes him to leave, Calum watching all of us from his shoulders in confusion.

Once they are gone, I grab Axel's hand, and pull him with me and Taegan to the couch in the living room.

“Taegan,” I turned his body to face me and Axel on my lap, “I met Axel many years ago, before you were ever in mommy's belly. I didn't know it then, but he knew we were meant to be together. You know how Casey and Mr. Rick told you about mates?”

“Yeah,” Taegan tilts his head in confusion.

“I'm his mate,” I pat Axel's chest, getting momentarily distracted by his muscles. I shake my head to clear the lusty thoughts and continue the explanation.

“We, uh, were together for a night and I ended up getting you in my belly. I didn't know about werewolves and mates, so I ended up leaving Axel, and when I found out I had you inside me, I thought you had to be from Levi, since I didn't know how werewolf pregnancies work. That's why I thought Levi was your dad. I was wrong, though. Levi isn't your dad. Axel is. We will be staying here with your real daddy from now on. Is that okay with you?”

Taegan looked up at Axel, tilting his head like he was measuring the nervous man up, seeing if he was worthy of the honor of being his daddy.

“You don't make mommy cry.”

It wasn't a question. It was a command. Taegan wasn't going to tolerate another man being mean to me the way Levi was. Axel shakes his head. “Never,” he states clearly, a voice full of reverence.

I comb my fingers through my son's hair. “He is a good man, and won't hurt either of us, sweetie. He loves us both. He has shown that since we got here, hasn't he? His dad, your grandpa Max, is bringing Grandma Lucy to live with us too. Isn't that great?”

“Really?!” Taegan's whole face lit up.

I laughed softly at him, “Yes. Really.”

Taegan pumps his fist in the air, “I can show Grandma Lucy the ice cream machine!”

Axel chuckles, ruffling Taegan’s hair, “Try not to hurt your hand next time you use it.”

I laughed loudly, remembering his little show he put on to get Stephanie to help him eat. Grandma is going to straighten out that flirtatious streak in him quickly once she gets here.

Taegan stared at Axel, “So, is that why I can’t call you brother any more? Cuz you’re my dad?”

Axel shrugs, “That’s one of the reasons.”

“Do you want me to call you daddy like mommy said?”

Straight to the point. This kid doesn’t beat around the bush for anything.

Axel is biting his lip, the longing in his clear blue eyes is evident as they stare back at their exact replicas in Taegan’s face.

“I really do, Taegan. I would love it if you called me daddy.”

Taegan nods, “Okay, daddy. But I still call Brother Casey, Brother Casey, right?”

Axel and I both laugh at that, “Sure, kid. You can call him whatever you want.”

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After lunch, Taegan, Axel and I headed home to relax for a bit as we patiently waited for my grandmother to get here. Well, I’m not being very patient, but I’m trying to hide it by being overly attentive to Taegan, carrying him around with me everywhere I go.

Axel knows I’m eager for her arrival, and watches me with amusement, listening as I stammer nervously, talking about anything and everything that comes to mind. I stammer when I’m nervous. I can’t help it. Taegan is used to it, and Axel says it’s cute.

Honking outside has me running to the window, Taegan in my arms, eagerly peeking between the blinds, seeing that it is them. She’s here! She is finally here.

Axel took Taegan from my arms, leaving me free to run outside, bouncing on my soles waiting for the moving van, pulling my grandma’s car in a tow lift behind it, to stop in front of the house.

I throw open the passenger door as soon as it stops moving, enveloping my grandmother in a hug as tears start to roll down my cheeks.

“You’re here! You are really here!” I cried, overcome with relief that she is finally with me. I was so worried about leaving her alone, and now I don’t have to be. I know Axel will ensure that she is always taken care of, just because she is my grandma and I care about her so much. My

emotions and desires are no longer mine alone. Through the weird voodoo mate bond, everything I feel he feels too. I never have to face anything alone ever again.

“I’m here, Bailey,” grandma coos at me, running her hand gently down my back, “But I can’t breathe,” she laughs.

“Oh, sorry,” I jumped back and helped her down from the van.

Max gets out of the driver’s seat, gruffly walking around to meet us.

“We would have been here a lot sooner, but the woman has a bladder the size of a thimble.”

Grandma points a finger at him, “I’ve had about enough of your yammering.” She then turns a radiant smile on me. “I’m happy to see you, my dear. Oh, so happy. Where is Taegan, though?”

“Here, Grandma Lucy,” Axel walks down from the porch carrying Taegan. Before she says anything else, Axel comes up beside her and squeezes her to his side. She looks up at him in surprise, but I can see behind her stern expression she is pleased with the affection. “It’s great to finally meet you in person, Grandma Lucy.”

“I’ll say,” she mutters, “You don’t walk around naked too, do you?”

“What?” Axel furrows his brows and Max huffs in exasperation.

“No, he doesn’t walk around naked, Grandma,” I tell her, wondering why she would ask.

“Well, that’s too bad,” grandma mutters under her breath, making me gasp out a laugh.

“Grandma!”

“What?! This one showed up stark naked in my yard. I was just wondering,” she pointed a finger at Max again.

“How many times do I have to tell you, we can’t shift with clothes on. Fucking nag is what you are,” he grumbles.

“Spoon! Bad word! Grandma Lucy, the spoons in the kitchen. Let me show you,” Taegan wiggles free from Axel, takes my grandma’s hand and leads her into the house.

Axel puts his hands on his hips, looks at Max and shakes his head, “You couldn’t shift back in the treeline and have the guys bring you clothes?”

“I wasn’t fucking thinking about being naked?! It slipped my damn mind!”

I giggle at his defensiveness, knowing that if my grandma keeps pointing it out, it’s not because she disapproves, but because she is too embarrassed to admit she liked what she saw.

“Thank you for bringing my grandma, Max,” I told him, going to give him a big hug.

He blushes as I pull away. “Aww, it was nothing. The woman needs to get her bladder checked, though. 9 times. She had me stop 9 fuu- flicking times so she could pee.”

I giggle as the three of us make our way inside.

#### 43 Revelation

## Chapter 43 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

“Do you not like them?” Casey asked me.

I rolled my eyes and ignored him, not interested in the new shoes he just got in the mail from his friend, Matt, in Miami. He’s been making a big deal about them being a limited release and priceless.....I don’t care. Why a man would spend hundreds of dollars on shoes he can’t work in is a crazy concept to me.

I’m leaning against my counter, staring outside at the porch, where Bailey is sitting with her grandma and my dad as they explain to her about her mom and my dad’s involvement with Grandma Lucy.

I told Bailey the other night after my confession of the paternity test, somewhere between rounds 4 and 5, that there was more, but I thought it best for her grandma and my dad to explain everything to her.

Now, I’m worried, watching from the kitchen as they finally talk to her.

Grandma Lucy has been here for two days now, settling in, and she has just now said she was ready to talk to Bailey about her mom and great-aunt.

I can understand her hesitation, especially since she lost not just her sister, but her daughter too, because of my father’s influence. It’s probably still raw for her, and the fact her granddaughter who she has raised since birth is now mated to me can’t be helping with her raw emotions.

My dad was mates with her sister, and she died on our pack lands. Her daughter came to work for my dad, and got swept away by a fucking vampire lord. I think she has earned the right to be

hesitant about the supernatural world and revealing anything about it to her granddaughter. She has earned the right to take her time to come to terms with all these changes.

It has made me anxious, though, waiting the past few days for Lucy to be ready to tell her. I didn't want to keep anything from Bailey, but didn't think it was my place to tell her.

This is such a relief to me, but at the same time, I'm nervous about how she is going to take the news. I can already feel her restlessness in the bond. I'm watching, just waiting to go help comfort her if need be.

"I'm just saying, if we were really best friends, when I told you I got new shoes, you would have asked me if I could run fast in them," Casey mutters, lifting his foot up and examining the bottom of his shoes. "It's like you don't even care."

I huff, thinking to myself how much I really don't care.

"If you have to wear crease protectors with them, I doubt you are doing any running in those," I snickered at him.

"You're right," he nods, "I can only do a fast walk at best. I could still smoke your ass without them, though."

"Sure you can," I huffed. No one can smoke me, but Casey may be the closest to keeping up with me.

"Daddy!" Calum came running out of Taegan's room with a water gun, "I founds it."

"You founds it? What did you finds?" Casey kneels down to his eye level and takes the water gun from his son.

"Pew pew," Calum mimics the sound of a gun, making Casey chuckle.

I look out and see Bailey is okay for now, and decide to check on Taegan really fast while I know she is okay.

Taegan is sitting on his bean bag, headphones on, playing mario kart. He is so absorbed in the game, he hasn't noticed his cousin is no longer playing it with him.

Coming back out, I see Casey filling up the water gun for Calum in the sink.

"If you do that, you know he's going to retaliate," I smirked at him.

"Hey, it's payback for the water balloons."

"The water balloons were payback for the mud incident, right?"

“Quit being rational. They’re boys. They need this. Builds fucking character,” Casey states.

"Yeah! Kar-ter," Calum tries to mimic his dad.

“Okay. Your funeral.”

One thing I am so sure of about my son is that he is as dominant of a wolf as it gets. He doesn’t let anyone get the best of him, and Casey is getting a spoon to the ass when Taegan finds out he is the one who filled the water gun up for Calum.

Taegan will be a strong alpha one day, and a scary one. He’s a lot like my dad with his no-nonsense personality.

“You get that video game thing wet, you are buying him a new one,” I tell Casey as he and Calum act like secret agents, sneaking stealthily down the hall.

“Video games are bad for the brain, Alpha,” Casey whisper-yelled to me.

“Yeah! Bad bain,” Calum repeated his dad's words.

I cross my arms and shake my head, watching them as they make their bad decision. Taegan is not going to react kindly to this.

Sure enough, 30 seconds later, Taegan roars in his little alpha voice, and out comes Casey and Calum, running for the back door, Taegan hot on their heels, a fierce look over his face.

“MOMMY! SAID! NOOO!”

“Daddy said yes!” Calum giggled, beating his dad out the door.

I sighed, deciding to leave Casey to his fate. Those new shoes of his he can’t run very fast in will be ruined by the time Taegan is through with him.

Casey just got back in Taegan’s good graces too. I guess he prefers staying on his bad side.

I moved back to the kitchen and I leaned against the counter, staring back out at the porch, taking in Bailey’s beautiful profile. I can feel her distress, and though I can’t hear them, I can tell her grandma is getting to the part of the story where her mother leaves her to be the lover of some vampire.

This was the part I didn't like keeping from her, but knew it had to come from her grandmother and not me, since I didn't have the full story. I don't think even my dad could have explained everything about Kathrine to Bailey very well. No, she needed to hear this from Lucy, and I'm glad she is finally telling her.

Her heartbreak radiates through me, and without Casey or the kids here to distract me from her emotions, they are all consuming, seeing them also play out on her face. I can feel her distress and her resentment, and I pray that resentment is for anyone else besides me, as selfish as that is.

“Axel, I need you,” I hear her voice clearly through the link, and I’m moving out the door before her melodic voice stops ringing in my head.

As soon as I’m out, she looks up at me with tear-filled eyes, reaches up, and she’s in my arms, seeking my comfort before anyone else’s.

It’s a bittersweet moment, but one I will always treasure. She is hurting right now, and I’m the one she is looking for reassurance and solace.

“It’s okay, Bailey. I’m here. I got you.”

Bailey POV

Hearing that my grandmother had a connection with Max from a time before I was born because of a great-aunt I knew nothing about was a shock, but nothing could have prepared me for the news about my real mother.

I knew my mom had abandoned me to my grandmother, but I never knew why. Hearing that she chose to live as a lover or girlfriend to a vampire over being my mom was a huge blow to me.

Being a mom, I don’t know how someone can choose anything or anyone over their child.

Axel. My body was suddenly craving his comfort and support. I reached out to him in my mind, and he was there with me before I knew it.

Being enveloped in his hold instantly soothes my aching heart, knowing as long as I had him I would be okay.

“It’s okay, Bailey. I’m here. I got you.”

His words were like a soothing balm over my festering thoughts about my mom abandoning me.

“How could she choose a vampire over me?” I whispered, crying against his chest.

“Sometimes we don’t really have a choice,” Max says as Axel sits with me on his lap.

“What do you mean?” I asked, turning my face to stare at him. Axel covers his hand with his sleeve and uses it to wipe my face free from tears. My eyes are still leaking, but now I have a clear vision of his father. It’s crazy how, with this mate bond, Axel just always knows what I need when I need it.

“Well, vampires, the damned creatures, have a bond like our mate bond. It’s hard to fight. I don’t know myself, but I’ve heard others say that the bond they form with their lovers is stronger and more absolute than a werewolf mate bond. I think that is total bull shit, but who fucking knows.”

The mate bond with Axel does seem all consuming at times, but I still can't imagine abandoning Taegan with Axel. Max's words do nothing to comfort me. Only Axel's strong hold and comforting scent are helping to calm my aching heart right now.

“Honey, I think that your mother loved you enough to allow you to have a normal life with me, rather than subject you to a life with vampires. I can’t imagine that being a healthy setting for a little human girl to grow up in,” my grandma tells me.

I wouldn’t know. Mom didn’t give me a chance to ever know her or choose the life I wanted to live. I just know I would never be able to abandon Taegan like she abandoned me. I also know Axel wouldn’t let me. Even if Taegan wasn’t his, he would have loved and raised Taegan just for the fact he was my son. Just like he is taking care of my grandmother so well, just because she is someone I love and care about. Love is selfless. Axel has taught me that.

“Is that all? Is that all you guys wanted to tell me about my mom, a great-aunt I knew nothing about, and vampires?” I asked, not sure how much more I wanted to sit here and listen to. I just want to be alone with Axel and have time to process all of what I’ve already heard.

“Well,” Max looks sheepishly between me and his son. “I just got word this morning from Dusty that your ex, Levi, is working with the coven in some way.”

“What?” Axel roared, his entire body vibrating with anger.

Even my grandma also looks surprised by this news.

“The coven? You mean?....” she started to ask.

Max nods, “They followed him all the way to Blue Falls Coven territory. They couldn’t follow him in their wolf forms past the border, but it looks like the vampire who delivered the fake court papers was from Blue Falls. Dusty and Chris caught his scent just outside of their territory.”

"Shit," Axel growls, "Did you talk with Stephanie?"

Max shakes his head, "This is getting more complicated than I thought, Axel. I think we need to find a way to talk with Lord Antonio ourselves."

Does that mean my mom is helping my abusive ex try and get custody of my son and get access to me? Any hope I had of coming to terms with my mom just went out the window. If she is working with Levi to hurt me, that is more unforgivable than abandoning me as a baby. She is putting my son at risk, and I am not going to tolerate that. Screw her, and I hope we never cross paths.

## Chapter 44 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Max POV

I could sense that my son and his mate needed some time alone. She needed some time alone with him to help her soothe her aching heart. She learned that her mother not only abandoned her for a vampire, then became one, but she is now also aware that the coven her mother belongs to might be involved with her abusive ex.

How and why, I'm not yet sure, but I will find out. I won't allow for anyone to harm my family, and Bailey is now my family as much as my son and grandson are. She is a gift to our pack and to my son. She just doesn't know how much of a gift she is yet.

I somehow talked the old coot, Lucy, into letting Axel comfort Bailey alone, and have her come with me so we could check out available housing. Axel said he didn't mind her staying with them indefinitely, but I noticed that he put her in the room farthest from his.

This was noticed by Lucy as well, so she agreed when I asked her to consider living in her own place. As much as she seemed to enjoy watching her granddaughter be loved by my son, I don't think she liked hearing the sounds of their love at night. Soundproofing a bedroom means nothing when they forget to close their bedroom window two nights in a row. I think Lucy would like her own space too, for that reason alone. Then, we can move all her damn dressers and clutter to her own space and she wouldn't have to worry about being a hindrance to her granddaughter with her endless supply of grocery bags and empty butter containers.

I don't think she told Bailey yet, but we will deal with that later. As long as she is kept close, I think that is all that truly matters. Taegan might argue with that, but if he insists on his Grandma Lucy living with him, I'm going to get my feelings hurt since he isn't insisting the same for me.

Axel carries Bailey inside as I help Lucy down the steps of the porch. Lucy had a mask of concern on her weathered face, and her eyes seemed lost in thought.

"Do you really think Katherine has something to do with Levi?" she asked in a broken whisper.

I press my lips together grimly, "It looks like it. I don't know what other explanation there could be."



“She wouldn’t,” Lucy stated. “She... she loved Bailey. She was only with her briefly, but I saw the love and guilt on her face whenever she looked at her daughter. She wouldn’t try to hurt her like that.”

I don’t think she would intentionally hurt Bailey either....Not when she was human at least. Before she was changed into a vampire, she was merely another sire for Lord Antonio. He has had many over the years. That is why I tried so hard to get her free from him. I thought she was just another blood bag to him.

It wasn’t until he changed her did I realize that she was more to him than that.

Sires follow their Lord’s orders and commands selflessly, without any true regard for themselves or their own will. Even if she is a vampire now, she lived for years as his sire. She could still just be following his commands blindly, for all we know.

If Lord Antonio wanted to hurt me and my son by using Katherine’s daughter, he may not even be telling her about Bailey’s involvement.

What I would like to know is Harriet’s involvement in all this.

I know she was against Axel having a human mate, but I never thought she would go to extremes like that to prevent it. I also didn’t know why she was pushing Stephanie on Axel so much. Was it just because of Eric?

I knew I should have transferred him to a different pack when I noticed all those years ago that they were mates. She doted on him after his chosen mate died, and because of that, I started to resent her little by little.

I didn’t want to banish him for selfish reasons such as that, especially since there was no evidence of an actual affair. I never felt betrayal pains, never heard word about them being overly involved. I just noticed the way her eyes would chase after him when he was near, and the way he would sometimes stare at her.

I wouldn’t say I was jealous. It was more about my pride and ego. Even if I didn’t truly love her, she was still my mate and the mother of my son. The possessive alpha in me was having a hard time tolerating the threat to my already fragile mate bond.

I had no right to berate her or banish him when I myself was still deeply in love with and longing for my late mate.

Instead of letting my petty pride cause me to make rash decisions, I kept putting distance between Harriet and me until we became like the strangers we are to each other today.

I can understand her wanting to hurt me, but why would she hurt Axel, her own son? Why she is forcing his mate away from him is beyond me.

It has to be Eric.

He never acted on it, but I saw the hatred in his eyes whenever he looked at me.

I don't think it's so much Harriet betraying her son as it is her being manipulated into doing so.

We have to find a way to meet with Lord Antonio, the blood-sucking fuck-face pale-ass cunt....

Maybe I will leave that to Nate and Axel. I may make matters worse.

No. I can be civil. I will be civil for the sake of my grandson and daughter-in-law.

"For a man with so much muscle, you sure move slow. Does it all just weigh you down?" Lucy huffs beside me.

Shit, I was going slow for her benefit. Maybe I should just let Lucy deal with Lord Antonio and the whole thing instead. I'd like to see him threaten her.

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Antonio POV

"My Lord, I think we may have a problem," Felix entered my court, looking very distressed.

"Did the human cause you trouble?" I asked, reaching for my chalice and leaning comfortably back in my wingback chair, not at all truly interested in how this little favor to the annoying wolves who befriended my love had gone.

Rina. My beautiful Rina was befriended by the Luna of the horrid wolf pack nearby when the Luna learned of her mate's interest in my beloved. Back then, she claimed she wanted to help Rina rid herself of her alpha mate's interest and she was the one who suggested I turn her fully, convincing Rina it was for the best. I was thankful to her back then, because now I can keep my Rina with me eternally, not having to risk her life ending like Addison's mother. I've tolerated her periodic visits because of that ever since. This last visit, though, she came with that rough wolf, claiming he was her fated mate, and they needed my help. It is only because of Rina's bidding that I gave in to such a request. I would do anything for my beloved.

Rina is my one true love. I felt it from the moment I first saw her, alone, crying in the woods. I didn't even feel for Addison's mother the way I feel for Rina. My love for her was all-encompassing and all-consuming. I only had one main obstacle when I finally was able to claim her for myself.

That damned alpha.

The detestable beast of a man pursued my Rina for years, and now he was mistreating his own mate. When she and her fated mate came to me with a request, saying they wished to save a

young human that was being entrapped by the new alpha unjustly, even though she had a young child and she had another man she was stolen from who was truly devoted to her.

I sympathized just enough to provide them with Felix here to deliver some forged documents, compelling the young human woman's family to force her to come home.

Rina was worried for her friend, since this matter seemed to be weighing heavy on her heart. The aging Luna said that she only wished for her son to not follow the same path as his father, treating women as nothing more than property to be acquired.

Rina, having experienced the old alpha's greed towards her dying aunt, and then enduring his harassment herself for years, desperately asked me for my help.

I helped, but I do not truly trust the Luna and her fated mate to help them any more or in any other ways. If they ran into some issue, they will have to deal with it on their own. I am not going to risk going to war with the wolves for the sake of a single human woman who means nothing to me.

"My Lord, the compulsion did not work. She was completely immune to it," he tells me.

"Immune? I thought she was human?" I asked, only slightly more interested in the conversation.

"She was, but she had a strange and ancient magic in her, like that of Lady Rina's. And that's not all."

I sat up, now invested in this conversation at the news of my beloved's....charm being found in another. That is not possible, unless....

"I stayed to observe, like the 2 wolves requested in case of further assistance being needed. The older woman was not only immune to compulsion, she was being protected by 2 young warrior wolves. After I left, they began to pack her house for her, and got her ready to move. I thought it would be as we were told and she was being held captive to keep the granddaughter in line, but the older woman was the one ordering the wolves around. And they obeyed her with reverence.

"I observed through the night, and saw the young man, Levi Sullivan, who I first met with the wolf, Eric Collins, stalking the house like a predator. He did not seem like they had said. He seemed....delusional. Psychotic even. He muttered to himself a lot and seemed sick in the head. It wasn't until the older alpha showed up in the middle of the night that I overheard through him that the human man, Levi, was in fact abusive towards the young human woman, and the wolves were protecting the humans from him."

"So you are saying the aged Luna and her fated mate have deceived us?" I asked as my anger started to take root.

How dare they use my beloved's kindness and good heart to have me do their dirty work for them. Why would they lie? What is it that they wished to accomplish by doing something like

tearing a human girl away from a pack that is trying to protect her? Is anything they have said to my Rina the truth?

I knew not to trust that wolf, Eric Collins. I was in his presence but for a second, when I accompanied my Rina to the guest house that she provided them with. I was dropping her off and seeing him through the window, I felt he was a concerning presence. I let my beloved's long-term friendship with the Luna hinder that judgment.

“They are not only deceiving us, my Lord. They are conspiring against Lady Rina’s own blood. I followed the human woman and the old alpha back to their pack-”

“YOU WHAT?!” I roared, standing to my feet and grabbing him by the throat in a fraction of a mortal second. “YOU ENTERED THEIR LANDS?!”

My magic slips out, and the lights in the room flicker and dim. My dominance and power swept over Felix, his eyes going momentarily wide in terror before I controlled my outburst and recovered myself. My nails recede from his neck, his face relaxing slightly as he becomes aware that I'm pulling my aura back. I am still gripping his neck, but not as lethally as before.

“I had to,” he croaks out despite my hold. I eased up my grip just enough to allow for clearer speech. “I suspected, but I wanted to be sure, my Lord.”

“Sure. Of. What?” I drawled out each word, finding it hard to keep my temper at bay.

Entering the wolves’ territory could be deduced as a declaration of war, putting all of us at risk. Felix had better have an ethical reason for doing as he did.

“She’s Lady Rina’s daughter. The human girl that the old Luna wishes to have leave her son’s side. She is Lady Rina’s daughter and the young Alpha’s fated mate, my Lord.”

I dropped Felix from my hold, stepping back in surprise. The human is my Rina's daughter?

Bailey. Her daughter's name was Bailey.

That is why the compulsion would not work. The women of that family have an immunity, or maybe the better term would be a blessing from certain supernatural abilities. A blessing, and at times a curse....

I pace my polished floors, contemplating what this would mean. If we were a part of trying to take my Rina’s human daughter away from her fated mate when he was trying to protect her from an abusive stalker who may be mentally unstable, that could lead us to war and also would devastate my beloved.

I know, though she never speaks of her, that my love’s only regret about accepting me was abandoning her daughter, who was but a baby when we had met.

She still longs for the child that she never truly knew. If she knew the deception her Luna friend pulled on her, endangering her own child, she would fall into a pit of despair.

I can not have that.

“Bring me my daughter,” I commanded Felix. He bows respectfully before departing to carry out my task.

She thinks I do not know, but I do. I know my daughter has a relationship in some way with one of the wolves from that pack.

They keep themselves discrete, and there has never been any trouble that came of it, so I have let it be, not asking questions or digging into her personal life any more.

That will have to change today. She will be my ambassador. I need to speak with the wolves and learn the truths of the deception I have been put under before deciding what to do with the wolves now residing on the outskirts of my territory, claiming they are seeking refuge from their oppressive Alphas.

An hour later, Addison, my lovely daughter, entered my great hall, following Felix with an exasperated look on her face.

She does not like to come here unless it is to feed or when there is court. She still resents me for my negligence.

“Yes, oh Lord father,” she mutters sarcastically. Felix smirked, looking down quickly thinking I wouldn’t see his amusement.

I let it go. Addison has every right to be resentful of me.

“Daughter,” I smiled down on her, “I think it is time we had a talk about your involvement with the Blue Cliff Pack of wolves.”

Her eyes went wide in surprise. “What do you mean?”

I smirked down at her, knowing I caught her off guard. “Your lover, my daughter. How close is your lover to the alpha of the Blue Cliff Pack?”

45 Invasion

Chapter 45 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

“Are you sure you don’t want to take the cabin that is closest to us?” I asked my grandma as we walked through the small, two-bedroom home she chose to move into.

There was a newer cabin just 50 feet away from our home, but she wanted this one, on the other side of the packhouse.

“I like this one. It has charm,” she states, peeking out the blinds in one of the front windows.

I go beside her to see what she is looking at, and I laugh when I see the charm she is speaking about.

This home is meant for a warrior couple just starting off out of the packhouse before having kids. It’s closer to the warrior building than anything else, and when I look outside, I can see a large group of male warriors, just getting back from a run, it seems, as most of them are still naked. They are all muscle on muscle, looking rugged and very, very naked....

“On second thought, I think this house is perfect,” I giggled at her.

“It’s all in the charm,” Grandma smiles knowingly, then burst into a cackling laughter of her own.

It’s been about a week of her living here with us, and Max arranged for her stuff to be delivered from our old home to this new one today. He had the carpet replaced and the house deep cleaned, and asked us to do a final walk-through today to confirm it was move-in ready.

It’s perfect.

The view especially.

Grandma and I opt to sit on her new porch with bottles of lemonade I brought over from the packhouse, and watch as the men complete their training now that they are, for the most part, dressed.

Well....they have pants on at least.

It’s weird not having a job to do and not having Taegan with me. Taegan begged to go to work with his daddy this morning and I was instructed by just about everyone to relax for now, and that they would work me plenty as their Luna after my ceremony.

The Luna ceremony is being planned by Fiona, Courtney’s mom, and is set to take place next week. Axel told me it was customary to invite other alpha’s and luna’s from other packs, and they would need notice, otherwise he was ready to officially make me Luna now.

The thought of being Luna to this entire pack, when I, myself, am very much human, terrifies me. I already feel incompetent and lacking as Axel's mate. Being the top female of this entire community of werewolves when I am not a werewolf seems outlandish to me.

Axel keeps reassuring me that I'm fated and destined for this, and that I will be great, but I'm not convinced.

Grandma and I were deep in a conversation about the importance of protein when Max came to join us.

"Bailey," he smiles at me, then turns a gruff expression to my grandma. "You," he huffs.

"You? What kind of greeting is that?" Grandma threw her empty lemonade bottle at him.

"Hmph," he picks up the bottle and places it on the railing.

He had been a bit bitter with grandma since two days ago, when Taegan declared that she was his favorite between the two of them.

"I am just stopping by to let you know the truck will be here soon. I was going to call a few warriors over to help unload. Since you've been out here ogling them again, are there any that caught your eye?" Max lifts an eyebrow at grandma.

I almost choked on my last gulp of lemonade. Grandma is narrowing her eyes at him, looking ready to pounce.

"Maxwell, I don't appreciate your tone."

"Name's not fucking Maxwell," he huffs.

"Maximilian."

"Quit fucking guessing, woman. I'm not telling you and you won't fucking guess it."

She glares at him coldly. "I'm going to tell your grandson you're using bad language with me."

I buckled over laughing at the horrified expression on Max's face. He's been subjected to Taegan's wrath for his bad language a few times now, and as much as I don't like the spoon thing, it's hilarious watching him face off with all these big, bad werewolf men when they make him angry.

"What is my grandson and his father up to?" Grandma asks, satisfied at putting Max somewhat under his thumb.

"Ugh," Max groans, looking upward and shaking his head, "Dealing with an annoyance."

“An annoyance?” I asked.

“A minor invasion. I’m here to help you, so I don’t have to be there helping him.”

What kind of invasion would not have Max worried, just annoyed?

“Is Taegan okay with him?”

Max nods, giving me a crooked smile, “I think Axel wanted to keep him to show him off. I tried to bring him with me. Used you to bait him but he still chose to stay with his dad.”

“Despite his genes, that man is a good one. I’d choose him over you too,” grandma goads him.

Max growls slightly and grandma waves away his anger with a satisfied smirk on her face.

I shake my head as they continue to bicker, not at all wanting to get in the middle of it. Max and grandma don’t know how to get along and I’m not getting caught in the crossfires.

I sigh heavily, looking out towards the packhouse where I last saw Axel and Taegan this morning. Whatever invasion Axel is dealing with, I hope Taegan doesn’t cause any problems.

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Axel POV

“Daddy, where are we going now?” Taegan asks me from where he is perched on my shoulders.

I’m gripping his ankles firmly, making sure he can’t fall. I trusted him to stay still on my shoulders this morning, but he got overly excited when he saw the she-wolves at training this morning and almost fell in his attempt to get down on his own.

“To meet Calum’s dad,” I told him.

Taegan growls slightly, making me chuckle.

“Brother Casey is a big baby,” he mutters.

“That he is,” I laughed.

Casey made a big deal about his shoes getting dirty when Taegan was chasing him, showing everyone a few minor scuffs at dinner last night. He made a comment about Taegan owing him new shoes, so Taegan took his hot fudge Sundae and dropped it right on the shoes as Casey was wearing them. He just walked right up to Casey, dumped the bowl upside down over his shoes and said, “Now I dirtied them,” then walked off, like the little alpha he is.



Bailey was mortified, and offered to clean them, and tried to make Taegan apologize, but me and my dad, even Courtney, were laughing so hard that it ruined any chance she had of reprimanding him.

Casey pouted the rest of the night, and Taegan kept whispering to me and dad that he was a big baby when Bailey wasn't within earshot.

I think Taegan just didn't like Casey putting the blame on him for something that wasn't his fault, especially in front of his mom. He took control of Casey the only way he knew how, giving Casey a reason to blame him for his shoes getting dirty.

I was proud of him for putting Casey, the big baby, in his place, but I know I shouldn't have encouraged Taegan. I think we are going to have our hands full with him as it is when he gets older.

"Why are we meeting Brother Big Baby?" he asks.

"Well, he is bringing friends of his to our pack from the airport. We're going to greet them."

"Mommy doesn't greet them too?"

I chuckle. Everything always comes back to Bailey for him. "Not yet. She is busy with Grandma Lucy today. She will meet them later."

These friends are bringing good news, and I want to surprise her with it later.

"Who are the friends?" Taegan asked.

"You are so full of questions today," I laughed, lifting him from my shoulders and setting him on the ground. We are just outside the Childes' house now.

"I'm little," he shrugs, as if that was all the explanation needed for him being so inquisitive.

I reached out for his hand, then knocked on the door.

Aunt Fiona was the one to answer with a big smile on her face. "You are just in time. Nate just texted me that they were almost here. Seems they brought an extra guest with them too."

She is almost bouncing on her feet in excitement, making me wonder who the other guest might be.

I don't have long to wonder or time to ask who it is. Two large SUVs pull in front of the Childes' house, Casey driving one and Uncle Nate driving another.

Taegan's eyes go wide when a familiar redhead gets out of the first car along with a brunette clinging to Calum, kissing his chubby cheeks as he tries desperately to get away. They are both

sun-kissed and glowing, laughing with Courtney at some joke I'm sure is at Casey's expense, based on the deep scowl on his face.

"So pretty," Taegan murmurs, staring at the additional redhead.

Kid's got a preference, that's for sure.

"Alpha," she nods, holding her hand out for me to shake. Her grip always amazes me.

"Luna," I nodded in greeting while shaking her hand, "It's good to see you again."

46 Bearing Good News

## Chapter 46 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Casey POV

"Does anyone besides Simone or Vincent know you are here, Carli? I mean, holy shit, you know Parker is going to go fucking ballistic when he finds out that you are no longer in the same country as him."

She glares at my reflection in the rear-view mirror.

"Elena and Dad know," she snaps, "so shut the fuck up and focus on the road."

"You didn't tell Parker?" Courtney turns to gape at her other cousin, who just happens to be my sister's best friend.

Simone, my sis, has her lips pressed together, her eyes dancing with amusement. The look on Sim's face, and seeing the defiant look on Carli's tells me everything I need to know. Parker is going to kill me.

"He's going to tan your ass, Carli," I shook my head in disapproval.

"He has to catch me first," she mutters under her breath, then turns to dote on Calum, who is sitting in his car seat between her and Sim. She and Simone volun-told Vincent and Nate to drive with the other three kids, Carli's daughter Rosie, and her new son, Reese, along with Sim's daughter, my new niece Karina.

Calum had this horrified expression when he saw all his cousins. Probably because of Taegan. He probably doesn't think he can handle 3 more cousins at the same time. Vincent readily agreed to manage the kids so Sim could spend time with Calum and the girls. The fucking sop. He is so pussy whipped he would do anything for her. Anything.

“Girl, I told you it was a bad idea,” Simone shook her head at Carli.

“He would have said no. I’m a grown ass adult. I took the kids so he had nothing to worry about. He should thank me. Think of all the work he can get done without me and them to distract him.”

“Think of all the shit he won’t get done when he chases you up here,” I threw her a pointed look in the mirror.

“Fuck you,” she growls.

“You know I’m right,” I sighed.

“I’m just going to go ahead and prepare a guest house for you,” Courtney states, smirking while giving me a knowing look.

Yeah, Parker is going to be here soon. I give him a day. I bet in less than 24 hours he will call me from the airport saying to come get him.

“I’m staying with grandma and grandpa Childes, though.”

“I think you should spare their delicate ears from Parker’s wrath,” Simone giggled.

“Delicate ears my ass,” Courtney snorts.

Her grandpa has the Childes' potty mouth and libido. For an old couple, they're still a little too healthy in some areas. Courtney has had the misfortune of walking in on them multiple times.

I always fucking knock. Saves me the mental scars and awkwardness on holidays.

Carli and Simone start to coo and fuss over Calum, planting kisses all over his face and pulling candy and treats out of their asses to give him.

Maybe it’s a mom thing, carrying food around with you everywhere you go. Even Courtney takes little bags of goldfish and cheerios with her everywhere. I don’t randomly keep fruit snacks, chocolates and granola bars in my pockets.

Wait....okay, that’s not true. I have a stash of skittles in my pocket right now, but those aren’t for sharing.

“You should text or call Parker when we get home,” Courtney mind links me, “Just let him know we are preparing for his arrival.”

“Already sent him a text,” I smiled at her, reaching over and rubbing her thigh. Thank the moon goddess that I was mated to Courtney and not the reckless Carli like I had hoped all through school. I don't know if I could tolerate half the shit Carli pulls over on Parker. Plus, Courtney's just so much better. Like, hands down, the sexiest fucking woman alive. And the sweetest. And funniest. Plus, that ass.....

A few minutes later, we are pulling up outside Nate's house. Fiona, Axel, and the little shit that destroyed my new Jordans are standing on the porch, turning their attention towards the cars as we put them in park.

“You say shit about me being here without Parker's unnecessary approval, asshole, I will send the picture I have of you of the time you got your eyebrows cleaned up and they accidentally waxed them completely off to every warrior in this pack,” Carli snarls at me.

“Oh, I have one of him in a pair of high heels, helping me stretch them and break them in,” Simone adds.

“You told me you didn't take a picture of that,” I growled.

“I lied,” she smiles sweetly at me.

“I have a picture of him in my wedding lingerie,” Courtney just had to pipe up.

“You said that was for your eyes only,” I muttered through clenched teeth.

She giggles, the sound melting some of my agitation. Fuck, if Courtney wants to show everyone that picture, if it will make her happy, fuck it. I'll project the image on the side of the warrior building for the day just for her.

These other two, her fucking cousin and my pain-in-the-ass sister... they don't get that right.

Carli doesn't wait for my reply. She gets out with a smirk, knowing she has me in a corner.

Whatever. Courtney will tell Axel and I have already talked to Parker. By the feeling of the constant buzzing of my phone in my pocket, I'd say he got my text.

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Axel POV

Taegan is all smiles for Simone and Carli, much to everyone's amusement. His “foot broke” conveniently, so he asked Carli to pick him up and carry him inside, which she readily agreed with.

She's carrying him over to meet her kids in Nate's car when Vincent Solace, Simone's vampire mate and Casey's brother-in-law, comes walking towards me, carrying his new baby girl.

I only met Vincent once before, when he accompanied Simone several months ago to visit Casey. He looks as suave and clean-cut as before. He very much looks like a young, rich business man in Miami, with his designer clothes and perfect looks. He is the male version of Simone, who is always in heels and impeccably manicured. Even now, Simone is gracefully walking on the dirt path in killer heels while carrying Calum. She seems perfectly alright, but Vincent is still staring down at her feet with some concern.

“It is good to see you again,” I told him, reaching out to shake his hand. He easily shifts his baby in his arms to shake mine.

“Alpha,” he nods, “I have brought the results personally, as you wish. Also, my lady is aware of your situation and is willing to help make contact if need be.”

Lady Delilah, the immortal vampire that reigns over Miami’s coven, is a very powerful, very connected first generation vampire. Carli, when she became Luna of her pack, created a counsel of the supernatural in Miami, and Lady Delilah and the fairy queen, Queen Aisling, both readily joined. Members of their races work together to govern and rule the supernatural in the city, so not one race has more power than another.

I would like to implement the concept here, but being in a remote area, it is not exactly practical. Blue Falls Coven is the closest supernatural territory to ours, and it is still quite a distance away. Plus, thanks to my dad and many of the other elders in our pack, Lord Antonio is not a fan of ours.

His involvement with Levi and Bailey’s court case proves that.

“One of our members is mated to Lord Antonio’s daughter. They will be acting as ambassadors between the coven and our pack for us soon. I was hoping, though, that you might be willing to be a mediator between us if needed?”

“Of course,” he offers me an easy smile, “I will help you in any way I can. Under one condition, though.”

I furrowed my brows, “What’s that?”

“Allow for me to have a pathway paved for my love along the walking paths she will likely be using during her stay.”

I gave him a dumbfounded look. “Uh, I wouldn’t mind, but it would probably not be completed until after you are back home.” A project like that would take me weeks to organize and get the materials for. We work in lumber, not concrete.

“I have my men staying in town. They can accomplish it tonight. I just didn’t want to have more vampires intruding on your territory.”

My mouth almost drops. I knew this guy was stinkin' rich, and also heard from Casey and Nate he was overly doting to his wife. I didn't know it was to this extent.

"Um, okay? Casey can help you with the pack's layout if need be," I told him, not sure how else to respond.

"Great," he smiles crookedly. "Here are the results," he tells me, pulling a sealed envelope out of the leather messenger bag on his shoulder. "Lady Delilah had one of Crystal Moon pack members, Mitchel Meyers, oversee the tests to be sure there was no temperament. I know some of your pack do not fully trust vampires. Mitchel's brother is our gamma. He is trustworthy. At least with matters like these."

"Thank you," I murmured, not sure what he meant by "matters like these".

I don't open the results. I will let Bailey do that later. I want her not to have any doubt that what this envelope contains is the truth. I know without a doubt that Taegan is mine, and I know she feels it in her heart, too. This would just be the final thing to make her heart at ease and close the case of Taegan's paternity for good.

47 Surprises

Chapter 47 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

Axel comes to get me from my grandma's new home after a few hours, leaving Max and grandma to bicker alone.

"Those two just don't know how to be nice to one another," Axel snorts, shaking his head when my grandma throws a wooden spatula at Max for saying one of her homemade blankets looked like it was made by a blind person.

"I'm just happy you came to save me when you did," I laughed.

He wraps an arm around me, pulling me tight to his side, "You could have called me to come get you."

I scrunched my nose, "Your dad said you were dealing with an invasion."

Axel throws his head back and laughs. "Kind of! He considers it to be one," he smiles and shakes his head, "My dad isn't a fan of eccentricity. He thinks the people visiting us right now are too loud and eccentric."

"Who?" I can't help but to ask.

Axel grins, "Family of Casey and Courtney. Casey's twin sister and her mate and then Courtney's cousin from her dad's side. They're from Miami and have loud personalities."

"Your dad's favorite," I giggled.

"He likes being the loudest in a room," Axel huffs.

Oh, I know. I have just witnessed that for the past few hours.

Max is cute, though. As gruff as he is, you can tell he has a good heart. Why else would he continue to help someone who just fusses at him and makes fun of him?

"So, I have a surprise," Axel tells me with excitement, "Can I take you back to our place first before we head to the packhouse to get Taegan?"

I looked up at him curiously, "Okay, but if your surprise is more good morning kisses, I just want to remind you we only have an hour until dinner. It's taco night, too." I love taco night. Last week they had the best carne asada in the taco salads. The salsa and chips were homemade too. The head chef is from a pack in the southern part of the U.S. Texas I think. She likes to make filling meals and everything is always seasoned perfectly.

I bet Axel could fill me up too, though, if we were to skip dinner....

He smirks at me, "Is that an invitation? As long as I don't take more than an hour?"

I giggled at him, "No, goof ball. I'm just saying...."

"Sounded like an invitation to me," Axel murmurs, his hand dropping down to my ass as he gives it a gentle squeeze, followed by a series of not so gentle squeezes.

I can't tell him no. The electric sparks that dance across my skin at the contact of his hand I can feel straight to my core, making me moan involuntarily. He knows the effect he has on my body, and he also knows that if he wants me, I'm going to give in, because I want him just as much.

My eyes travel up to his, and the heat behind his icy blues makes my mouth water and my pussy leak.

An hour is more than enough time.

A sexy growl vibrates through his chest before he leans down and sweeps me off my feet, bringing his mouth fervently to mine, devouring my surprised whimpers and lusty moans.

We're outside, walking very publicly to our home right in front of the packhouse, but neither of us care who sees us. I want him and he wants me.

Axel strides with purpose towards our goal, which is not just our home but our bed. I know it. He knows it. Everyone watching us right now knows it.

I'm gripping his neck with one hand, the other groping his firm chest, his hard muscles making my arousal leak out to the point I'm soaked through my undies now. I know it. By the growls coming from him and the deepening of our kiss, I can tell that he knows it too.

He somehow manages to open the door with me in his arms, slamming the door shut with his foot. We make it two steps in when he rips the clothes from my body, his claws extended and making goosebumps appear on my skin where they graze.

I have no fear, even when the beast in him shows. I know he will never hurt me. He may be a scary alpha werewolf, but he is my scary alpha werewolf, and when he gets rough like this, it is such a turn on.

He sets me on the counter in the kitchen, giving me one last lingering kiss before pushing my legs apart and using his claws to tear the fabric of my soaking wet panties.

"Fuck," he murmurs, inhaling the erotic scent perfuming from me.

His mouth meets my lower lips, his tongue swiping up then circling my nub, making me scream in pleasure. My legs try to close on reflex from the intense sensation making my core quiver, but Axel's got a firm hold on my legs, keeping them wide open for his greedy attack.

His tongue works its magic, vigorously massaging my clit as his fingers pump in and out of me, curling and rubbing against all the right places.

My hand travels through his hair, gripping it while my other hand holds me steady on the counter. My hips start to move and soon, I'm grinding and bucking them into his face, chasing my friction to deepen the already mind-blowing pleasure.

His hand is bruisingly gripping my thigh, keeping my legs spread as he growls and grunts in appreciation, worshiping my pussy.

If this is my surprise, it's amazing.

"Axel, I....fuck, baby....I'm...." I tried to warn him right before an all-consuming orgasm wrecked my entire body, making my legs quiver on either side of his face.

He growls, lapping up everything I give him.

It isn't until he pulls back that I see he is no longer wearing his pants. Damn, he is perfect. I lick my lips in hunger as he is licking my arousal off his.

I pushed his shirt up, revealing his sculpted abs. He lets out a husky laugh before pulling his shirt over his head. I moan in appreciation, running my hands up the rock-hard ridges of his body, scraping my nails along his skin. He hisses as the sparks from the bond sends a rush of desire between us.

In one quick thrust, he is buried inside me. My eyes roll back, my sensitive pussy pulsing around his heavy length.

He grips my hair, angling my head to the side so his mouth can latch onto his mark on my neck. The feeling of his mouth on his mark takes me by surprise each and every time. My human mind is unable to fully grasp this sensation, and the emotions it brings forth inside me. I'm left in an incoherent mess every. single. time.

Tears filled my eyes, a husky cry escaping my lips.

His mouth moves up my nape, his tongue dancing around my ear, making me whimper. He sucks gently on my earlobe, then bites it, nibbling on the tender flesh, making me go crazy. It's my weak spot and he knows it. My hips are moving, my pelvis grinding against him, meeting him thrust for thrust.

"I'm so close baby," he husks in my ear, "Give me one more," he demands, his deep voice doing things to my already tingling insides.

A new orgasm overpowers me, making me scream as my vision dances with stars.

"Yes, baby. Give it to me," he growls, pounding into me harder and harder until he stills with a sudden groan, emptying himself into me. The pulsing of his spurting dick inside me makes me whimper. I love this connection with him. I love how all-consuming his devotion is to me. I hope he can feel how much I love him too.

"Fuck, you are amazing," he whispers hoarsely.

I laughed breathlessly, leaning against his chest as I caught my breath. "I didn't do anything. You did all the work."

"Still," he chuckles, cupping my face and pulling it towards him for a kiss. I can taste myself on his tongue still. It's intoxicating and so, so satisfying.

"Great surprise," I teased him when he pulled away.

"Oh, fuck. I forgot."

He pulls out of me, making me hiss, then searches the floor for his pants. When he found them, he pulled out a letter-sized document envelope that had been rolled up and placed in his back pocket.

“This is the real surprise,” he tells me, excitement written all over him.

“What is it?”

“Open it and see,” he urged, placing the rolled up envelope in my hands.

I tear past the seal, pulling the papers out from inside.

The seal on the papers is from a laboratory in Miami, and after scanning the document for a few seconds, I realized what these papers were.

“You got the results?!” I exclaimed, “What do they say?”

He laughs at my enthusiasm. “It was sealed, babe. You are the first person here to read the results.”

“You haven't looked yet?” I asked in amazement.

He shakes his head. “I don’t need a test to tell me he is mine. I already know he is. I did this test so you would never have any doubts.”

I smiled softly at him, “I don’t have any doubts, Axel. I know he is yours too.”

He kisses my lips suddenly, pouring so much love and adoration into it. The fact we are both still naked only distracts me for a second. I’m excited to read the result and put this whole paternity thing behind us.

I scanned over the papers, my smile widening at the conclusive evidence on the form. “He’s yours. Completely and truly yours,” I stated, throwing my arms around his neck, pressing my body into his.

Axel gave off a throaty laugh, “I know. Now we can get his legal name changed to Kissinger and we can forget all about that ass hole you left behind.”

I pepper kisses on Axel’s chin, smiling against his stubbly skin. “Sounds good to me.”

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Axel and I showered, then headed out to walk to the packhouse for dinner. Taegan has been with Courtney and Casey, with their extended family for a while now. I think it is time to save Casey from any more torment our son is subjecting him to.

As we neared the packhouse doors, my phone started to ring. I checked it and the caller ID said it was the police from my hometown.

I showed it to Axel, who made a concerned face.

“Answer it. Maybe the asshole is starting more shit. I can have my lawyers take care of whatever it is.”

I sigh nervously, but press the answer button. Before I could bring the phone to my ear, Axel pressed the button to put it on the loudspeaker.

“Hello?” I said, looking up at my tense mate.

“Hello. I’m looking for a Bailey Traynor?” a male voice asks politely.

“This is her.”

“Miss Traynor, I’m calling from the-”

“Give me that damn phone,” a familiar and hostile voice echos out of the speaker. “Where is he, you little bitch? Where is my son?”

I groan internally. I always hated Levi’s dad. Why the hell is he calling me now?

“Mr. Sullivan, I have no clue what you are talking about. I haven’t seen your son in weeks.”

“Don’t give me that shit. You fucking whore. What? You find out he isn’t your real baby daddy and decide to fuck his life up even more by having him skip town? Where the fuck is he?”

Axel growls deeply and takes the phone from my hand. “Listen, asshole. You’re fuck-up, abusive, stalker of a son isn’t with her. I’m guessing you had the police call because you noticed I had all the numbers associated with you and your son blocked from calling Bailey’s phone. She is with me, her real baby daddy and the man that loves her, and would never abuse a woman or child like your pathetic son. If you have any other questions for my....my fiance, feel free to disclose them to my lawyers. I’m sure the court that is handling my son’s paternity case has provided you with their contact information. If you try calling my woman again, verbally assaulting and degrading her, I’ll make your pathetic political career impossible to recover from.”

“Who the fuck do you think you are threatening me?” Levi’s dad asks, snarling into the phone line.

“Kissinger. Axel Kissinger. Remember that, because you and your son will be dealing with me if you fuck with Bailey again.”

“Kissinger?” Mr. Sullivan asked with a startled voice. “Like the lumber tycoon, Kissinger?”

“Among other things,” Axel mutters, “Leave. Bailey. The hell alone. You and your son. I will not tell you again.”

With that, Axel hangs up the phone, cursing under his breath.

Levi is missing? Where could he be that his dad is at the police station, calling me to find out where he is?

Unease settles in me....

And just when everything was starting to fall into place.

48 Protector

## Chapter 48 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

I could feel how scared Bailey was, which made me want to kill that fucker all over again. I thought we could finally put this shit to rest with Levi Sullivan. I thought after a diplomatic talk with the vampires, all of this could be resolved.

That was just hopeful fucking thinking, I guess.

“I would never let that bastard hurt you or Taegan again. You know that, right?” I cup her adorable but frightened face in my hands, running my thumbs against her dimples. She is chewing on her bottom lip, and when I see the strain her teeth are causing on the delicate skin, I lean down and suck that lip into my mouth, freeing it from her worried assault.

When I pull away, she looks much more calm.

“I know you won’t, Axel, but....”

“But what?”

She anxiously stares up at me, that bottom lip finding its way between her teeth again. Fuck, we were just so blissfully happy. She was blissfully happy, but that fucker’s father had to find a way to call Bailey and mess that up.

“I’ve spent years being terrorized by him, Axel. Years. I thought I was sticking with him for those momentary good times, but after being with you, I realize there never were good times. He was always manipulating and controlling me. Lording over me like I was his property. I was scared to even go to work most days, scared of what he might do if he was watching in the shadows and I triggered him in some arbitrary way. In the back of my mind, I was always aware and fearful he was likely watching me. It’s hard to break that fear, even with a rugged cult leader that turns into a giant puppy protecting me.”

I know she threw the last line in there to try and lighten the conversation, but it didn't help. I growl when hearing how much the fucker screwed with my mate. I almost hope he tries something, because it will give me an excuse to kill him. If he tries anything with my mate or child ever again, he’s dead.

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Katherine POV

Laying in mine and Tony’s bed, I have been thinking over the past week. Tony is hiding something from me, but I haven’t been able to figure out what.

When I ask, his only response is “In good time, my love.”

In good time my butt.

He asked me to avoid leaving the mansion while he sorts whatever he is up to out, but I’m getting a little stir crazy. I want out.

Harriet and the man she brought with her have been staying in a guest house on the outskirts of our land, and I haven’t been able to check on her in a week. I rarely get to see her, but maybe once or twice a year. This is the longest she has stayed, and I’m not even able to spend time with her.

It’s strange, though, how she hasn’t reached out to me once in the past week. Maybe because of the dynamic our relationship has always been in, where she just pops up to visit without much notice. We don’t usually communicate outside of her visits. She always said it was too dangerous. That if Max found out, it could start a war.

That Max.

When he took my aunt away when I was a teen, I thought he was the answer to my prayers. Then, when he tried to “save” me from my addiction problems, I saw a different side to him. I saw him for the monster he was.

His entire community, and most of the people working for him were monsters, turning into werewolves when they thought no one was watching.

One night, I was walking into the woods, trying to channel my desire to escape from the real world with drug use. The real world hurts. It's where I always felt incompetent, and alone in my failures. I would try to replace escaping the real world by using drugs with physically escaping the worksite I was currently living at, even if it was only temporary.

Walking deep in the woods, I heard carnal sounds coming from near the lake I usually walked to. I should have turned back, but curiosity got the best of me. It didn't sound like an animal attack, but it did sound animalistic in a way.

What I saw was two of the people I worked with, both in a half-shifted state, hair sprouting on their arms, claws extended, and long, thick canines protruding from their mouths, going at it like rabid dogs on the forest floor.

I was fascinated at first, their desire for one another even making me hot and bothered. That is until the guy bit into the woman's neck, making her whole body go limp after screaming out, from pain or pleasure, I couldn't tell.

It scared the life out of me, and I ran.

That image stuck with me for weeks, especially since the girl didn't come back to work in the office after that. The man ended up being transferred a few weeks later too, saying his wife was expecting.

I thought that may have been a one-off event, but when I braved the woods again, I heard more animalistic sounds deep in the woods.

Like an idiot, I followed the noise, much louder and more fierce than previously. There were many separate growls and snarls, not just that of two people.

I thought I might be walking into an occult orgy or something, but it was much worse.

Max was there, stark naked, inky blood and putrid guts all around him, holding up in the air the head of a human-like creature. Dozens of giant wolves were surrounding him, and somehow, in the chaos of it all, they didn't notice me standing on the sidelines, hidden behind a tree, watching. I was mortified. Too scared to make a sound.

When I was able to move my feet again, I ran. I ran in the opposite direction to the encampment and employee trailers. I ran into the part of the woods I was told to avoid, until I came face-to-face with Antonio.

Tony knew. He knew what I had seen and how it terrified me, and knew I didn't want to go back. I couldn't go back.

I was trying to better my life so I could become a better person, worthy of my mother's unconditional love and worthy of calling myself Bailey's mom.

That terror I felt at seeing the monsters Max and all his people were had left me desperate for that numbness that came from drugs. I wanted them. I needed them.

Antonio became my new drug.

Drinking a vampire's blood as a human is better than any drug you could ever do. Antonio took me from under Max's control, and every time I had the itch, he would give me a dose, calming the other toxic desires in me.

I became like his sire, like many others, but he treated me differently than the rest. I kept my free will. I kept my humanity, and Antonio helped me overcome my addictions, with a calmness and unconditional love and support I had never felt before.

I knew he wanted more from me, but because of my daughter and my desire to one day return to the human world, he never completed the sire bond, never feeding off of me in return. He left that choice up to me, asking periodically if I would consider joining him, not as his sire, but his lover, changing fully to a vampire to live with him forever. He wanted me to become like him, but he never forced me. I chose humanity, in hopes of one day being good enough to go home.

That was until Max had made it to where I had no other choice.

He kept coming for me, begging me to return to his world. I couldn't, not after what I saw. Tony explained to me that they were werewolves, and what I saw was Max and his men disposing of a rogue vampire encampment that had been plaguing a nearby human town. That explanation didn't dilute the horrible images in my head.

When Max started using my mother and daughter to try to convince me to go back with him, I almost considered leaving Tony, scared of what Max might do to my mother and child if I didn't. I couldn't subject my daughter to this monstrous world.

Thinking back to the girl and the guy I had first caught fornicating in the forest, I started to suspect that my aunt didn't merely die from her illness. Max had said he could help cure her. Maybe he was all talk. He said he would help me, but just kept me away from my family, surrounding me with monsters. What if he did to my human aunt what that other guy did to the girl I worked with in the forest? What if that was the reason she had died?

I may have been a shit mother, and didn't deserve to hold the title, but I never wanted her to be a part of this world. I really didn't even want to be a part of this world. I came to love Antonio, but that didn't trump the longing I had for my human life.

Harriet appeared out of the blue, asking for my audience. Antonio was reluctant to let her meet me, but when she shared her worries that Max was trying to make me my aunt's replacement, Antonio allowed for her to talk to me, telling me about all her concerns.

She told me that after giving Max his heir, Max pulled away from her, and started to focus his attention on me, designating me as his next conquest. I didn't think he was that kind of guy, but

all of her points and reasoning, and the way he just kept coming to me, trying to take me home with him left me convinced.

She told me that if I ever went back to the real world, he would find me, and force me to be with him. She said she didn't want me to end up like my aunt or her. Harriet convinced me that my only option was to accept Antonio fully, and become one of the monsters I was wary of. If I had to choose between the werewolf monsters who I had witnessed so much carnage and death from, or the vampires who had shown me nothing but love and acceptance, I would choose the vampires every time.

I thought it was the only way to keep my mother and daughter safe.

And it worked.

Max, after seeing what I had become, lost interest in me. He stopped fighting to get me to go back home with him. Harriet, his mate, had been right.

I lost my chance to be my daughter's mother, but in turn, I saved her from being stuck in the world of monsters like me.

It has been just over 20 years since I became Lady Rina, now Lord Antonio's only lover. After turning, I learned of his imprinting on me the moment he saw me in the woods. The bond was finally felt by me too.

I no longer desired drugs, and I could no longer drink his blood, but I now had his undying love for all eternity.

My only regret was never seeing my daughter again. Never telling her how truly sorry I was for abandoning her. For choosing drugs and my selfish desires over her.

I know my mother would protect her above all else. I have left her to grow up happily in the human world, where monsters are just fantasies; the stuff of Hollywood movies. She will never know the carnal destruction and terror this world I am now in contains.

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"My love, are you ready?" Tony asks, knocking on the bathroom door.

He opens it moments later, his eyes running down my body and a sultry smile forming on his lips.

I'm wearing silk, his favorite. I'm hoping if I give him a little of what he likes, he will allow me to leave the mansion and his courts to visit my friend.

"Ready for what, my Lord?" I smirked at him from the mirror as he came behind me. He shifts my hair off to one shoulder, then starts placing open-mouthed kisses on the back of my neck.

"We have visitors coming tomorrow night. I was hoping I could entice you to have dinner with me while we discuss the reason for their visit," his soft hands skimming down my arms, his fingers lacing through mine. "But now I think that maybe we should stay in bed tonight instead."

I close my eyes and smile, leaning back against his chest. "Eating in bed does sound more fun," I whisper.

"Yes, it does," he husks, his hand laced in mine, roaming over the silk dress, gliding my hand over my belly and down to my sex, cupping our fingers against my folds.

I moan at his expert touch. He has been alive for millennia, and he can do things to my body I never knew possible. When he is like this, he is all consuming. I soon forgot all about Harriet and her male friend, in the guest house on the outskirts of our land. My mind is on nothing but Tony and his love.

Antonio sweeps me off my feet, his breath and sweet saliva mixing with mine as he carries me to bed.

49 Changed

Chapter 49 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Antonio POV

I still couldn't bring myself to tell her. I know how much she wanted to protect her daughter from the supernatural world, and I can't bring myself to be the one to ruin that desire and fantasy. Not yet.

Rina is lying in my arms, sleeping, beautifully naked and regal as always. I want her to always be like this. Sated and naively happy. I don't want her to face the missteps of her past again, or to add any more regrets than she is already carrying.

I don't want her to regret becoming mine.

I can't keep pushing back the inevitable. She never truly desired my world. Even if it was a farce, I was grateful to the Luna all those years ago for convincing Rina to join me. I knew her fate if she didn't. If she left me, she may have been momentarily happy with her daughter and mother, but that would have eventually come to an end.

It is in her blood. Her lineage.

It was not a mere illness that took her aunt from this world. It was a miracle her mother lived as long as she did, though I suspect it was because of a sacrifice of some sort.

To keep Rina in the dark about the truth in her blood, I've kept her sheltered, away from most of the real world. In a century, barely a blink of the eyes of a first generation vampire like me, all she knew before would be gone. She would not have to suffer the loss of those she loved.

I can not reveal that to her as of yet. Her daughter is still young. Once we overcome the deception and our issues with the wolf pack, I will find a way to prevent my love from any more heartache or regret.

I need to deal with those liars and deceivers staying on my land first.

With my superior hearing, I detected a presence outside of our bedroom door.

"My Lord, I need a moment of your time," Felix whispered, knowing I would hear.

He has been assigned the task of guarding the aging Luna and her mate while they are staying on my land, assuring that they get into no more trouble until I know what to do with them.

After this meeting with the wolves tomorrow, their time here will be coming to an end, one way or another. I am hoping to offer them to the alpha as a peace offering before discussing my love's daughter, and arranging for my love to relinquish some of her regrets.

She is now a grandmother. Once she learns of that news, I know her heart will long for those human connections once again.

I love my Rina too much to keep the news from her much longer. Once she learns her daughter who she always wanted to keep away from wolves, vampires and monsters is now mated to an alpha, the son of the alpha she once feared, I know there will be no stopping her from going to her daughter.

I slide out of our bed, gently placing a fur blanket over my love before slipping on my robe and silently walking to the door. I mist through it, not wanting to risk making Rina by opening the door.

At the other side of the door, I nodded in the direction of my office, indicating to Felix that we could talk in there.

Once seated in my favorite chair, I lean back and wait for Felix to speak.

“My Lord,” he nodded a bow in submission, “Sorry for the late disturbance. I thought I should let you know what I encountered today while observing the house.”

I drum my fingers on the side of my face, “What is that?”

“The boy, the one who wanted to get Lady Rina’s daughter to come back to him, he is at the house with them.”

“We knew that,” I interrupted him. We observed him crossing our land and entering the house days ago. He never left, so we haven’t addressed it as of yet, but I thought that he would make a nice touch to the peace offering that I would be gifting the wolves.

“He left the house with the older wolf, Eric, today. It was the first time I had seen him in days. The other two, the Luna and Eric, I would see periodically through the windows and around the house. This was the first time I had seen the boy since his arrival. I thought it odd, so I followed them to the woods instead of staying to observe the house and Luna. They changed him, my Lord.”

I was startled, sitting up straight in my chair. He can’t mean....

“Changed him?”

Felix nodded, “He is a wolf now. She must have been the one to change him because he was strong. The old wolf is of omega blood, but she has the blood of the alpha in her. The boy shifted, and was bigger than the other wolf. They fought briefly, but then the boy took off into the woods on his own.”

“YOU DIDN’T FOLLOW HIM?!” I roared, panic filling me. If he goes for the wolf pack on his own, before I can warn the alpha, it could be disastrous.

“I sent our trackers, my Lord. I followed him originally, but lost him along the river. I called our trackers to assist me, and when they showed up, I came straight here to report to you.”

Blast, Blast, BLAST IT ALL! I should have locked the three of them up the moment I learned of the deception. Now, I fear what the unhinged new wolf might do.

“Where are the luna and Eric?” I asked, getting to my feet. I need to get ready. I need to speak with the alphas now. Looks like I will have to go to them.

“Back at the guest home. Rayland and Stella are keeping watch.”

“Bring them to the cells. I don’t want to risk another of them escaping.”

“Yes, my Lord,” he bowed, leaving to carry out the task.

Addison. I need to bring her here, now. We will be moving up our meeting and changing the location of it to their pack.

And Rina.....I can't put off telling her any longer.

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Levi POV

Hours earlier....

This asshole fucking trapped me, tricking me into coming to the middle of nowhere, saying if I did, I'd finally have Bailey. For good.

The old man didn't tell me to get Bailey, he was going to trap me in a basement, shackled to a fucking bed, making his wrinkly, skinny bitch of a girlfriend bite me, changing me into the kind of monster I witnessed at Lucy's house.

If I knew this was their plan, I never would have come here. I blew off my dad to try to save Bailey from the monsters that took her from me. Who could have known that I would have ended up as one of them?

The transformation was the worst pain I had ever endured in my life. It felt like my bones were being broken and fused back together again and again, and the blood in my veins felt like it was boiling. My head is still throbbing from my skull feeling like it was in constant movement, shattering over and over again.

What was almost as bad as the pain was the gag they forced into my mouth, to prevent me from screaming out. I felt like I was choking and suffocating at times. It was pure hell.

It's been almost a whole day since the last of the bone-shattering pains came and gone. The old bitch, the one that seemed unsure of this whole thing, came down to take the gag out of my mouth this morning and give me water for the first time in days. I drank the entire pitcher she brought down, then demanded more.

When she told me no, to wait until my stomach settled, I surprised myself by ferociously growling at her. That was the moment I knew for sure that I was one of them.

I am now a werewolf.

I was livid, in total despair over lowering myself to this. I was what I was going to save Bailey from. After a while, though, I realized this may be a good thing.

If I was some ferocious beast, no one could take her from me again.

When the old fuck and wrinkly bitch came back down, I decided it was time to play nice. The sooner I get away from these psychopaths, the sooner I could save my whore of a girlfriend.

Like this, even my father could not go against me. I can be in total control of not only Bailey, but my entire life.

My hearing improved after the transformation was complete, so I was able to overhear much of what the two idiots were saying today. Blue Cliff. That's where she is.

I can find her. I know I can, and once I do, she will never leave me again.

While the couple were arguing about what to do next, having not thought that fucking far ahead, I suggested letting me get used to my new body first so they could find out exactly what I was capable of.

I could feel the urge to change under my skin. It was like a burning itch pushing to the surface. There was this angry drive inside of me, begging to be let out and used to attain what was rightfully mine.

Bailey.

I just had to get rid of dumb and dumber first.

"I don't think it's a good idea. We can't really trust him yet," the old bitch stated. She had this air about her that made her seem authoritative, but she was surprisingly submissive to the old idiot that first tricked me.

They were like watching that trashy couple at the mall, where the girl is a fuckable enough but had daddy and self-esteem issues, and the dude has a zit face but also has little man syndrome, and has deluded himself into thinking he's worth a damn.

They're both pathetic.

Old fuck just stares at me for a few seconds, contemplating what to do while I paste on my best meek or obedient face. I was going for both and hoped I didn't end up just looking constipated instead.

Whatever face I managed to make, it must work on the idiot, because he ends up agreeing with me. "He came when we asked, and his goal is basically the same as ours. I think we can trust him. We need to see what he is capable of."

The bitch looks at me nervously, then back to him, "Why don't we just stop this before it's too late. You said this would be easy, using him to get her to leave. It's been almost 2 weeks. I'm sure he has marked her by now. It is too late to make Stephanie the luna. I know I told you I would try, but this is getting excessive and dangerous. Max is back if he finds out--"

“He won’t fucking find out if you don’t fucking tell him,” old fuck snarls, jerking his hand back like he was going to hit her. She flinches, but he stops before actually doing it.

Crazy, idiot couple. They have no idea what they are doing and have lost total control of this situation. They aren’t even on the same fucking page with each other. I need to get free of them so I can do this shit on my own.

“What does marked her mean?” I asked.

The woman glances at me, then looks at the man to answer.

“It’s how we claim our mates. The woman we are going to be with forever,” he glares at the bitch from the corner of his eye, then moves over to move the hair off her shoulder and startles her by pulling the collar of her shirt to the side.

On her shoulder was a gnarly looking scar, covering the entire spot where her neck met her shoulder.

“This is a mate mark. If your tramp girlfriend is already marked by Axel, you will have to defeat him to claim her. You can also force her to reject him, but she may be unwilling to do that. He’s filthy fucking rich and the alpha of our pack. If she’s a fucking gold-digger like she seems, she won’t easily reject him. You might need to challenge him for her.”

I scoff at him, but don’t reply. Bailey isn’t a fucking gold-digger. It would have been easier to control her if she had been. She wasn’t interested in my money at all. Not even for the benefit of that brat. She got a second fucking job to be independent of my money.

“What would challenging him entail?”

The bitch’s eyes went wide at that. “What? Why would you need to do that? I thought you said she had your son,” she looks between me and her boyfriend.

I guess this fuck didn’t tell his girlfriend that the paternity test with me was negative.

The fucker just grunts, not giving her a proper answer. I’m not going to address that issue either. The brat is as good as dead to me if he’s not mine. Maybe I can use him to convince her to reject this Axel guy. I can figure that out later. For now, I need to get away from these two.

“Look. Until we see what I’m capable of, there is no telling what I can and can’t do. You want to use me, right? We have the same goal. Help me to help you and let me out to transform.”

“Shift,” the old fuck says, “It is called shifting.”

I resist the urge to roll my eyes. Who the fuck cares what it’s called?

“Shift, then. I need to shift to find out what I can do.”

The woman still looks nervous, but the guy grunts in agreement.

“Fine. I’ll take you out, but stay with me. We aren’t on the friendliest of lands to shift. Stay with me in case we find trouble.”

I nod, but think to myself that the only trouble he is going to find out there is thinking he is going to keep me with him.

I can feel inside me that I can take this guy. In his aura, I can feel that I am going to be more powerful than him. Leaving him won’t be a problem. With her, I might have worried about her overpowering me, but if it was just him, I could get away.

He releases me from the bed I have been stuck on for the last couple of days, and I rub my sore wrist from the strange metal shackles they used to keep me down. I flex and stretch my muscles, relishing the power now residing in them. That urge to transform is pulsing in my bone, making my skin itch.

Old fuck leads me up a set of stairs and outside. I follow him to the treeline and he talks me through how shifting works.

I don’t need a copy of Shifting For Dummies or whatever bullshit he is spouting. I can feel the urge in my bones. It’s coming, and when the shift happens, it takes him by surprise.

My bones shift and my skin tears, but the pain is nothing compared to the thrill of the beast being released inside me. My thoughts become sharper, more focused, and my senses almost overpower me until my sharper mind is able to grasp all the sensations at once.

I’m strong. I can fucking feel it. I can feel the kinetic force behind my muscles. I think back to the viking of a man outside of Lucy’s house. I feel as strong as he seemed. I feel fucking invincible.

Old fuck shifts beside me, and there is a noticeable difference in our sizes.

I’m much bigger.

I start to run in the direction I drove in from, but he snarls and jumps in my path. I snap at him, my teeth connecting with his snout, making him whimper like a pussy.

The bitch runs out just as I take off towards the road, sprinting at full speed and enjoying the roughness of the moist dirt under my paws.

I feel feral and alive, and superior. I can’t imagine my father trying to lord over me in the state I am currently in.

My instincts tell me to run into the thick of the forest, away from the road, and to race as fast as my body will push me down the flow of the river. The beast side of me is untamed, wild and ready to attack.

I have one goal in mind, and now that my mind is enhanced and free, I have an idea of how to achieve it.

## 50 Revelation

# Chapter 50 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

### Addison POV

Stephanie is lying in my lap, scrolling through her phone as I run my fingers through her silky red hair.

I love her hair. It fits her fiery personality.

Now that she was able to mark me, the bond I had from imprinting on her is so much stronger.

We can finally be together. After so many years, she and I can finally live in peace, free from the burden of both our fathers.

My father isn't oppressive, as hers is, but being his daughter, I had certain expectations placed on me. My mother was not immortal or a first generation like my father is. My power as his daughter was limited because of that.

Finding Steph and imprinting on her was my miracle. I thought I had finally found my reason to leave the coven, and someone I could build my life with. My father and the wolves never got along, thanks to Rina and her bullshit, but as long as I had Steph, that didn't matter to me.

That was until Steph disappeared from my life.

After worrying and thinking the worst had happened to her, I snuck into her pack to observe and see what had been keeping her from contacting me.

That's when I observed her with the Luna of the pack, very openly stating that Stephanie was the alpha's chosen mate and that she would be the next luna.

I was heartbroken, but could never get over her. That is the power of the imprint.



And then we ran into each other again.

Just like before, the overwhelming feelings of destiny and love came over me, despite knowing she had chosen to leave me for a man. I couldn't compete with that. Homosexual lifestyles are normal among vampires, accepted by all, but I know wolves are different. Their ideas on normal were....biased. Hateful, at times.

I thought that Steph had abandoned me to meet the expectations of her kind, until we met again, and I could feel the hurt inside her. I could read the devastation in her mind and I knew she was being bound to her place by some outside force. She did not choose to abandon me. It was forced upon her.

I started to resent the wolves for a time after that. I had enough power to feel her truth, but not enough to read the reasoning around it. I couldn't fully enter her mind, like my father is able, and get to the core problem of why we couldn't be together.

All I could do was patiently love her, and wait. I figured by her mannerism that it had to do with the Luna, but she could never fully tell me. I couldn't do anything without risking upsetting my father and starting a war, so I waited.

Waiting has finally come to an end.

"Your alpha truly does not care if I come to live with you in your pack?" I asked Steph, tracing the splash of freckles dotting her face.

"Not at all. He told me to pick a spot of land that you would be comfortable with and he would start a new build for us. Our gamma and his wife have a vampire in Miami sending us blood supplies for you when you are ready to move."

I live in a human town right now, between Stephanie's pack and my coven. It would be nice to have a way to be fully independent from my father, who is more absorbed in his junkie girlfriend than his own daughter.

Rina is nice enough now, but her selfishness when I first met her over 20 years ago, when she was still human, was hard to endure. When I mentioned not liking her to my father, hoping my father would release her to the wolves' Alpha for my sake, I was met with his anger instead.

He never hurt me physically, but he reprimanded me for my disrespect towards Rina, telling me I would understand the day I imprinted and found my destined love. I thought he was being disrespectful to my late mother, belittling her and, in turn, me.

After meeting Stephanie, I finally started to understand his obsession and devotion to Rina, even when I thought Rina didn't deserve the love she was being showered with.

I would do anything and sacrifice anything for Stephanie.

My phone started to ring on the coffee table. I ignore it, focusing fully on Stephanie and the way her eyelashes cast shadows on her pale cheeks, but she glances up at me with a smirk, then reaches to grab the phone for me.

It is my father.

He never calls me himself any longer. It is usually one of his sires or Felix.

“Yes, father?” I answered with a cold voice.

Stephanie, sensing my annoyance, sat up from my lap, turning to face me with worry. We are supposed to meet my father tomorrow to act as ambassadors between him and the alpha. Why he would be calling me this late the night before, I do not know.

“Now, Addison. I need to meet with the wolves now. There has been an emergency, and it is imperative I speak with the alpha now.”

I looked at Stephanie. “Do you wish for his number?” I asked, trying to keep my annoyance out of my tone. Stephanie, catching the drift of our conversation, pulls out her phone to get her alpha’s phone number for me.

“This will not be a conversation to have over the phone. We are on the way to the wolves now.”

“What happened?” I asked, his anxious tone worrying me. He is not an anxious being. The only anxiety I have seen from him was to do with Rina in the past. If he is anxious about something, I’m sure it in some way involves her.

My father just told me he needed to meet with the wolves. He didn’t tell me why. The alpha didn’t explain much to Stephanie either. As their “ambassadors”, we are left completely in the dark.

“We will meet you at the border. Have the wolf notify the alpha of our approach,” is all he says in response.

Rina is with him, I’m sure. He would have told me otherwise. He would not say or do anything to cause her worry. He likes it when she is ignorant and naive.

“Fine,” I said, then hang up.

“What’s going on?” Stephanie took my hand in hers, looking at me with worried eyes.

I sighed heavily. “Call your alpha. My father is on his way to your pack right now. I don’t know what happened, but I know its not good.”

She cups my face, running her thumbs over my cheeks, lingering on the dimples she loves so much.

She kisses me briefly, much too briefly, then stands to pace the room while making the call.

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Axel POV

When my phone started to go off in the middle of the night, and I saw it was Stephanie, I thought about rejecting the call and going back to sleep with my very soft and snuggly mate. Old habits die hard and I sometimes forget I don't need to avoid Stephanie anymore. If she was calling me in the dead of night, it had to be for a good reason.

I never expected when I answered that call, it would lead to this.

Lord Antonio with several of his men and the woman I can only guess is Katherine, Bailey's mother, are sitting in the conference room of the warrior building in the early, early hours of the morning.

Dad, Uncle Nate, Vincent and Casey are here with me, and Farak went back to my house with Quinn to protect Bailey and Taegan just in case. Both were sleeping soundly when I left.

Stephanie and her mate, Addison, are here with us, looking awkward and out of place. We haven't told Stephanie much more than we need to speak with Antonio.

We needed to get to the bottom of his involvement with Levi, but from the look on Antonio's face, and from his sudden arrival on our land, I think this shit is about to get much more complicated.

Bailey's mom is looking around the room nervously, her eyes landing on my father over and over again, fear of him evident on her features.

"Well," dad is the first one to break the silence. "You got us up all early and shit. Mind telling us the hell why, when we were already set to fucking meet later today?"

Antonio turns his lip up in disgust. "Mind watching your tongue in front of my Rina? She does not need to be subjected to any more of your vulgarness."

"My vulgarness? Why you little-"

"My apologies, Lord Antonio," I cut my father off, not wanting his temper tantrum to ruin this first meeting. "We are just a little tense and wondering what the reasons are behind this sudden visit."

Antonio grunts, sitting back and relaxing slightly in his seat. It is a show. He is not relaxed at all. His eyes kept flashing worriedly at Katherine. I'm starting to think that she is completely unaware that her daughter is here in my pack, mated to me. I wonder how much about her daughter she is aware of.

If Antonio helped Levi like we suspect, what was the reason behind it and why would she be naive about the situation?

“I have become aware of a deception my coven had uncovered involving 2 members of your pack,” he began to explain, looking again to Katherine with a worried glance. “Your, um, mother, I assume, and the man she states is her fated mate came to my lands not long ago, spouting a story about you, young alpha.”

“Me?” I asked in surprise. “My mother is at your coven?”

“With Eric?” Uncle Nate asked.

“They are,” Antonio nodded.

“What?!” Stephanie exclaims, looking as surprised as I am. “My dad, Eric? What is he doing at your coven?”

Addison is gripping Stephanie’s shoulder while glaring at her father. Antonio is observing Stephanie and his daughter, looking conflicted. “I was not aware that the omega wolf was of relation to you.”

“He’s her fucking father, and my mate’s fated mate. We have been searching for them for their involvement in repressing Stephanie and disabling her from accepting and marking her mate, who just happens to be your daughter,” dad sneers, “you fucker,” he adds in a whisper, unable to help himself.

Antonio’s eyes go wide. “Is this true?” He turns to Addison.

She stares back for several seconds before nodding slightly.

“Eric abused his daughter to keep her from Addison, and he used my mother to command her so she couldn’t accept the bond. Eric is wanted for the abuse she endured, and my mother is under investigation for her involvement. They have been missing since....since we discovered the truth.” I’m not sure yet if I should mention Bailey being here. If Katherine is ignorant to that fact, as I suspect, then I don’t want to be the one to mention it.

“Harriet wouldn’t do that,” Katherine murmurs, looking at Antonio with big eyes, “She said that Max was a monster for keeping her from her fated mate. She wouldn’t keep someone else from theirs.”

My dad growled menacingly hearing the lie my mother told. I don’t blame him. I would be pissed too.

Antonio grabs Katherine’s hand, a soft, adoring expression on his face. “I wish that were true, for your sake, my love, but I’m afraid it gets worse than that.”

She furrows her brows, her lips pursing in a way that reminds me of Bailey. “What do you mean?”

He sighs deeply, looking hesitant to continue. I noticed Vincent sitting up straighter in his chair, a worried expression on his face.

“They were using you to get rid of Bailey, weren’t they? That is why your member was found working with her ex.” Vincent, being of strong lineage, a second generation vampire, has senses and powers only the strongest of vampires possess. I’m guessing he has been using those gifts to get a better handle on the situation. I’m not surprised. If we had any impending danger to our pack, he would want to know to keep his mate and daughter safe. The man is having his men lay a fucking walkway just for Simone all around my packlands right now for Simone. Invading a Lording vampire’s mind, or more than likely, his men’s mind, to ensure his wife’s safety would be nothing to him.

“Bailey?” Katherine repeats her daughter’s name, then looks at my father in horror. “My daughter, Bailey? Is my daughter the one your pack took? The human girl you are forcing to be with your son?! She is the one you are abusing, you monster?!”

“What?!” I exclaimed in surprise, along with Stephanie and Uncle Nate.

Dad stands at his feet, dangerously slow, like an animal facing down a threat. “I am not the monster you make me out to be, woman,” he says in a menacing whisper. “My daughter-in-law is here on her own free will, happily mated to my son, her fated mate. Her and my grandson are loved and protected, along with Lucy, your fucking mother, but you aided my fucking mate and her cunt of a boyfriend to terrorize and try to tamper with her happiness. I am not the monster here. From our actions, I think my son, myself, and our pack are the ones saving her from her abuser, while you are the ones helping him.”

“What?” she looks at Antonio in confusion, “What is he talking about? You knew they had my daughter and didn’t tell me? Is that the secret you were keeping from me?”

“My love, let me explain-”

“Please! Please explain to me what the hell is going on!”

He sighs, running a hand down his face, “Why don’t we start from the beginning?”