

Chapter 61 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

“What an inspirational night,” I giggled, snuggled against Axel.

Axel rolls to his side, smiling smugly “I’m an inspirational kind of guy.”

Yeah he is. My whole body is still buzzing with inspiration. I’m full and satisfied in so many ways.

“Thank you for dinner,” I told him, “It was good. Almost as good as the rest of the night.”

“I’m practically a pro,” he boasts.

“At cooking or sex?” I grin.

“Both,” he snorts.

I laughed softly. “No arguments here.”

He cups my face, running his thumbs over my cheeks, “Goddess, you’re gorgeous.”

I blush shyly. I’m glad he thinks so. Axel has never made me feel anything but beautiful.

I traced the outline of his lips. His lips perk out, lightly kissing my fingertips. Our feet tangle together under the sheets. I’m totally content just being in his arms.

He finally got rid of that damn apron sometime in the middle of what we were doing and I plan on washing the thing and having him wear it at least once a week. His bare ass on full display as he walked around in the thing was to die for.

The dinner he made was actually delicious. He made a reduction sauce to put on top, and it was so yummy. Like, mind-blowingly yummy, just like everything else about him. The steak was amazing and the potatoes were well seasoned and crunchy. It was a very filling, very yummy evening for sure.

What made it even more delicious was the sexy man that cut my steak up for me, then fed me bite after bite, telling me to save my energy for later. I’m starting to think our son is more like

him than we previously thought. Those suave lines and his bouts of cheesy playfulness remind me so much of Taegan when he's being a flirt. I'm glad Axel saves all his flirting for me.

"Now that we got all the important stuff out of the way, want to pick out new furniture for your office?" Axel asks.

"I told you that I'm fine using what's in the office for now. We can pick stuff out later."

"Well, that won't be an option now." His guilty smile makes me narrow my eyes.

"Why?"

"I had your office cleared out and painted tonight. That's what I was mind linking Rick about. It's going to be empty until we get new furniture because I told him just to get rid of everything in there."

I gaped at him. "Where am I going to work then?"

"My office," he shrugs, "Unless that's too distracting, then you can use the conference room for now, but I'd rather keep you in my office."

I giggle, hooking my leg on his hip, bringing our bodies even closer. "Why's that?"

"You never know when inspiration is going to strike," he husks. His hand slides to the back of my head as he pulls my face towards his.

Our tongues meet before our lips, caressing passionately. His fingers gripping the back of my neck angled my head as I submit to his lead. He overwhelms me with his intensity. There is no hesitation or reservation in the love he showers me with. His devotion is all-consuming.

I guess neither of us are as sated or full, because he is soon hovering over me, resting his excitement between my legs, and I'm silently thanking Max for keeping Taegan for the night.

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Taegan POV

"Grandpa, do you suck the face with someone?" I asked grandpa. I still don't understand what daddy was trying to tell me. If it's just kisses, why am I too little for it? Why did daddy look not happy when I said I did it with Miss Carli? He says not to do it with Rosie, but why?

I did kiss Rosie. I always give her kisses on her soft cheeks when her mean daddy isn't around. Miss Carli says it's okay. Why did Daddy say no?

"What are you talking about? Who taught you that?" Grandpa says in his angry voice.

He's not angry. That is just how he talks. It used to make me annoyed, but it doesn't any more.

"Brother Rick," I told him.

Grandpa makes a growling sound. "Was Brother Rick sucking face with Quinn when you learned this new fuc-, I mean, fun term?"

I shrug, "Don't think so. Miss Quinn wasn't there. He said to mommy and daddy 'when you done sucking each other's faces, come see me,' and then I asked daddy what sucking faces is, and he said it was kisses, but I can't do it because I'm too little. But I give kisses all the time. Miss Carli said it was okay."

Grandpa makes the face like he needs to poop. He makes it every time he sees or hears about Miss Carli. I don't know why. He's weird. I like Miss Carli. She's pretty and thinks I'm cute. She calls me her 'future son-of-law' but I don't know what that means. Rosie's mean daddy doesn't like it when Miss Carli calls me that, though.

"If that woman tells you anything is okay, you need to run it by your parents or myself first. That woman has an obscured moral compass."

I tilt my head, thinking about what that could mean. "What's 'op-scurred'?" I ask.

"It means messed up," Grandpa mutters in his grumpy voice. He sets a big cup, the kind mommy says to be careful with, in front of me. There is lots and lots of the white cream Brother Casey puts on top of pancakes. Brother Casey is annoying, and makes me have the itchy hands like I need to hit him, but mommy says no. I can't hit when I'm not happy because it makes mommy sad.

I kicked Brother Casey once, but he deserved it. He got my game wet with my own water gun. That's rude, and mommy said games can't get wet. That's why I can't take it in the bath.

If Brother Casey wasn't such a big baby and didn't do the rude stuff, I would like him more. I like his pancakes, though. They are like cakes and taste much better than Cousin Courtney's banana pancakes. Those have yucky chunks of gross stuff in them like seeds and things Brother Casey calls bird food.

I lick the sweet cream, and it makes me smile. "Yum!"

"Is it good?" Grandpa smiles at me.

I nodded. "I like it. Is it chocolate milk under the white?"

"It's hot chocolate, so be careful. It may still be hot."

I take another lick of the cream and this time it makes me do a happy dance in my chair. I like going to grandpa's house because he doesn't say no and gives me all the sweets. He plays a lot too.

After dinner at the packhouse, grandpa turned into his wolf and let me ride on his back while he went running in the woods with Uncle Nate and Cousin Calum. Uncle Nate is funny. He gets mad at Brother Casey too. He said lots of bad words, but Mommy said it was okay. I don't know why it's okay for Uncle Nate and not everyone else, but Mommy said so, it must be true.

"Grandpa?"

"Yeah kid?" he took a big gulp of his cup, the kind you have to be careful with. He isn't as careful as me. Mommy would tell me to slow down if I moved my cup that fast, but I won't tell him that. I'm not his mommy.

"What are morals?"

"Morals are a set of rules you live by that help you to be a better person. You will be Alpha just like your dad is and I was, one day, so you should make sure you have strong morals now."

"Like what?"

Everyone keeps saying I will be like daddy and calls me little alpha, but I don't know what that means yet. Daddy said I would be the leader, which sounds fun, but I am already the leader all the time. I don't know how being the Alpha will be different.

"Well, an Alpha can't be selfish. You put your pack before yourself. You can't put anything before your pack. I think the only exception to that would be your mate, because when you get your mate, they will be the Luna of the pack. Like your mom is now. The Luna is the heart of the pack, pumping love and hope to all its members, while the Alpha is the brain, in control of the pack's every function. Every decision an alpha makes needs to be made in the pack's best interest, because it will affect everyone. If we have a selfish alpha, who doesn't have any morals, it will make the pack weak, and open us up to dangers from the outside."

"Is that what daddy means when he says I will be the leader one day? I will lead all the wolves?"

He nods, sliding over the plate of cookies so I can grab one. I like grandpa's cookies. He buys the big ones. Grandma Lucy only buys the spicy ones she calls ginger snaps, and mommy gets the ones in the blue package that are dry. Grandpa's are soft and have big chocolates inside.

"Did you have a luna, grandpa?"

When I ask him the question, which I thought wasn't hard, he makes a sad face and doesn't answer for a long time. He makes his big hand go down his face like daddy sometimes does and sighs loudly, looking out the big window.

I looked out the big window to see what he was looking at, but nothing was out there. Maybe he didn't hear me.

"Grandpa, did you have a luna? Or a mate? Mommy is daddy's mate. Where is grandpa's mate?"

Grandpa looked up at the ceiling for a minute. I look up, but nothing is there. Maybe grandpa needs glasses. Grandma Lucy wears glasses. When she doesn't have them on, she looks everywhere like she's lost too.

Grandpa finally looks at me, then smiles, but it looks sad. It's like the smiles mommy used to always make. Mommy doesn't smile like that anymore. She smiles with her eyes now, but before her eyes looked sad even when she smiled.

Grandpa's eyes look sad right now.

"I had my fated mate, but she died a long time ago. Before your daddy was born."

"How'd she die?" I asked.

"She was sick."

Oh no. Mommy gets sick when it gets really cold sometimes. "Mommy gets sick when it gets snow outside. Is mommy going to die?"

"No, no, buddy. That's a different kind of sickness. Your mom probably just got the flu or a cold. My mate, Alyssa, had a chronic illness. Your mom won't die from being sick. I promise."

I breathed out a heavy breath, the yucky feeling in my tummy going away. I don't want mommy to die.

"If your mate died, how did you get my daddy?"

Grandpa made the poopy face again, looking back out the window. I move around in my chair to see all the way around the outside of the window, but nothing is out there.

Grandpa does need glasses. I should tell Mommy. Mommy got Grandma Lucy her glasses.

"Your dad's mom was my chosen mate. Her name was Harriet."

"Did she die too?"

I haven't seen anyone with that name. I remember names really well. Mommy doesn't, and I have to tell her names sometimes. Mommy says it's because I'm smarter than her.

"No, she didn't die. I don't think so, anyway."

“Oh,” I’m confused, “Why did you not live with her? Mommy and daddy live together. All the mates live together.”

Grandpa makes the face again. Mommy should give him apple juice. “I made many mistakes and she left,” Grandpa eventually says.

“What mistakes?” I wonder if his mate left because of his poop face. Grandma Lucy doesn’t like his poop face either. She says it all the time.

“I wasn’t very nice or fair to her.”

I growl. Other Dad was not nice to mommy. “Were you yelling and hitting like other Dad did?”

Grandpa makes his growling sound and I cover my mouth. “Oops, I mean Levi. He’s not my other dad. I only have daddy as a dad.” Grandpa tells me that a lot, but sometimes I forget.

“No. I would never yell or hit my mate. I did ignore her, though. I thought I was doing what was best for her, and ended up hurting her.” Grandpa makes his hand go down his face again. “When you find your mate, you need to make sure you always communicate. If I had talked to Harriet, and worked our shiiiiii-....stuff out, it would have saved everyone a lot of grief.”

“Rosie said she was going to be my mate,” I told him. I don’t want to ignore Rosie, so we should be okay.

“Kid, that girl is going to be Alpha of her own pack. I would wait until you are 18 and confirm she’s your mate before you make her dad mad at you too much.”

“Why 18?”

“That’s the age your wolf is fully developed and you’re able to detect your mate. You won’t sense her before then.”

“Oh,” I tilted my head as I thought about what he said. “So that’s why daddy said I can’t suck face yet? I have to wait until I’m 18, so I know she’s my mate?”

“Even then, you will have to wait until she is 18. She is younger than you. You will sense your mate before she can sense hers. You have to wait until your mate can sense you too before claiming them.”

“So we both have to be 18?” I lifted my nose, not liking that.

“Yeah, kid. You do.”

“But that’s so long, grandpa,” I folded my arms on his table and put my chin on top of them. That’s a long time. I don’t want to wait that long.

“It’s really not, kid,” he laughs at me. “If you are anything like your dad or me, you will be able to wait. Mates are always worth waiting for.”

“If you say so,” I told him, then take a big drink of my hot chocolate, which wasn’t hot at all. It’s chocolate milk. Grandpa is silly.

“Grandpa, can we watch the movie you said not to tell mommy and daddy about last time? The one with the guy who eats the sunscreen?”

Grandpa laughs again, then makes my hair messy with his big hand. “The Benchwarmers? Sure kid. I’ll get the popcorn.”

“Yes!” I jumped out of my chair and ran for the couch.

I love grandpa’s house!

## 62 Renovations

# Chapter 62 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

“Alpha, a UPS driver is coming onto pack lands,” Marvin, one of my warriors running patrols, tells me. “It’s the usual truck. Want me to stop and inspect it?”

“No, I’m expecting the delivery. Just have a few guys running alongside it hidden in the trees. The driver knows to leave the delivery at the gates.”

“You got it, Alpha,” he says before he breaks the link.

Yes! It came faster than I expected. I ordered it just 2 days ago. I thought 2-day shipping applied after the item was made. They must have made them and sent them the same day.

“Hey, Taegan,” I called to my son, who was sitting by his mother.

They’re at the temporary table I brought in so she could work here with me while waiting for her office to be set up. I’m having the carpet torn out and replaced with hardwood, and her new furniture will be here early next week.

“Yes, daddy?” Taegan looked up from the book about wolves my dad bought for him.

“Want to help your dad with that thing we talked about for Brother Casey’s office?”

Bailey smirks, looking up from her laptop and the ledger she has been going through. “So mean,” she mouths at me, but I just blow a kiss back at her.

“You’re going to put up the porn show picture?” Taegan asked.

“I am! It just got here,” I tell him and he claps his hands, closing his book. He’s always eager to mess with Casey.

I had the picture of Casey in a white lace thong and a see-through bra enlarged to be a giant wall decal. I selected ‘permanent hold’ on the adhesive options, and ordered a few backup wall sized stickers in case the adhesive isn’t as permanent as I want it to be.

I started to feel bad about putting this plan into action, since Casey not telling me I was harboring a runaway Luna led to me getting extra backup from Alpha Parker. His warriors he had sent to our pack are well trained and have been a huge help in filling in the extra patrol shifts. Even having Parker and his mate to help with training has been a blessing.

But then, last night, Casey wouldn’t stop running his mouth, saying shit about having supreme swimmers, aka sperm, since they announced Courtney was pregnant again.

He kept apologizing to me for being better at baby-making, then proceeded to try and give me tips.

Here’s a tip for him; don’t piss off your alpha. He’s on a 24-hour security shift for the logging site now, and I have until this afternoon to do this before he comes back. Perfect timing.

Bailey checks the time, then gets up to stretch. “I’ll walk over with you guys and hang out with grandma for a bit. I need to organize her pills for the week.”

I hired a home health nurse to come twice a week to help with her grandma, but Bailey still insists on doing things like setting up her pills and checking her blood sugar levels periodically to make sure Lucy is keeping up with her insulin.

Dusty and Chris are basically living with her now, and they have been doing a great job keeping up with her every whim, and making sure she is safe and eating regularly. The home health nurse helps her to shower safely and is supposed to take care of all her medical needs, but Bailey still likes maintaining some control over her grandma.

“Dusty and Chris are there, but do you want me to ask my dad to come too?” There still hasn’t been any sign of Levi or my mom, so I’m still unwilling to let Bailey be without protection.

“No thank you. I don’t want to hear them bicker today. Yesterday they fought over the correct pronunciation of mayonnaise.”



“Who won?” I chuckled.

“No one wins when they argue. I swear they just argue for fun.”

“Grandpa lost, mommy. Grandma Lucy called him unrefined swine and told him to go find a pig pen to roll in. Remember? I asked you what’s swine is.”

Bailey huffed, looking heavenward and shaking her head.

I just laugh. Dad needed someone like Lucy to humble him a bit. He’s never had anyone that could talk down to him before. Uncle Nate might joke with him a lot, but even that had its limits.

Thinking of Uncle Nate, I decided to mind link him to ask if he wanted to join me.

“Hey Uncle. Are you busy right now?”

“Not too busy for my favorite nephew. Why? What’s up?”

“Wanna fuck with your son-in-law a bit?”

“Uh, yeah. That little shit had the fucking nerve to give me a thank you card for watching my own fucking grandson and a plaque to the world’s ‘okayest’ grandfather.”

I work hard to hold back my laughter. Casey had an award plaque made for Uncle Nate and had little plates under it with the time and date of both conceptions, so my uncle would know the precise times that his son-in-law impregnated his daughter.

It didn’t go over well. The fact that there were 10 extra blank name plates for future dates didn’t go unnoticed by Nate.

“Meet me at his office. Me and Taegan are heading over to do a little renovating now.”

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Casey POV

It’s been a long-ass 24 hours. I should have been home last night, celebrating with my delicious pregnant mate instead of being out in the logging camp, sleeping on a cot, then spending the whole fucking day redirecting the routes to avoid a landslide that happened on the side of a nearby hill.

Now I’m filthy, exhausted, and Court didn’t seem to miss me half as fucking much as I missed her.

Carli, the ass, sent me pictures of her and Quinn in my bed with my dead ass asleep, half-naked mate, telling me to stop calling her because she was enjoying the break from me.

Break from me, my ass. I very much enjoyed telling Carli that the exact spot she was lying was where I accidentally nipped the night before after getting sucked off vigorously by the woman she claimed didn't miss me.

She and Parker, along with my sister and Vince have to head back to Miami soon, and as much as I love my sister, I'm ready to have my mate to myself again. Parker is leaving Laura's team behind to continue helping with patrols, but they all have to get back to their own jobs of running the pack and Vince with his million businesses. His company just bought out my parent's charter and fishing company, and he's working on getting the details ironed out. My parents are officially retiring so they can easily travel back and forth to spend time with both their grandkids.

They're going to have two grandkids up here now, since my sperm is so much more superior to that fucking vampire's apparently. Besides Carli and Parker, who I don't think should count considering Carli's obnoxious fornication habits, me and Court got everyone else beat in procreating so far.

I'm just too sexy of a beast with strong, beastly swimmers, I guess. No wonder the Alpha sent me away for the night. He was jealous of my overwhelming sex appeal. He sleeps with his mate and she runs away the next day. My mate can't get enough of me.

When I pull into the warrior center lot to drop off my work shit so I can get home to nap (get a quickie) before patrols later tonight, Parker and Carli are outside leading a training session.

Well, Carli is leading the session. Parker is watching with amusement while she uses Phillip, a warrior, as a demonstration partner and folds him up like a pretzel. I can almost see the tears in the guy's eyes. Carli scares the shit out of me sometimes.

Parker has their son in a carrier strapped to the front of him, and I'm guessing Rosie is with Taegan and Calum somewhere, being doted on by the spoon villain. Taegan is obsessed with Rosie being his mate. I'm excited to see how that will play out when she leaves to go home.

Parker sees me getting out of my car and jogs over, cradling Reese's head to his chest on the way.

"Hey," he smirks at me.

"Yep," I muttered, taking my grumpy attitude out on him.

"Rough night?"

"Oh, it was the best. My favorite part was when your mate called me and told me she was taking my spot in bed next to my wife while I was away."

He busts out laughing. "You know, there was a time that hearing that would have excited you. I like you more now, getting pissed at Carli for being in your bed."

I cringe thinking back to high school when I was practically desperate to be with Carli. Thank the goddess, she always shot me down. That would have made family functions so awkward.

Courtney is the best of the Childes' cousins too. She is way less reckless, sweeter, her ass, she's way more chill, her ass, doesn't ever get defensive or try to murder people for stupid reasons, and her ass. Goddess, I love her ass.

I miss her ass so much right now.

"Thanks for taking the training sessions for me today," I tell Parker, ignoring the gibe about once liking his mate.

"Carli covered them. I was on baby duty," he kissed the top of Reese's head. He doesn't get much free time to spend with the kids during the weekdays at home and is taking advantage of it while being here.

"Well, you can tell her thank you for me," I grumbled.

"Still feeling bitter?"

"No comment."

He laughs softly, walking with me into the warrior building. "Hey, congrats on the new pregnancy. I liked your little announcement at Nate's last night."

My mood lifts and I turn to smirk at him. "Like that? Wanna get a plaque for Tommy too?"

Parker chuckles, "I don't want my father-in-law to hate me, but thanks."

"Childes men are built differently, huh?" I snickered, "I learned so many fun phrases and words from my father-in-law."

"I liked it when he called you a sugar infused cunt-waffle with shit sprinkles and told you to fuck a moose in the nose."

"That was a nice one," I murmured with a straight face, "It pointed out how sweet I am."

"I definitely think that was the point he was trying to make," Parker snorts.

When we turned the corner to my office, there was a big white and pink bow on my closed office door.

"What the hell?" I questioned.

"Expecting a present?" Parker asked.

“No. None.” Who expects a present?

“Maybe it’s a congratulatory gift from someone? You did make sure the whole pack knew you knocked your mate up at dinner last night? Maybe someone got you a plaque.”

My eyes lit up. “Maybe!” I wouldn’t mind a world’s ‘okayest’ dad plaque.

I open my door and my smile slips away as my eyes go wide.

“What the shit is this?!”

“What?” Parker poked his head around the door, then burst into laughter. He’s gripping the wall to keep from falling down. It sure as hell isn’t that funny seeing my naked body plastered on the back wall of my office wearing Court’s white lace underwear. My shelving and desk were even moved to make the picture more visible. It takes up my entire fucking wall.

“Who did this?!” I yelled, making several others in the hallway stop to see what was happening. “What the fuck! Who the hell did this? Was it Carli?” I asked Parker, but he was still laughing uncontrollably. He just shook his head.

“What’s wrong, Gamma?” one girl asks, her and her friend sliding up behind us.

“NOTHING!” I tried to quickly close the door, but not fast enough before they saw.

Shit.

63 Girls Night 1

Chapter 63 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Bailey POV

After dinner at the packhouse, Axel had to take off to run patrols since Casey wasn’t back yet.

Max was back to babysitting us, but Courtney, Simone and Quinn decided to come back with us too for “girl time”, since I haven’t been meeting up with them at Grandma’s house the last few days. It started out with just Quinn inviting herself over, then it turned into everyone wanting to come back to our house for tea and grandma’s baking.

Of course, if Simone was there, that meant Vincent had to come too. I don't think he ever leaves her side. He's my grandma's favorite of the men now, thanks to his suave way of speaking, unending patience and his immortal good looks. Simone thinks it's adorable how Grandma starts blushing and giggling like a schoolgirl when he's near.

Stephanie and Addison are with grandma tonight, giving Dusty and Chris a night off to have alone time, and they are going to bring her over a little later so grandma can show us all how to make brownies from scratch. My kitchen is a lot bigger than Grandma's and everyone else's, so that's why everyone is coming over here.

Carli is leading an afternoon training session in Casey's place that is for the workers that live in town, then she and Parker will be over too. She said that the men could be babysitters and taste testers, but this night is for the girls, so they are to stay out of our way. We are trying to soak up each other's presence as much as possible before Simone and Carli head back to Miami.

I'm going to be sad when Carli and Simone leave. I love them like sisters, and Carli especially has been a great help with adjusting to my new life.

I was worried about the new role of being Luna, but Carli has been giving me advice, reassuring me that I'll be great. She isn't a traditional Luna herself, she claims, and told me that my main job, above all else, is to support my mate. I just need to be Axel's greatest source of comfort and support, and since I already have that down, the rest will come naturally.

I'm sitting by Courtney, holding Simone's baby girl when Taegan walks out of his room with 2 controllers for his video game in his hands.

"Grandpa, can you play Mario Kart? Mommy just crashes the whole time."

I scoff and roll my eyes. I tried playing with him once and, yes, I crashed the whole time, but in my defense, it was my first time ever playing.

I don't think Max has ever played video games either, so I'm excited to see how this plays out. By the horrified look on Max's face, I could tell he was worried about being a disappointment like I was.

"Uh, sure, but you've got to show me how to play."

Taegan sighs loudly, clearly not satisfied with that response, then looks at Calum, playing mega blocks on the floor with Rosie. "Cal, wanna play? You can't bring food into my room, though."

"Why?" Calum is munching on pretzels from a snack bag as he builds an awkward-looking tower. He clutches the bag closer to his chest like he is scared Taegan is about to take it from him.

"Because you get crumbs in the controllers, then they don't work right."

“Then.....no,” Calum turns his nose away in the air, taking a stubborn stance before Taegan tries to make him.

“I can play with you, little man,” Vincent volunteers.

Taegan looks at him questioningly, “You wanna play?”

Vincent shrugs, “Sure. Why? You don’t wanna play with me?”

“You look like you play girl games, not boy games,” Taegan mutters.

"Taegan, that's rude," I lightly scolded him.

Simone and Courtney start to snicker and giggle at Taegan’s comment. “What are girl games?” Simone asks with a repressed smile.

Taegan shrugs, “I don’t know. I don’t play them.”

“Uncle Vince play blocks wiff me?” Calum asked.

Taegan runs over to Vincent and places a controller in his hands. “Nope. He’s playing with me.”

Vincent laughs, not at all offended by my son, then follows him off into Taegan’s room.

Taegan likes playing with Casey the most, though he would never admit it, but Casey has been out for work at a logging camp as a punishment for the last 24 hours, since he took it upon himself to insult Axel’s baby-making abilities.

I got pregnant from one night with Axel, so there is clearly nothing wrong with Axel’s ability. Courtney is now very closely monitoring me for signs of pregnancy, wanting us to be pregnant together. With how much Axel and I are intimate, I wouldn’t be surprised if in the next few weeks we didn’t have news of our own to share.

Max, slightly sour that Taegan dismissed him for Vincent, sulks as he walks back to the hallway, most likely to peek in on them playing. I bet Max will soon get another system for his place and practice playing by himself so he could play with Taegan next time.

“That man needs more grandkids,” Quinn says, shaking her head. “Could you imagine him with a granddaughter?”

I chuckle, “He actually told Axel to try for a girl the other day.”

“Your future daughters would have some fierce protection. Their older brother, father and grandfather are all scary in their own ways, and all super protective,” Quinn snorts.

“Don’t forget the uncles and cousins,” Courtney states, laying her head on my shoulder to make faces at her niece.

“I wonder what you’re having?” I mused.

“A girl. My brother needs a girl,” Simone says.

“Why a girl?” Quinn asks.

“Nothing humbles a man faster than a little girl. My brother’s gotten a little too cocky since moving up here. He and his superior sperm need a girl.”

Courtney runs her hand over Karina’s very full head of dark hair, smiling. “I wouldn’t mind a baby girl. I wouldn’t mind another boy either, though. Calum is pretty easy unless he’s hungry, just like his father,” she giggles, “My colleagues at the clinic are starting a pool and almost everyone thinks it’s a girl.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because I was super sick all the time when I was pregnant with Calum, but I haven’t gotten sick at all with this one. If Casey didn’t pick up on my scent changing, I wouldn’t have even picked up on being pregnant.”

“That doesn’t mean it’s a girl. Maybe you’re pregnant with twins,” Simone wiggles her eyebrows, “Runs in the family.”

“Don’t even joke,” Courtney sighs, throwing her head back on the couch. “Could you imagine how huge I would get?”

“Girl, you barely even showed with Calum,” Simone snorted. “I looked like a heifer. Vincent wouldn’t let me do a damn thing, and fed me around the clock. He would somehow know I was dreaming of food or craving something and it would be in my hands before I even had to say anything.”

“That doesn’t surprise me,” I giggled, “The man built a freaking sidewalk all around the pack for you in one night.”

“Oh, he gets worse. He had a frozen yogurt machine brought in when she was pregnant with this one, and a personal chef was moved into the condo below them on call around the clock just for her,” Courtney huffs.

“He made the best cheesecake,” Simone sighs.

“Oooh, cheesecake sounds good,” I hummed.

“Yes, it does,” Courtney moans in agreement.

Maybe I can talk my Grandma into showing us how to make cheesecake too.

Pounding on the door startles us, until the doors are thrown open and Casey comes storming in. “Court! Courtney!” he calls out to her angrily.

“Quit yelling! I’m over here,” Courtney says, pushing off the couch next to me to greet him.

He stomps over as she walks up to him. “Hey, how was your punishment?” She smirks, throwing her arms around his neck. Her smirk fades to a look of concern when she takes in his angry expression.

“What’s wrong?”

He looks nervously around at us, then in a hushed voice asks, “Did you send those pictures to anyone?”

Oh, shit. I completely forgot about the picture Axel put up in his office.

“What pictures?” Courtney asked, confused.

“Those pictures. From our wedding night,” he hisses.

I’m biting my lips, trying not to look at Casey, but he quickly notices my nervous expression and points at me, walking away from Courtney and in my direction.

“You know,” he accused.

“Know what?” I feigned innocence.

“It was the Alpha, wasn’t it?” he glares.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I bit my lips to keep from smiling.

“What’s going on out here?” Max came out of the hall, narrowing his eyes at Casey, who was still pointing an accusing finger at me. One look from Max, and Casey quickly curled the finger into his palm, taking a step back from me.

“Your son is a fucking menace, that’s what,” Casey grumbles, “I just want to know how he got the picture. Just tell me that,” he looked back at me.

Courtney is going through her phone, a confused look on her face. I’ll tell Courtney later that it was Carli. I’m not going to throw her under the bus right now, though.

“I’m not sure,” I lied, biting my lips even harder. It’s so hard to keep a straight face, and I know I’m failing.

“So it was your mate? I’m going to....I’m going to.... Gah!” he throws his hands up.

He can’t do anything. Axel is his Alpha. I wonder if I should warn Courtney her dad was in on it too?

“Everything okay?” Vincent and Taegan came out of Taegan’s room, Vincent looking between Casey and Simone with concern.

“Casey. Care to enlighten the rest of the class as to what you’re talking about?” Quinn crosses her legs, staring up at him with a look of amusement.

She knows. Rick, even though he wasn’t involved, knew so of course she knows.

Casey must have caught on to that too, because she was the next one to receive his glare. “Was Rick in on it? I can get back at him.”

“Rick wasn’t involved,” I piped up, before Quinn got defensive over her man and this turned into a fight.

“So it was just your mate?” Casey asked, taking a step towards me.

Before I could answer, Taegan was in front of me, growling at Casey. “Mommy didn’t do it! Quit being mean to mommy!”

Casey’s hands went up defensively, almost like he was scared of my son, “I wasn’t being mean to the Luna, little guy. I just wanted to know who ruined my office with your dad.”

“Your office wouldn’t be ruined if you didn’t do porn shows,” Taegan put his hands on his hips, leaning his little body forward as he talked.

Casey's mouth dropped. “Did you do it with your dad?”

Taegan folded his arms. “Just I did it. Daddy and Uncle Nate were not there.”

Oops. Cat’s out of the bag for Nate’s part in it now.

I got up and handed Simone’s baby back to her so I can handle Taegan and his little attitude now.

“So it was Alpha and Nate?” Casey squats down to Taegan’s level, groaning and wiping a hand down his face.

“No, it was just me,” Taegan stubbornly stated, crossing his arms tighter and trying to look even more menacing.

“Yeah, yeah, I got it,” Casey states, musing Taegan’s hair. I picked him up, pulling him with me to the couch as I noticed his hands twitching with the urge to retaliate for Casey’s dismissive response.

“Want to fill us in on what’s gotten up your ass?” Simone scoffs, patting her baby’s back.

“I think we should take a field trip to the warrior building,” Quinn giggles.

“You know?” Simone grins at her.

Quinn shrugs, “I may have heard rumors.”

“Field trip!” Simone stands, walking towards the door, Quinn following closely behind with a broad smile.

“Hey, HEY!” Casey calls after them to stop, but they just keep on going.

“What the hell is going on?” Max asked in an exasperated tone.

Calum toddled over to his dad, patting his face. “What’s wrong, daddy?”

“Your dad did por-”

I covered Taegan’s mouth before he could say it again. We don’t need two little boys going around using that phrase.

“Come on, princess,” Vincent picked Rosie up off the floor. “Let’s go for a walk.”

“Hey, this isn’t a fucking peep show,” Casey lifts Calum and follows after Vincent. “At least fucking pay me if you want to see my goods, you perverted leech.”

Vincent’s laughing at Casey’s annoyance could be heard until they closed the door behind them.

“It was Carli,” I told Courtney once her husband was out of earshot. “She went through your phone and sent it to Axel.”

“Of course it was Carli,” she let out an exasperated laugh.

“What was?” Max huffed, annoyed no one had told him yet what was going on.

“Axel put a wall-sized picture of Casey in women’s underwear up in his office with the help of Nate,” I tell him with a laugh.

“I helped too!” Taegan says loudly from behind my hand.

Max laughs quietly with a smirk, shaking his head.

“The least Axel could have done for stealing my treasured picture was make me a wall-sized picture too,” Courtney pouts.

“He made extra!” I sang out to her.

She claps excitedly. “Get me one?”

“Of course!”

64 Girls Night 2

Chapter 64 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Addison and Steph walked my grandma over while everyone was walking back, and when she heard about the new artwork in Casey’s office, she was laughing just as much, if not more, than the rest of them.

“How did a big thing like you get into her undergarments?” she cackled.

“Excuse me, ma’am, but I get into her undergarments all the time,” Casey huffed.

“Crude. You are a very crude young man,” Grandma stated, but the twinkle in her eyes let us know she was enjoying herself.

“Rude, crude and tattooed, that’s me. Now, if you will excuse me,” he handed Calum off to me, “if you could watch this for a few hours. It’s the least you could do for not intervening, Luna,” he scoffs, then bends down and lifts Courtney by her legs, tossing her over his shoulder, making her laugh and squeal. “I have some rude and crude things to do with my wife. She will see you guys later.”

“She’s already pregnant. Give the girl a break,” Simone calls out.

Casey just laughs, swatting Courtney’s butt as he starts to jog in the direction of their house.

Courtney curls her fingers in a wave, a Cheshire cat grin on her face. She likes the rude and crude aspects of her mate. They are so cute together.

“Wanna have a sleepover at our house tonight, Calum?” I asked him as he scowled in his parent’s direction.

“I get top bunk,” Taegan stares up and growls, “and no food in bed.”

“Just popcorn?” Calum counters.

Taegan sighs, “Fine, but I pick the movie.”

“Dinosaur Park?” Calum asks, his face lighting up.

“Jurassic Park,” Taegan corrected him.

“Yay!” Calum likes the Dinosaur movie. It is one of the only ones they can agree on. Taegan isn’t a fan of the little kid shows Calum usually picks.

Carli joins us a little later. Parker comes, but just to get Rosie. He and Vincent are having a poker night with Vincent’s guards and a few of the warriors after putting the babies to sleep.

Carli and Simone both offered to keep the babies here and put them to sleep in one of our spare bedrooms, but Parker looked at Taegan with a disapproving expression and firmly said no. Taegan didn’t miss the look and stuck his tongue out at Parker when he turned his back, making Carli bust out laughing.

“I miss you,” Taegan whispered to Rosie, so Parker couldn’t hear when he hugged her to tell her bye. “Don’t worry. We turn 18 and be mates, then we can suck faces all the time.”

“Oh my gosh,” I covered my eyes with my hand, fully embarrassed.

“Kid isn’t even fazed by Parker,” Quinn whispered in my ear with a giggle. He is going to be a fierce alpha one day.”

“I keep hearing that, and it just worries me more,” I tell her.

“He’s going to have all the mates,” Stephanie smirks.

“Rosie won’t be one of them,” Parker snapped, overhearing our conversation.

He lifted her away from Taegan, careful to avoid hitting or jostling Reese strapped to the front of him, and placed her on his shoulders. They must do it a lot because she giggled and knew how to duck down to avoid hitting her head since he was so tall.

“Mommy said yes,” Taegan growled at Parker.

Geez, leave me out of this. My son might not be scared of the bulking mountain of a man, but I sure as heck don’t want to be up against him.

“Daddy said no!” Calum yelled from my arms, missing the entire conversation, just throwing out his automatic answer when he heard Taegan say that. Mommy said yes, daddy said no. It’s the

most common fight between the two, and most of the time, they aren't fighting over anything concrete; just fighting to fight.

"Taegan, remember what we talked about?" Max interjected, pulling Taegan up in his arms.

Taegan sighed then hung his head. "Fine. We wait until 18, then see if we're mates."

"That's right." Max ruffled his hair, and Taegan sulked, resting his head on his grandfather's shoulder.

Carli and Simone said bye to their mates, and I helped grandma get everything set up in the kitchen to start making brownies after giving Calum a handful of chocolate chips to tide him over.

We didn't have nearly enough cream cheese to make a cheesecake, but Quinn mind linked Rick, who said he would bring some to us after he was done with a late night run to town. Some members living in the in-town lodging were in a fight at the local bar, the one Axel and I first met in, and he had to go deal with the members. The bar was just filled with pack members so, thankfully, no humans were present when they started to shift, but Rick still had to go in and punish them.

The bar I met Axel at is actually owned by Rick's family. Axel was there that night to meet Rick, but saw me instead.

Fate is amazing. For some reason, Levi wanted to get away when he was trying to make up with me and we came to Blue Cliff the same night that Axel was in town to meet Rick. If I hadn't left the hotel room when I did and gone to that bar, and if Axel hadn't gone out that night, we may have never met, and Taegan wouldn't be here today.

I couldn't imagine a life without Taegan and Axel. I'm so grateful to fate.

Grandma is in her element as she directs us in the kitchen. We end up with 4 pans of brownies, sending one to the men's poker game with Rick when he comes to drop off the cream cheese.

By the time Courtney was dropped back off by Casey, with swollen lips and a serious case of sex hair, we had 2 cheesecakes cooling on the counter and were just starting to cut into our brownies.

All of us started hooting and hollering when Casey left Courtney breathless with a kiss that would make a porn star blush. Everyone except Simone, who started gagging, and Max, who groaned in disgust and covered the boys' eyes, which I was grateful for. I don't need Taegan asking more questions or making more observations about mates.

Grandma was ready for bed at that point, so Addison and Stephanie grabbed their portion of the deserts and left with Grandma to walk her back and stay with her for the night.

“Grandpa, where are you sleeping tonight?” Taegan asked. Max usually just stays on the couch when he’s here late, but with all the girls here, I’m not sure where he will be.

“I’m probably not, kid,” he grunts.

“Why not?” Taegan tilts his head in question.

“You scared we’re going to not be enough protection for your daughter-in-law, Alpha?” Carli lifts her brow in question.

“I’m not any kind of protection,” Simone raised her hand, taking a sip of her wine.

“I’m pregnant,” Courtney proclaimed, as if to explain why she wouldn’t be any help if a situation arose.

“Well, with me and Quinn, I think she’s got all the protection she needs,” Carli huffs.

Max looks at her with annoyance.

“You don’t think so?” Carli challenged.

“I’ll be staying awake. It won’t be long until Axel is back anyway.”

Carli scoffs, “I could take you,” she mutters.

“I bet you could too,” Quinn giggles. “Alpha Max won’t fight women. He will let you win.”

“That’s fucking sexist!” Carli scoffs.

“It’s not. It’s sweet,” I defended Max, walking over to him and offering him some cake and a brownie, giving him a reassuring smile.

Axel had told me once that not sparing with women was something Harriet had asked of Max at the beginning of them being mates, and he upheld his promise not to since then.

Axel asked me if I cared if he spared with women, willing to stop if I wished, but it didn’t bother me. It’s work. I’ve seen him spar with a few. There is nothing sexual about it.

I’ve been in a relationship where I was told to stay away from the opposite sex. I know how it feels to be at the other end of that. It’s unhealthy and feels icky. No way was I going to be like that with Axel.

Max did not have that trust in his relationship and is just respecting the bond with his mate, even if it is not there anymore. I don’t want others to think badly of him for that.

“Thanks, Bailey,” he grunts, taking the plate from me.

I smile warmly, “Want some coffee to go with it?”

The corners of his mouth lifted at hearing that. “Please.”

Carli, probably sensing my protectiveness, leaves Max alone from that point. She and Quinn start discussing fighting tips and moves, and I hum to myself as I move around my kitchen, preparing a pot of coffee for Max and anyone else who wants it.

“You’re a good one, Bailey,” Courtney murmurs, gently bumping me as she slides over beside me on the counter. “My uncle is gruff, but not sexist. You interjected yourself gracefully, ending the argument on both sides before it got out of hand with only a few words. Good job.”

“I don’t like anyone picking on my family,” I whispered.

“I know. I could see that,” she smiles at me.

“Carli has a thing about being underestimated because she’s a girl,” Simone moved to my other side, helping to arrange coffee cups on the counter. “Parker’s dad used to treat her as less than for being a warrior and a woman, so when she feels like she is being belittled she gets defensive.”

She can probably also tell Max doesn’t like her. He doesn’t really hide his distaste for Carli very well. I get that, but I’m still not going to be okay with her picking on Max. He’s a sweetheart and doesn’t deserve that.

Some people just don’t mesh well, and that’s fine. They only have to tolerate each other for a bit longer.

I fill a mug for Max and another for me once the coffee is done dripping, carrying them to him and softly sitting down on the floor beside him.

“Thanks,” he mutters as I pass his cup to him.

“You are welcome, and thank you.”

He gave me a confused look. “For what?”

I pat his knee, smiling sweetly at him. “For sacrificing all your sleep for us. For keeping us safe when Axel is working. You’re a good man, Max.”

His cheeks redden in embarrassment. “Stop it,” he sputters, placing his rough hand over mine. “I’m just doing what I should.”

“I think you do much more than you should. You really go above and beyond, Max. You put up with a lot, and I’m grateful. I know Axel is too.”

He grips my hand, then leans over and kisses my head. “Thanks, sweetheart.”

I rested my head on his shoulder, watching Calum and Taegan racing hot wheels on the floor, enjoying a moment with my mate’s father in the midst of a girl’s night.

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Axel POV

The house is quiet when I’m finally done with patrols at midnight, but I know that Bailey had all the girls over while I was running patrols. They must have gone to bed earlier than expected. Casey is out on a search team until morning, so Courtney is staying the night, but Parker, Rick and Vincent walk back with me as I head back home.

“Damn, your Luna can drink,” Rick whistles softly as we walk in, eyeing the tower of white claw cans between her and Quinn where they are passed out at the kitchen table. Simone is lying on the floor in a mess of toys, Calum and Taegan are asleep on either side of her, and Courtney is snoring on the couch.

Parker and Vincent’s kids are sleeping at my aunt and uncle’s house, and with the way Parker is scrutinizing Carli, I can tell she is in for another punishment when he gets her alone.

“Not in the open forest this time, please,” I muttered, glaring at him.

He smirks guiltily. “I’m taking her to bed. Don’t worry.”

My beautiful mate is leaning on my dad’s shoulder, her eyes fluttering softly in her sleep. She has the throw from the couch wrapped around her, and though my dad is awake, he’s being extra careful to keep still to prevent her from waking.

“Hey,” I whispered down to him.

“Hey yourself. How were patrols? Catch anything?”

I shook my head. “No new scents. Casey went out with a team to do a sweep of a neighboring town. We’ll see if anything turns up.”

He sighs, tucking the blanket tighter around Bailey when a corner of it slips off her shoulders. “This is getting fucking ridiculous. If that prick would just make a damn move, I would feel much better. I don’t like all this waiting around for something to happen.”

“Yeah, I don’t either. I’m anxious about mom too.”

Dad makes a face hearing me say that. Without the anti-venom, mom is slowly dying from the poison from the vampire bite. There is no telling how she is doing right now or if she is even alive.



I know that, just like me, he's up and down with the way he feels towards my mother. Yeah, she fucked up, hugely, but she is still my mom and his former mate. She needs to pay for what she did, but I, just like he does, I'm sure, would like some closure with her. I don't want her to die without seeing her one last time.

I bent down to pick Bailey up, freeing him to start moving around. He rotates his stiff shoulder, then moves to the couch to get Courtney to carry her back to the guest room while I go back to lay Bailey in our bed.

When I come back out, the other men whisper their good-byes, helping their own mates out the door. Quinn wakes and is walking holding Rick's hand, but Simone is in a sleepy daze, snuggling against Vincent's chest as he whispers nonsense to her and carries her out. Carli is tossed over Parker's shoulder, still deeply asleep. I have a feeling she won't be asleep for long. He is gripping her upper thighs in a way that makes it look like he's about to rip her pants off.

I lift my handsome little boy up off the ground and carry him to his room, dad following behind me with Calum, setting Calum on the bottom bunk while I manage to get Taegan on the top one and under the covers without waking him.

Walking out of his room together, dad then yawns and stretches after closing the door. "What a night. You might want to get those cheesecakes in the fridge so they don't go bad," he tells me, nodding to the 2 half-eaten cheesecakes on the counter. I cover them with plastic wrap, then slide them in the fridge as dad works to get all the toys off the ground and into the basket Bailey keeps them in.

"Everything go okay tonight with the girls?" I ask him, and he sends me a genuine smile, something he doesn't do often.

"I like my daughter-in-law," he states, as if that answers my question.

"Uh, great. You're stuck with her, so I'm glad to hear that," I laughed dryly.

"She's a good one. Make sure you always treat her well. Don't make the same mistakes I did, son."

I furrowed my brows in confusion. Where is this coming from? "Dad, are you okay? Did something happen?"

He shakes his head. "No, I'm just tired and my mind is wandering. Thinking of shit from the past," he sighs, then pockets his phone and keys to head out. "I'll meet you guys at breakfast."

I stared at him for several seconds, trying to decipher what might be going on in his head. "Okay, dad. Thanks for keeping an eye on them tonight."

"Yep," he waves as he walks out into the night.

## Chapter 65 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Antonio POV

“My Lord, we found a lead,” Felix came striding into my office, an anxious look on his face. The debris and leaves covering his clothes and tucked in his hair suggest that he ran all the way here.

“What did you find?” I leaned forward, alarmed by Felix’s expression. We have been scouring the area between our coven and the town my Rina once lived in, and haven’t come across any signs of them. None. If Felix found something but it was making him anxious, the lead must be concerning.

Felix shifted nervously on his feet. “I know you said to stay away from the house of the Lady’s childhood, but I had a hunch.”

“A hunch?” I asked, raising my brows. “You went against my order on a hunch?” The hunch had better have paid off. I don’t take kindly to my men disobeying any of my orders, and if this were to have further hindered my love’s relationship with her family, he would pay.

“My Lord, I apologize, but I sensed something was off. There was odd movement around the area of the house. I didn’t want to miss an opportunity by waiting. I’m glad I didn’t. We found his car. The car of the new wolf. Levi Sullivan. It was found in the small garage attached to the house. I had the registration and VIN numbers checked, and it was in fact his.”

A smile spread on my face. “That is fantastic.” He lucked out. I’m elated we finally have a lead. We had been looking all over for the car, but nothing checked out.

“I thought so too, but that wasn’t it. The reason I felt the need to check was because a neighbor had been mauled to death. The house of Lady Rina’s mother had signs of the two of them hiding out there, but the presence was faint. Very faint. The neighbor that was killed happened days ago and he had a recreational vehicle that was missing, stolen after his death. The humans ruled the death an animal attack, but the vehicle missing raised some questions.”

“Did you handle it?” I asked, getting up from my chair. If there was ever a lead, I plan on being the one to follow it. This situation, however, is more concerning than just finding them. They killed a human. That is not allowed in our world. We are to stay out of human affairs, and the new wolf broke that law. He needs to be put down.

“I implanted the idea that the camper was left at an RV site and stolen from there, not the neighbor’s home. It being stolen from another location would sever the connection between the missing RV and the animal attack.”

“Good.” I made my way down the hall and took the stairs to the foyer. “Ready a car.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

As he leaves for the garage, Rina emerges from the drawing room, eyeing me questioningly.

“Where are you off to?” She asked as she scrutinized my features. I’m sure she can sense my urgency. I want to leave her in the dark, but I won’t. Not when it comes to her daughter. I made that mistake already.

“Felix found a lead,” I told her.

Her eyes lit up, “He found them?”

“No, my love. He found where they were. We are heading there now to hunt.”

She sets her face in a stubborn expression, and I know what she is going to say before the words are out of her mouth. “I am coming with you.”

“It could be dangerous. I would prefer for you to stay here,” I tried to argue, but I know it was in vain.

She narrows her eyes at me. “Not a chance. I will grab my shoes.”

I sighed, rubbing my hand over my chin. No point in arguing. She will not back down.

I send a quick, benevolent prayer to her ancestor above to keep her and her family safe.

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Bailey POV

Today is the day that the Miami crew heads back home. Taegan has been a pouty mess all day. He is convinced that Rosie is his mate and that Parker is the devil. Parker is still unfriendly towards the idea of them possibly being mates.

Carli invited us to come down to Miami soon to visit, and promised that her and the kids would be back for my Luna ceremony, but he is still upset that they’re going home.

Taegan is sitting in his bean bag chair, his arms crossed over his chest with a deep scowl on his face while I try to get his shoes on his feet. This is my 3rd attempt, after removing fuzzies for the

second time from his socks. I must have gotten them this time because he didn't complain as I slipped his shoes over his socks.

"Mommy, can we move down to Miami?"

I smirked at him. "Do you know where Miami is?"

He shrugs. "Where the ab-li-gators are?"

"Alligators," I corrected him.

"That's what I said."

"Sure it is," I grinned, "No, we can't move down to Miami. Your dad has to stay here, and do you want to be without daddy? I don't. People depend on him here so, in a way, they are depending on us to stay here and support him too."

Taegan pouts and rests his face in his hands. "They can depend on my left foot. I want to go with Rosie."

I chuckle at his cuteness. He is getting Max's attitude, which is cute in his miniature body.

"Are you both ready?" Axel walked into Taegan's room.

"No," Taegan grunts.

Axel laughs, helping me up off the ground and lifting Taegan into his arms. "It will be okay. You will see them again before you know it."

"But, daddy, you said we were supposed to live with our mates. How can I live with her if she leaves?"

"Remember what grandpa said," I told him, kissing his pouty cheek.

"18 is so long! Brother Casey told me I had 16 years before Rosie turns 18. Cousin Calum can't even count to 16!"

"Can you count to 16?" I lifted my brow.

Taegan scoffs, "I'm not a baby."

"That's right. You're not a baby, which means you know how to wait like a big boy. I promise you will see Rosie again soon. This isn't a long time good-bye. Just bye for now," Axel tells him in a kind but firm voice. I love watching Axel and the patient way he handles our son. Taegan sighs loudly and just rests his chin on Axel's shoulder.

We walked together to Nate and Fiona's house. Vincent's men are waiting in an SUV and Nate is taking another to drop them off. I had wanted to ride to the airport with them, but Axel and Max were both against it. They wanted me to stay on the pack lands where they knew it was safe.

Taegan wiggles free from Axel's arms, running over to Rosie who is toddling around on the porch while Courtney, Quinn, Fiona, and Stephanie hug Carli and Simone. Addison is off to the side holding Reese. I noticed that she always gravitates to the babies.

The men are all grunting good byes and well wishes. Casey has Simone's baby, and is whispering something in her little baby ear that is making Vincent smirk. I'm curious to know what he's telling her. Probably something about how werewolves are better than vampires or something like that. That seems to be the ongoing feud between Vincent and Casey, though Vincent doesn't contribute much to the feud.

"16 years isn't long. I can count to 16 really fast! Mommy says I will come see you and your mommy says you will come see me," Taegan is rambling on to Rosie, who is barely paying attention.

Parker keeps throwing Taegan glares and menacing looks, which makes both me and Axel chuckle. Taegan isn't affected at all. He was totally focused on telling Rosie that he would miss her and would see her soon.

As Axel is shaking hands with Parker and thanking Vincent for the renovations to the pack, Simone gives me a tear-filled good-bye and then Carli pulls me off to the side.

"You got this, Bailey. You're already a damn good Luna. Just be yourself and you'll do great."

I smiled warmly at her. "Thank you. I'm feeling a lot more ready after hearing all your advice."

"If you ever need anything, just call," she hugged me. "And I'm sorry about the thing with Max the other night. I apologized to him, and got a grunt back, so I think he's okay, but I wanted to apologize to you too."

No, I didn't like her picking on my mate's father, but I'm happy she apologized and is owning up to it. "Thanks. Future visits will be more fun without any strife."

"I know," she giggles. "He might be my daughter's grandpa-in-law one day."

I smirked at her. "He does want a granddaughter."

"Well, maybe he will get news of one soon," she wiggles her eyebrows, then leans in and whispers in my ear. "Your scent has changed since I came here. You should have Courtney take you to the clinic to get checked out."

My eyes go wide at what she is suggesting, making her laugh. "Call me and tell me the results."

As she skips away to tell Addison bye and get her baby, I see Simone and Vincent smirking at me from the car.

"No way," I whispered.

"No way, what?" Axel asks.

Did I tell him what Carli just told me?

No. I should wait and make sure.

I pulled myself together and smiled at him. "Um, nothing. I just can't believe they are leaving already."

"Already? I feel like they've been here forever," he grunts.

Just then, Taegan started growling at Parker, who went to retrieve his daughter from Taegan's eternal hug.

Axel sighs. "I got him."

I nodded and watched as he put Taegan in a football hold and apologized to Parker, shaking his head one final time.

We stood there outside the Childes' home, waving as our Miami friends and family drove off to the airport.

"Man, I can't wait for Carli to see the surprise that's waiting for her when she gets to her office tomorrow," Casey smiles widely, waving to the cars much longer than the rest of us.

"Why? What did you do?" Courtney asked in a suspicious tone.

"Paybacks a bitch," he snickers.

"How did you do something from here? What did you do?" Courtney huffed.

"Just gave her a taste of her own medicine. Mitch and Mark were more than willing to help."

I giggled at the disapproving look Courtney gave Casey. "Parker is going to murder you if you pasted pictures of her naked all over her walls."

"She was clothed," he smirks. "Man, I hope they record her reaction."

Chapter 66 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

“Are you sure you want to do this test without Axel first? I mean, your scent has changed, but I figured it was due to the marking and mating and your body adjusting. You might not even be pregnant,” Courtney tells me in a private room at the clinic.

I told her last night at dinner that I wanted to check, but asked her not to tell anyone else yet. At breakfast this morning, she announced that she was taking me to work with her so she could do a routine checkup, claiming I hadn’t had one in a while, and told Axel to manage by himself at the office without me this morning.

Taegan still went to work with Axel, but Max came with us to the clinic. He’s currently waiting uncomfortably outside the room, thinking I’m getting a pap smear done after Courtney informed him it was going to be a womanly appointment.

“There being a possibility that I’m not pregnant is exactly why I didn’t want to tell Axel yet. He wants another one just as much as everyone else seems to want me to be pregnant. He’s had enough bad news lately. I don’t want to needlessly add to it.”

“He’s going to lose his mind if you are,” Courtney smirks at me, getting my arm prepped to draw my blood.

“Max might lose his mind more,” I giggled.

“They want a girl so badly,” she shakes her head. “Max needs a granddaughter to channel all that protective energy into. I don’t know what he is going to do with his life when he doesn’t have to guard you around the clock anymore.”

I smiled sadly. Poor Max. I wish we could find Harriet so he can have some closure and move on. I think he is so protective over me and Taegan because of his guilt about the way he treated her.

Harriet had a pitiable life here, but she brought a lot of it on herself. No matter how she felt about Max or how much she misunderstood his motives for trying to get my mother away from the vampire coven, she shouldn’t have betrayed him like she did. She manipulated many people because of her own insecurities instead of doing the right thing and talking with Max about it. If she just talked to Max, he would have done whatever she wished to improve their relationship. I think he was trying to be considerate of her and her fated mate by stepping away and giving her space. I want him to be able to move on and find happiness for himself. He deserves it.

Communication. It's the key to any healthy relationship. Miscommunication seems to be the cause of most heartache.

"How long until you get the test results back?" I asked Courtney as she finished drawing my blood. She places a bandaid over the needle mark, then wraps the vials of my blood with sticker labels.

"These should take about an hour, but this," she opens a drawer and pulls out a sterile cup, "will only take minutes. Fill it up while I drop these off in the lab."

I quickly do my business in the connected bathroom, and when Courtney gets back she dips a test strip in the cup, then grins widely as it starts changing color.

"I want you to chant 'girl, girl, girl' each night before you go to bed and think only sweet, girly thoughts for the next several days, because if this is another dominant little alpha male wanting all the mates, I don't know if my son can handle that. He needs a less dominant cousin this time."

"You mean...." my eyes went wide, and I stared between her and the strip resting on the top of the cup.

"You're pregnant, Luna Bailey. Congrats! Let me call Axel over and we can get you in for an ultrasound to see how far along you are."

"I'm really pregnant!?" I put both my hands over my smiling mouth, in shock but also elated that I have good news for Axel and Max. They need a little good news right now.

"Yes! Now we can start planning all our pregnant shenanigans together. Want me to let Max in now or do you want to wait for Axel to get here to tell him?"

Tears are filling my eyes. "I don't know! Can I tell Max first? Will Axel care?"

Courtney shrugs, "I don't think he will mind."

Courtney opened the door, still staring at me waiting for an answer, but when Max saw from where he was propped against the wall in the hallway, the tears streaming down my cheeks, he pushed off of the wall with an alarmed look on his face and pushed past his niece to come over to me.

Max kneels on the ground in front of me, examining my body as if to check for injury while pulling my hands away from my face.

"What? What the hell happened?! Are you hurt?"

I shook my head, biting my lips to keep from sobbing.

Courtney chuckles from the doorway. "Like I said, that protective energy needs another outlet. Sweet and girly thoughts, Bailey. I'm going to get your mate."

"What the hell is she talking about? What's wrong? I know she's my niece, but I'll...I'll punish her mate if you want me to. What happened? Did she say something to make you cry?"

I smiled at his worried and lost expression, gripping his hands back. I'm touched he is willing to punish Casey if Courtney made me upset, even though it's ridiculous.

"I'm crying because I'm happy," I tell him in a soft, shaking voice.

"That doesn't make any fucking sense! What the hell happened? Was it the needles? Want me to go stab her father with a couple to make you feel better?"

I laughed breathlessly and shook my head. Guess Max is finding out before his son to protect Casey and Nate from Max's assumptions.

"You're going to be a grandpa again," I whisper before a sob breaks free.

His eyes go wide, then he looks at the cup still sitting on the medical table with the test strip sitting across it.

"You're pregnant?!"

I nod, tears running down my face and dripping onto where his hands are gripping mine.

"It's a girl, right?!"

At that question I laugh, choking as it turns into another sob.

"It's too early for that," I choked out eventually. I know werewolf pregnancies go fast, but I'm sure it's still far too early to know the gender.

"Oh. Right," Max mutters, looking flustered. "Shit, another baby. I'm going to get another grandbaby," his thumbs are rubbing the backs of my hands furiously as he tries to process the news. A slow smile creeps on his face, then he stands, pulling me up in his arms. "I'm getting another grandbaby!"

I laugh as he twirls me around the room. I'm glad I told him first. If he is this excited, I can't even imagine how excited Axel will be.

"Oh, you amazing girl!" he sings, then sets my feet on the ground, gripping my arms to hold me steady. "I'm getting another grandbaby!"

I giggle, then wipe my eyes on my sleeves before he takes notice and starts mopping my face with the hem of his shirt.

“Is she going to get Axel?”

I nodded, grinning up at his excited face. “You were the first to know. Are you disappointed I didn’t make you a plaque like Courtney and Casey did for Nate?”

He grimaces, but only momentarily as I quickly add, “It would say ‘World’s Best Grandpa’ instead of world’s okayest. I’m glad my babies will all get to have you for a grandfather.”

His cheeks heat and he pulls me into a hug. I’m sure to hide his embarrassment.

“So I know before Lucy, huh? I can’t wait to be the one to tell her you told me first.”

I snort. “Be nice.”

“I’m kidding. Kind of.”

I rolled my eyes but let it go. They always need something healthy to bicker about.

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Axel POV

“Hey Ax. Your Luna needs you at the clinic,” Court tells me by mind link.

“Why? Is she okay?”

“Go see,” Courtney tells me in a taunting tone.

“Fuck, Courtney. Is something wrong?”

“Nothing is wrong. She just needs you? Uncle Max is with her now, but she needs you, so hurry your butt up and get over here.”

Shit. Why the hell can she not just tell me? Now I’m going to think the worst until I get there.

“Rick, I got to cut you off,” I told my Beta mid-sentence as he was explaining to me an issue his dad had in the mining plot this morning. The excavator broke and the part is a custom piece. He wanted to buy another one to use while waiting for the new part, but needed my approval on the budget for one. We just bought a new washplant this season, so the budget is going to be tight.

“If we need it, we need it. Approve it, and I’ll sign the forms when I get back.”

“Where are you going?” he asked, piling up his documents he had laid out all over my desk.

“Court said Bailey needed me at the clinic. I don’t know when I’ll be back.”

“Everything okay?”

I shrugged, not sure what to tell him. “Courtney was being a brat and wouldn’t tell me.”

He furrows his brows with a curious expression, then shrugs too. “It can’t be bad then. Let me know if you need anything.”

“Will do,” I murmured as he left, then turned my attention to my son.

Taegan is lying on my couch on a facetime call on my iPad with Carli so he can talk to Rosie.

“Hey, bud. It’s time to say bye. We need to go see your mama at the doctor.”

“Aww, but daddy, I just got on.” He turns the tablet and Rosie’s smiling face appears, then Carli’s as she waves.

“Hey Alpha. You wanna do me a favor and order your Gamma to answer my calls?”

“Maybe later,” I smirked, remembering the prank Casey pulled on his mate’s cousin.

He went through Simone’s phone and took every unflattering picture of her face he could find, then had them photoshopped to look even worse and made a collage wallpaper out of them. He had his friends from Miami who had access to her office do to her office what I did to him, then took it a step further and did it to Parker’s office too.

“You can call back later, Taegan. We have to go.”

“I don’t want to go, daddy. Can’t I stay here until you’re done? I promise I won’t move. I’ll stay right here.”

I narrow my eyes at him, and he pouts out his lips as Carli chuckles on the tablet.

“You stay right here. Rick is next door if you need anything.”

“Okay!” he grins, then goes back to talking on the call.

Taegan listens well, and in the packhouse there isn’t an issue with security. He’ll be fine, and I can send dad over once I get to the clinic.

“Stay here,” I reiterated. “Grandpa will come check on you once I get to your mom.”

“I know! I will!” He does a bad job at hiding the irritation in his voice from me interrupting his call again. I sigh, but leave him be. I send a quick mind link to Rick to listen and watch for him, and he agrees to keep his office door open until I get back, keeping an eye out for him.

As I stride towards the clinic, I get another mind link from Quinn. “Alpha, a delivery truck is here. The gate guards say it’s a furniture delivery.”

“It’s for Bailey’s office. They should be on the log. You can let them through if the driver checks out.”

Quinn was silent for a moment, then a few minutes later, “He’s clear. He’s on the list and his ID matched.”

“Send him through. I’m going to the clinic to check on something with Bailey. Can you ask your mate to sign for the delivery?”

“Sure! Everything okay?”

“I don’t know yet,” I almost growled.

“Okay, let me know!”

I cut off the mind link, slightly aggravated. I would like to know first! I hope everything is fine. It has to be. Dad would have told me she was not okay.

I pick up my pace, running the rest of the way.

67 Smells

## Chapter 67 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

When I go into the clinic, Courtney is at the nurse’s desk, a huge smirk on her annoying face and a clipboard in her hands.

“Why the hell are you smirking, brat? Couldn’t you just tell me what was going on? Where is she?”

“You messed with my mate, I can mess with you a little bit,” she laughs. “Bailey is fine. She just has some news for you before I get her back for another procedure.”

Anxiety knots in my chest. “What kind of procedure?”

She shrugs, and I’m tempted to put her in a headlock.

I'm forced to follow behind her as she walks at a leisurely pace around the halls, and I'm almost growling from my impatience. I'm not in the mood for her petty payback. Not when it comes to my mate.

I can smell Bailey's scent as we get further into the clinic, and I end up pushing past Courtney and jogging the last several yards to the door where I can sense leads to her.

When I open the door, Bailey is being held by my father as she sobs against his chest. He is patting her back, whispering something in a tender voice, but I don't have time to focus on his words as I reach for her and pull her away from him.

"What happened? What's wrong?!" I demanded, holding her face in my hands. Even with her tears streaming down her face, she is smiling, her dimples adorably pronounced on her cheeks.

"I'm pregnant," she sobs, her voice breaking into a breathless laugh.

My eyes go wide, and I look at dad, who is also sobbing like a giant baby, and Courtney, who is smiling in the doorway.

"Pregnant? With a baby?!"

Courtney scoffs, "No, with a penguin. Yes, with a baby, you weirdo. What kind of question is that?"

"You're pregnant?!" My face feels like it is breaking from the smile spreading on it. "Is it a girl?"

This time it's Bailey who scoffs. "Your dad asked the same thing."

"It's too early for that, genius. Goddess, your IQ is taking a hit from the news," Courtney mutters, but I'm too happy to care about the insult.

"You're really pregnant? You're having my baby?"

She nods her head with a huge grin, her warm hands resting on my chest. "We're having a baby."

"We're having a baby!" I yelled, jumping back. I ran out in the hall, jumping and skipping on the hard floor, my fists pumping through the air. "We're having a baby!"

I can barely register everyone's cheers and applause over my own enthusiastic chanting. "WE'RE HAVING A BABY!"

Good Goddess, this day couldn't get any better than it is right now. Nothing can ruin my mood.

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Taegan POV

“Hey, little alpha. We have to go outside for a minute.” Brother Rick is standing at daddy’s door, waving his hand for me to come with him.

“Daddy said I can stay here,” I told him. Adults are being annoying today. Mommy left me to go play with Cousin Courtney. Daddy tried to make me get off the screen while talking to Miss Carli and Rosie. Now, Brother Rick is bugging me too.

“Well, your dad asked me to watch you, and I have to go outside for a minute. You’re going to have to come with me.”

“It’s okay, Taegan. I have to go anyway and Rosie can’t work the phone by herself. I can call your mom’s phone tonight so you can talk again,” Miss Carli tells me.

My lips puff out, not liking having to get off the screen. I miss Rosie and Miss Carli already. Mommy said we couldn’t go with them, but I wanted to. Nobody is doing what I want lately.

“Fine,” I muttered, then sucked face on the screen over Rosie and waved to Miss Carli before I hang up.

I gave Brother Rick my angry face. “I want to stay here and play my game.”

“Bring the iPad with you. The wifi works right outside. We won’t be gone long, though. I just have to sign something for your mom’s new furniture.”

“Why can’t I stay here, then?” I cross my arms, not wanting to walk around if it is only for a little bit. If we were going to see Miss Quinn at the fighting building I would want to come. Her friends are pretty. I don’t want to just go outside, though.

“Because I’m watching you. That means you stay with me.” I don’t like the look Brother Rick is giving me. He is trying to make me feel like I have to listen and don’t have a choice. If I’m a little alpha, why do I have to listen? He should listen to me.

“Mommy said-”

“Uh uh. Don’t start that. If I were to call your mommy right now, you know as well as I do she would tell you to listen to me. Part of learning to be a good leader is learning to be a good follower and learning how to listen. You are not listening very well at all today. I heard you arguing with your dad too. Come on. Put the iPad down. You can play it when we get back.”

I growled at him, giving him my meanest look that always makes Cousin Calum give in. Grandpa would give in, but Brother Rick didn’t.

“Up. Now.” he gives me the annoying look again, where his eyebrows go down and his eyes look mean. He is pointing his finger out the door. I want to kick him, but mommy would be mad at me.

“Fine!” I told him. I jumped off daddy’s couch then stomped my feet as I walked past Brother Rick. I’m telling grandpa he was mean to me. Grandpa always lets me do whatever I want, and doesn’t try to tell me what to do.

I stomp out the front door, my arms still squeezing my chest and I make my face look as mad as I feel.

Stupid Brother Rick. I’m telling Miss Quinn on him too. She will make him buy me donuts and say sorry.

There is a big truck in the front, and I stomp up to it, kicking the big tire, wishing I could kick Brother Rick instead.

He walks around to the driver guy, then takes a paper from him, signing it against the big truck.

“Where’s mommy?” I asked.

“At the clinic with your dad and Alpha Max.”

“Why?” I ask. I thought Mommy was going to work with Cousin Courtney. Daddy said something about doctors though. “Is mommy sick?”

“I don’t know, kid. Your grandpa should be on his way soon and he can tell you what’s going on.”

I gave him another mean look. He doesn’t give good answers like daddy and grandpa. “I’m telling grandpa on you,” I told him.

He laughs, making me more mad. “You go right ahead. You’re in a bit of a bad mood today, aren’t you?”

Everyone is making me mad today. No one ever does what I want to do. Just grandpa. I want grandpa.

I want to sit down, but the ground is dirty. Mommy said not to get my clothes dirty. I don’t like the dirt anyway. It feels yucky on my hands and clothes. I want to be in daddy’s office where there is no dirt and I can play my games.

Everyone tells me no and I’m little. I’m not little. I can be by myself. Calum’s little. He can’t be by himself because he makes all the mess. He likes to be dirty. I hate it. That means I’m big and he’s little.

“I want grandpa!” I yelled at Brother Rick.

He whistles under his breath. “You sure aren’t making me regret not having kids today. Do you need a nap? Is that the issue?”

“If I say yes, can we go back to daddy’s office?”

“Nope. Not until the furniture is inside. Your grandpa is on his way though. Your dad just told me.”

I smile. Not a nice smile. A mean smile. Grandpa is going to kick Brother Rick for me.

He sighs, then squats down so he isn’t taller than me any more. One push and he would be sitting on the dirt. I want to do the one push, but then he might tell mommy. I’ll wait for grandpa and have grandpa do the push.

“What’s wrong with you today? Why are you acting out all of a sudden?”

My mean smile turns into a regular mean look again. “You’re being bossy. Mommy was acting funny at bedtime and this morning. Rosie and Miss Carli went to live with the ab-li-gators and mommy said no to me. Then Rosie has to hang up because you and daddy were not nice!”

“Ahh,” Brother Rick makes a weird smile like he is making fun of me. “I know what your problem is. You’re love sick. Poor kid.” He messes up my hair, then dodges me when my hand tries to slap him away. He laughs, and I growl. I don’t like him making fun of me.

“Mommy said be nice!”

“Yeah, yeah. Mommy said. I got it.” he stands back up, still laughing.

Just wait till my grandpa gets here.

I walked away, over to the chairs in the front of the pack house and sat down to wait for grandpa. When I sit down, I watch as the driver lowers a big, flat, metal thing on the back of the truck, making it go all the way to the ground.

I bet it would be fun to play on. He has some kind of controller in his hand, and when he presses the buttons, it goes up and down.

I want to do it.

The man goes up, then comes back down with a big, big square thing with blue blankets around it and the clear stuff mommy puts on the top of leftover food. He has it on two wheels somehow, and that looks fun too, but I want to play with the remote thing.

I watched the guy do it again, and then Grandpa came as I was thinking about how to ask Brother Rick if I could play with it.

Good. Grandpa says yes. Brother Rick is being mean today.

“Grandpa!” I jumped off the chair and ran over to him, but then slowed down when I saw the weird look on his face. “Grandpa, were you crying?”

Brother Rick turns and stares at Grandpa, making a face like he is worried too.

“Is the Luna okay, Alpha?” he asks.

Mommy! Is mommy okay?!

“Grandpa! Mommy? Is-”

“She’s fine,” he smiled. “She just had some good news. She will tell you later. I don’t know if I should be the one to tell you yet.”

Brother Rick’s eyes go really big, and he starts to smile like a weirdo. Why is he happy that grandpa was crying?

“Is she....?” Rick asks.

Grandpa makes a big smile, not paying any attention to me, then his eyes go funny like he is doing the thing where he talks in his mind to someone. I don’t like it when they do that. It makes me feel left out. Mommy says it’s not nice to leave people out.

Grandpa will say yes anyway, and now he is making me mad too, so I decide to go to the back of the truck while grandpa and Brother Rick are doing the weird eye thing to try out the remote. I can do it. I saw the guy do it two times now.

When I went to the back of the truck, the truck was darker than I thought it would be. It smells funny too. It smells like stinky trash, like when the trash people didn’t pick up Grandma Lucy’s trash cans for two weeks. Mommy says they were going on strike, whatever that means. It smelled really bad.

That’s what it smells like in the back of the truck, and it is so dark, it's hard to see.

I’m not a big baby, though. I can do it. I’m not afraid.

I pushed the up arrow on the remote. It's easy. It goes up, but makes me stumble a little bit.

I look around to the side, and see grandpa and Brother Rick still with funny eyes, smiling weirdly at each other, and Grandpa keeps rubbing his eyes. I hate being left out. Grandpa is

being mean too. He didn't even say hi to me like he usually does. He knows something about mommy and didn't tell me too.

When the truck goes all the way up, I change my mind about being in the truck. It's too dark. I'm not scared. I just don't like the stinky smell and the dark together. When I start to make the metal part go back down, something moves in the dark.

"Oh, Taegan," I hear something whisper, but it's really quiet. Too quiet. I almost didn't hear it. Maybe I'm just hearing things.

"Taegan," I heard my name whispered again in the dark. It's much easier to hear it when the metal isn't moving to go down.

I'm almost all the way back to the ground. I looked around at grandpa, and I was about to yell at him to come get me, not scared, but worried about what the voice would do if the metal moving again made it where I couldn't hear it.

Before I yell out to grandpa, the yucky smell gets worse, then a really sharp smell, like the stuff mommy cleans with but stronger, so strong it hurts, is over my nose on a washcloth, and it makes me sleepy. Too sleepy. My eyes close, and I really do feel scared now. Everything is dark.

Grandpa!

My mouth won't work. Why won't it work?

GRANDPA!

Even my head feels dark, and before it makes everything dark, I hear the whispers again.

"I got you, you little bastard brat. I thought I was going to have to sneak out of here and go find your mom myself. Let's see who your mom chooses now."

68 Taken

Chapter 68 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Max POV

These damn eyes. What the fuck is wrong with me? I got a bit of good fucking news and I'm crying like a damn baby.

A baby. I can't believe they're having another baby.

Please, goddess, let it be a girl. Taegan needs a sister to protect and to help mellow out his little womanizing nonsense. His 'all the mates' bullshit and the way he chases after all the pretty girls. Having a sister would make him more conscious of how he treats other girls.

I need a little granddaughter because picturing Bailey's adorable face with my son's and Taegan's blue eyes makes my chest tighten up in a good way. She would be the prettiest little thing in the world. I would love her and cherish her so much. She would be loved more than any other little girl in the world.

I always wanted a little girl. I was too fucking insecure in my relationship with my mate to ask her for more kids, but I wanted them. I would have loved to have a daughter. Courtney was adorable as a baby. She became a lot less adorable after becoming an adult and being mated to that bra-wearing heathen.

"So, Luna is really pregnant?" Farak asks, a goofy grin on his face.

"Yeah. Don't go telling Taegan yet. I'm sure those two want to do that themselves. Though, after Axel's little celebration lap he fucking did around the clinic, half the damn pack probably knows by now."

"Victory lap, huh?" Farak chuckles like a damn school girl. "I bet he can't wait to tell Casey how much more superior his sperm is now."

I snort at that. I can't wait to tell Nate that Bailey called me the best grandpa in the world, while he only gets 'okayest'.

Fuck my eyes. It's like a faucet was turned on. I keep rubbing the hell out of them trying to turn them off, but they just won't quit.

"Does this mean the Alpha will be gone the rest of the day?"

I sigh. Shit, Axel will probably want to spend at the least the rest of the morning with Bailey. "I don't know. They're doing an ultrasound right now. I don't know how long that shit lasts" I wanted to stay for it, but Courtney said I couldn't. I started to argue with her, then she so fucking crudely informed me the ultrasound involved a rod being inserted in my daughter-in-law's lady parts, and I didn't want to stay for that. I don't want to even imagine Bailey's lady parts. Courtney got a lot more fucking crude after mating with that damn Gamma.

"I'll call Nate and see if between him and Steph we can get Axel's training and patrol shifts covered. I can cover the late night search party."

"I can help cover for him too. If he's staying with Bailey and Taegan I can--"

“Alpha, you’re celebrating too,” Farak gave me an annoying pitiable look, probably because of the damn tears. “You should celebrate with your grandson. The little fart is in an awful mood today. He’s been asking for you since his dad left. Probably wants you to kick my ass for not bending to his will and letting him stay alone in Alpha’s office.”

Ah, Taegan. In our excitement about having him with us, Axel and I have been spoiling the shit out of the kid, and now he’s getting harder to manage. He listens to Bailey without any issues, but I guess we’re making it hard for everyone else to manage him too.

“Where is Taegan?” I asked out loud. He was just here. I looked over to the side door that the delivery driver backed up to and was hauling the furniture in. I thought he was playing over there.

No sign of him.

“He was pretty upset about having to come outside with me. He wanted to stay in his dad’s office and play his games, but when he started arguing with me, I made him leave the iPad behind. I bet that he ran back in now that you’re here.”

I ran a hand down my face. Those video games are the issue here. I’m going to try and keep him off of them the rest of the day. It is not healthy to be zoned out on a screen so much, and with Axel so busy, he uses the video games as a babysitter.

“I’ll go get him,” I muttered.

I walk through the front doors and make my way to the offices. When I peeked my head into Axel’s office, Taegan wasn’t there. I checked the attached bathroom too, but no Taegan.

Walking back out, I went to the dining room to see if he decided to help himself to the ice cream again.

He wasn’t there.

I check the sitting room and the game room and when I don’t find him at either of those places, panic starts building in my chest.

I walked back to the offices to check his mother’s office. Maybe the kid got curious and wanted to see it first?

The office door was shut, and when I opened it, a horrible smell came wafting out. Like death and decay.

Rogue.

My alarm bells instantly started going off. The furniture was all that was in there. Nothing living. What the hell is the source of the smell, and how did it get in here?

One of the pieces was still wrapped in a moving blanket, and it smelled the strongest. The stench radiating off the blanket was putrid, making my beast push to the surface.

I ran out the side doors, and the smell was faint, but evident where the truck had been parked. I looked around in horror as I noticed the truck was long gone.

“TAEGAN!” I screamed, hoping my assumptions were wrong. I pray that he is just off somewhere, flirting with a group of she-wolves and the rogue stench was just a coincidence. Maybe the driver was rogue and Farak didn’t mention it.

No. This isn’t just the scent of a rogue. It’s feral, like a rogue that is more beast than human. It’s dangerous and not the scent of someone who could hold a 9 to 5 job.

“Alpha, everything okay? You didn’t find him?” Rick asks, jogging over to me from where he was talking to a group of men from the logging camp at the front of the packhouse, then his nose wrinkles as he catches the scent too.

“Geez, the guy said there might be a slight smell because something had died in his truck, but this is...”

“It’s a fucking rogue! Was the driver rogue?!”

Rick’s eyes go wide and he shakes his head. “Human. He was human. Quinn ordered everyone in wolf form to stay clear of the packhouse until-”

I don’t let him finish. I run, then shift into my beast mid stride as I take off after the truck.

Please, goddess, let me be wrong. Let Quinn or Stephanie show up any second with Taegan while feeding the kid ice cream or some shit. Not my Taegan. Please don’t let it be that someone has taken my Taegan. Don’t let it be that monster I suspect it is.

It only takes me a few minutes to reach the front gate, but the few minutes seem like hours as every bad scenario goes running through my head. The truck was just pulling away from the gate when I spotted it still about a mile back. “STOP IT! STOP THAT FUCKING TRUCK!” I roared out through the mind link, alerting every warrior in the pack. I don’t have time to distinguish who is where or who is working the gate. I need it stopped. Now.

Seeing me coming along with the command, the guards instantly shifted, sprinting after the truck as well. I can sense Farak behind me, and in the link I left open, I can hear him barking orders at everyone.

Good. I have one focus, and that is stopping that damn truck.

“Alpha. Alpha Max!” someone is yelling at me in the link, but my goal is set, and I’m not stopping to explain what is happening to anyone.

“Just stop the fucking truck!”

As me and 5 other wolves get near the tail end of the truck, the driver looks in his rear-view mirror and a horrified expression crosses his face.

He hits the accelerator, making the truck take off faster with a jerk. Shit, I can't keep up. I can't go any faster, though I'm trying, and I'm not making any headway at getting closer to the vehicle now, my pace even with his.

That's when a blur zooms past me, not a wolf, but a woman. Addison. A vampire's speed is greater than a wolf's. She is on the truck in seconds, grabbing something from her back pocket and slicing it through the air, making it penetrate the back tire.

The tire explodes, making the truck swerve, then finally stop with a screech on the side of the road.

“Addison, get the driver. Hold him while we search the truck,” Farak ordered.

She tears the door off the driver's side, pulling the frightened driver out and slamming him against the side of the truck.

“Does the cab or does he smell like rogue?” Farak asks.

Addison looks over to us and shakes her head.

I was the first to reach the truck, aside from Addison. I shifted back, then ordered the men around me shifting to get the back of the truck open.

The rogue scent is definitely coming from the back of the truck. If the driver and the cab don't smell like it, that means a rogue was hiding in the back. How did the guards miss it when the truck came in? How did Farak miss it when he was signing for the shit?!

As the men get the tail lift down, my impatience can not wait any longer. I punch the center with enough force, the latch comes undone, then lift the sliding door and leap into the back.

The stench is enough to choke you. This is where he was, where the rogue was hiding. The truck is almost empty, just a few covered pieces of furniture secured to the sides. All of them are covered in blue moving blankets and plastic wrap except for one.

There is a deep huge freezer in the very back, the top of it open and the inside was filthy with debris and dirt.

“Here!” I yelled out to no one in particular, but it was Farak that came up beside me to peer in.

“That's how he got past the guards. The seal probably kept the stench contained, and the driver thought the faint smell was from a rat or something dying in there.”

I growled, turning and jumping down from the back of the truck.

The driver looks about ready to shit his pants with so many of us surrounding him, Addison still holding him firmly. She has his hands restrained behind his back and his face smashed against the side of the truck.

“WHERE IS HE?!” I growled, taking the driver from Addison, gripping him by his throat.
“WHERE IS MY GRANDSON?!”

“Ya-your g-g-grandson?” the man stutters, the smell of urine drifting up to me.

“WHERE IS HE?” I yelled again.

“He is about this tall with blonde hair and blue eyes. He had on jeans and a red pullover and white sneakers,” Farak came beside me.

I can see the realization on the man’s face and know he knows who I’m talking about.

“WHERE THE FUCK IS MY GRANDSON?!”

The man looked around at all of us. These many warriors standing naked and staring at him like we were ready to tear him to pieces made the man piss all over himself again.

“He wa-was s-s-stuck in the back. H-him and th-th-the man started banging on the walls. I pulled over to the side and l-l-let them out.”

“You let them out?!” Farak asked. “Where?”

“Back before the gate. I w-w-was a-about halfway t-to it.”

Farak looks back at a few warriors, nodding at them, and they instantly shift back to run back to check.

“WAS THE BOY OKAY?” I yelled in his face as I worked hard to contain my beast. I don’t know if this man had anything to do with my grandson disappearing, but the need for blood is strong and he, even unknowingly, had a hand in my grandson being taken.

“The boy w-was asleep. Th-th-the guy said he was sc-sc-scared of the dark and passed out. S-s-said that they were looking inside and g-g-got stuck when I closed it.”

My eyes narrow. What kind of shit story is that? How does someone get fucking stuck in the back with a kid and not realize they are being shut in? I grip the man just a bit tighter, but it makes him choke and whimper pathetically. Even if I believed him, I wanted to kill the bastard for being a fucking idiot.

“He’s telling the truth,” Addison tells me. Her arms are crossed, and though she is half my size, she looks lethal with the glare she is wearing.

I growled, then released the hold I had on his throat. “Can you wipe his memory?” I asked Addison. We have a witch who can manipulate memories if Addison can’t.

“I can. Go. I’ll handle this,” she tells me, then takes the man by the collar of his shirt and drags him towards the front of the truck.

I don’t waste any time in shifting back, then sprinting back towards the pack.

Axel. I need to tell my son. Shit, this was supposed to be a happy day for him. How do I tell him I let his son get kidnapped right under my nose?

My Taegan. My poor boy. I have to find you. I’ll let the kid play video games and eat all the fucking ice cream he wants if he just comes back to me. I can’t lose him when I have just got him.

“Alpha Max, we have an issue.” the annoying voice from earlier that was breaking my concentration while trying to get to the truck fills my head.

“If it’s not about my fucking grandson and the bastard who took him, it can fucking wait.”

“I think it is, sir.” The warrior's voice is reserved, solemn. “Two warriors were attacked and killed running patrols. They were taken by surprise. The trail leading away from them and off the pack lands smells strongly of rogue.”

SHIT! SHIT, SHIT, SHIT! If I had only stopped to fucking listen to the damn warrior back then. It’s been minutes, at least 10 or more, since he first tried to alert me in the fucking link.

"I told Beta Quinn, and she's on the trial now," the warrior informs me. "She told me to try and get you again once the link calmed down."

“Get more teams to follow the trail! Someone get my son. Everyone is to aid in the search for my grandson. EVERYONE! Call the fucking towners and the logging camp.”

“Yes, Alpha,” several voices echo in the link.

69 Before Death

Chapter 69 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Axel POV

“Look right there,” the radiology tech points to a pulsing dot on the screen. “That’s our little alpha’s heartbeat,” she smiles.

Bailey finally stopped crying, but right when she stopped, I started. Fuck, I’m so happy. I was so disappointed I missed all of Taegan’s first years, and that I wasn’t with Bailey to help her through the pregnancy. Being able to be there for her through this one, showering her with more love than she can stand, is like a dream come true.

My eyes become too blurry to see, so I rest my head on Bailey’s shoulder, letting her sweet vanilla scent surround me. It’s not just vanilla anymore. I thought it was changing due to being marked, but now I know the spicy hint of nutmeg mixed with her regular scent is from my baby growing inside her.

“I’ll give you both a minute,” the technician said.

“Thank you,” Bailey tells her in her sweet, cheerful voice.

“We’re having a baby,” I whispered.

She giggles, running her fingers through my hair. “We are. Good job. It looks like all you need is one time to implant a new kid inside me.”

I choked out a laugh.

With how far along Bailey was, it's clear that she got pregnant her first few days here.

“I can’t wait to tell Casey,” I muttered.

Bailey giggles. “After hearing about their love life, I think those two would have a million kids by now if Courtney let them. She made him wait until Calum was out of diapers before they started trying again.”

“Diapers,” I repeated in horror. I forgot about diapers.

Calum had some nasty ass diapers. They would stink up the entire packhouse. Courtney tried to get me to change him once, but I threw up before I could even get the thing open all the way.

Blood and carnage; easy. Shit-filled diapers; hard as hell.

I’ll find a way to manage, though. I won’t make Bailey handle all the diapers herself. They make masks for those kinds of things, right?

“We need to tell Taegan before someone else does,” Bailey tells me after we sat there for several minutes in content bliss. “I’d like to get my underwear back on too.”

“You could always go without,” I muttered, not ready to put any space between us.

“It’s a bit breezy down there, though,” she giggles.

Fuck, I love her giggle. I love her smile, her voice, and the way her fingers are running through my hair. I love her. I love her so damn much for giving me another child.

“Fine. Let’s go-”

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

“Alpha,” Casey’s voice is hesitant on the other side of the closed door in the clinic room we are currently in. “Uh, I need you to come out here for a second. It’s urgent.”

I growled, irritated by his disturbance, then kissed Bailey on the head as I stood at my feet. “Get dressed. I’ll be in the hall waiting.”

Her sweet smile chases away all my irritation. “Okay.”

Casey’s face as I stepped into the hall was a mask of unease, raising my alarms instantly.

“What? What is it?”

“Alpha, we, uh, had a breach,” Casey’s arms are crossed tauntly over his chest, his hand rubbing nervously against the stubble on his cheek.

“A breach? Did that asshole finally try to break onto our lands?” This is what we have been waiting for. We can’t hunt him down. There is too much wilderness and land between here and Bailey’s old home. We search the areas and towns closest to us every night while the humans are asleep, but still have yet to find any sign of him or my mom.

“He didn’t try. He did get across our border. He was hiding in the back of the delivery truck that was here to bring Luna’s office furniture. He masked his scent by hiding in a deep freezer in the back.”

A deep growl leaves me. Fuck, if I wasn’t in such a rush to get here to see Bailey, I would have ordered the truck to be searched. Shit.

“Did you guys catch him?”

Casey looks down guiltily, shaking his head. “No. Alpha Max, Quinn and Rick are on his trail now, but we haven’t caught him yet.”

Dad? I thought he was with.....

Taegan. I left Taegan behind at the packhouse with Rick. Right where the fucking truck was heading to.

“Where’s my son? Why is Dad or Rick not with Taegan? Where is he?”

Casey stares at the ground for a few seconds, anxiety eating away at me as the tension grows.

"WHERE THE FUCK IS HE?!"

When he looks back up, his eyes meeting mine, I know. I fucking know what horrible truth he is about to tell me before the words leave his lips.

“He took him, Alpha. I’m sorry. The bastard somehow got Taegan and took off with him.”

“WHAT?!” I yelled so loud my throat was pulsing from the strain. “HOW THE FUCK DID HE GET HIS FILTHY HANDS ON MY SON?”

“Who?” Bailey’s voice wafted up to me, and I turned to see her staring at me from the open doorway of the room we were just celebrating our good news in. “Who has our son?”

The pain in my heart was indescribable as I watched the realization spread on her face. Her face that was just filled with joy and bliss was not painted over with panic and terror.

“WHO?! WHO HAS MY SON?!” she yells, her eyes going wide and frantic as she looks between Casey and me.

“I’m sorry, Luna. We are searching right now. Alpha Max is-”

“Was it Levi? Did that...that...?” she couldn’t even finish the question. I don’t know what to do. How do I answer her? How do I tell her that I failed her? Failed our son?

I should have made him come with me. I should have told the guards at the gate to search the truck. I should have been there. I failed her. I failed her at keeping our son safe; something I swore I would always do.

“Bailey,” I whispered her name, reaching for her, but she took a step back.

“Was it Levi?” she demands, looking between me and my Gamma.

Casey nods. “I’m sorry, Bailey. We are doing everything we can to-”

Suddenly, her eyes roll up and she starts falling, fainting. I reach out and catch her just in time before she hits the floor.

Please, moon goddess, no. Don't take my family from me. I can't lose my son.

Levi. Count your breaths because you're dead. Once I find you, you're going to be begging for death before I'm through.

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Harriet POV

I can hear the pads of paws coming in fast, hitting the ground in a rhythmic beating. I strain my dying body to push up on the bed in the RV this monster murdered a human to steal and glance out the window.

There he is, carrying a ratty blue blanket with a heavy bundle in his wolf's mouth. He drops the blanket on the ground right outside the RV, and when the fabric falls away, I see a young boy, appearing no older than 4, tucked inside, curled in a ball as he sleeps.

I hope he's asleep. I hope this monster did not stoop to killing a child in his demented quest.

Levi picked the boy up and his arms, and though his head lulled to the side, I could see by the rising and falling of his chest, along with the rosy hue in his cheeks, that he was very much alive. I breathed a sigh of relief watching as Levi hoisted the child over his shoulder.

Thank the goddess.

I couldn't mentally handle knowing that I was the reason a child was killed. I turned this man into the monster he is, and it will forever be my biggest regret.

Levi opens the door on the side of the RV with a loud thud, his feet stomping loudly as he climbs the few steps, the child hanging limply over his shoulder.

"Here," he grunts, tossing the child on the bed beside me. "Watch him. We have to hurry and leave."

I gasp as the child's scent, an all too familiar scent, reaches me.

He's my son's. This child is my son's child. I can smell it. The blood in his veins is the same as Axel's, I'm sure.

"What did you do?" I croaked out. My voice is as broken as the rest of my poisoned body. I don't think I have more than a week or two in me. Without anti-venom, I'd be dead for sure. With my crimes, I don't have a hope in the world of getting it, even if I do manage to get free.

I can't get away from Levi now. Not knowing that he managed to kidnap my son's child. A child I knew nothing about.

Was he telling the truth that day? Did that human woman really have his child? I thought....I truly thought that she was just trying to trick my son into taking on another man's child.

This child, without a doubt, is Axel's. Even his little face and hair looked the same as Axel's when he was this size.

"I did what I had to, since you were more worthless than I thought. Bailey puts that kid before anything and everything. If I tell her to leave your son for me to get him back, she will. I'm going to try and take it a step further and see if she's willing to kill for him," he says with a sick grin as he hurries to take down the shade from the front window and start up the RV.

"Keep the brat steady. Don't want him falling and knocking his head and dying before I can use him."

I'm weak now, but I muster enough strength to tuck the child to my side, marveling at how beautiful he is.

My Axel once looked just like this, before he too started to leave me behind to follow behind his father, learning to run a pack.

I ran my black veined fingers through his hair, combing it away from his face.

He winces and murmurs a "Grandpa" before whimpering in his sleep.

Grandpa. He must be referring to Max. How close are they if this child is calling out to my former mate in his distressed sleep? Not his mom, and not Axel, but it is grandpa who he is dreaming of saving him.

In a small way, it's comforting to know that even though I messed up so much, Max had this little boy loving him, longing for him in this dire situation.

Levi revs the RV, pushing the gas so hard that the tires skid in place for a second before it takes off with a jerk. I hold the boy as tightly as I can as we jolt around on the small bed.

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"Hey," a small voice hisses in a whisper. "Hey! Miss lady! Hey!" the voice came again.

I groan in pain, my insides feeling like they are melting. I have to work hard to force my lips to part and my eyes to open.

"Hey, Miss lady. Are you awake?"

I strained to turn my head and see the little boy sitting up on his knees, leaning over and staring down at me, his nose wrinkled up in disgust.

“Do you smell the bad smell too?” he asked me.

Bad smell? I looked around and saw that Levi was no longer in the RV. Where did he go?

“Who are you, Miss lady? You smell like daddy, but also like the bad smell.”

I almost laughed. Yes, I smell because of the poison and being rogue. Not being able to shower thoroughly doesn’t help either.

“Where is he?” I croaked out, looking around again for Levi. I must have fallen asleep while he was driving. I don’t know how long he drove for, but glancing outside tells me we are in a whole different part of the country. There are far fewer trees and the landscape is rockier.

The little boy shrugs. “Bad dad... oop!” he puts his hands over his mouth, “No, he’s not dad. Grandpa said I only have daddy as dad. Levi, not dad, is out. He said to stay here. He actually said lots of bad words, but he meant to stay here. I can’t say bad words. Mommy says I’m too little. Brother Casey says lots of bad words, but mommy said he can because he’s not little. I don’t think I’m little, though. Cousin Calum is little. I’m big because I don’t make messes. I still have to wait till I’m 18 for my mates, though. Grandpa said so.”

The little boy looks at me speculatively. “Why do you kind of smell like daddy and grandpa, but stinkier? Who are you? Did bad Levi make you smells the stinging stuff and take you too?”

At that, I do start to laugh. He may look like Axel, but he talks a lot more than Axel did.

“My name is Harriet,” I told him, trying hard to sit up on the bed. I don’t know if I should tell him that I’m his daddy’s mother. I don’t know what he knows about me or if he’s aware of how I tried to take his mother away from my son. That may scare him, though he doesn’t appear scared at all right now. What a brave little boy, just like my Axel.

“Oh! I know that name! Grandpa said his mate had that name. He doesn’t have a mates anymore. It makes him sad, but then we watch funny movies and it makes him feel better. I can’t tell mommy about all the movies we watch, though. Some have bad words. Grandpa says some bad words sometimes, and grandpa isn’t bad, so I don’t think the movies are bad either.”

I chuckle at his little spell about Max. Max is a little rough, but he’s not bad. It may be too little too late, but I want to protect this boy as much as I can in Max’s place until he saves him. I know Max will save him. Max’s whole world revolved around Axel when he was a child. I can only imagine how much Max cherishes this boy, who looks so much like our son.

"What's your name, young man?"

The boy looked at me hesitantly, like he was debating about whether he should tell me the truth or not.

"It's nunya...."

Chapter 70 - He Stole My Heart, I Stole His Child

Taegan POV

30 minutes earlier....

“You stay here, you little shit. You move a fucking muscle, I’ll tear your feet off after I make you watch me mutilate your whore mother.”

I don’t know what mew-late means, but it sounds mean. Old da-, I mean, Levi is standing by a little door in the tiny house car, and he looks dirty, and smells like the old trash. He’s where the bad smell came from. It’s the same.

When I woke up, the smell was hurting my nose. Levi was on the phone, then yelled out lots of curse words. It made me mad. Mommy said no. You can’t say those words. It made me think of all the times Levi said those words to mommy and made her sad.

It’s confusing because grandpa and Uncle Nate say those words too, and they’re nice, but Levi is bad. He makes mommy sad. They make mommy happy and she laughs.

“Why the hell will it still not connect?!” was what he yelled the most on the phone. That was what woke me up. I don’t know who he is trying to call, but they won’t answer or talk to him. Probably because he’s stupid. Big whiny baby.

“Keep your ass right there, you got it?”

“I’m not going anywhere, Levi. I want mommy,” I tell him, my growl leaving my voice.

Levi growled back, and walked over, moving to touch my hair like he was going to hurt it, pull it like he used to, but I scooted behind the stinky woman who drew all over herself with black marker. He can’t reach me without waking her up.

“Just keep your fucking mouth shut and keep your ass in line. Your mom will be here soon.”

Good. Mommy will bring daddy. Daddy is going to beat him for me. Daddy can beat anyone and mommy says it’s okay because he’s Alpha. No one can beat my daddy. Well....grandpa says he can, but then daddy does the snort thing when grandpa says that, so I don’t know if that’s true.

Stupid Levi can't beat daddy. If I were big like daddy, I could beat him myself. I hate being little. Nothing I want to happen, happens until I'm big. Like the mates with Rosie thing.

Stupid Levi goes to the part of the car house that looks like a car with a big steering wheel and gets the keys out from where they go next to the big wheel.

He looks different than last time I saw him. Meaner. Grandma Lucy used to call him a pretty boy, but he was not pretty at all. His hair is messy, with lots of stuffs in it. Like, yucky stuffs. I think there is hair from animals in it, and blood. Looking at the bunches of hairs and blood makes my tummy go twisty, and my throat feels bubbly in a not good way.

His clothes are yucky too. They are all dirty and torn up. He smells really bad too. He needs a bath.

"You leave this fucking RV, I'll kill you and your mother. Remember that. When that bitch wakes up, tell her I'll be right back and not to fucking move."

I growl at him as he leaves. I heard the door go click, so I bet the stupid butt locked it.

Like I can't unlock it. I rolled my eyes. He's so stupid. I can't wait until grandpa gets here. I hope grandpa and daddy come, and they leave mommy home. I don't want mommy around Levi. Levi is bad and makes mommy not happy. He hurts mommy, and he keeps saying he wants to kill me and mommy.

He can try. I won't let him. Daddy won't let him.

I watched out the window and saw him take his yucky clothes off. His body is dirtier than his yucky clothes. Gross. He has blood all over, but not cuts. How do you get that much blood on you with no cuts? No wonder he smells bad.

He turns into a wolf, and I'm surprised, because his wolf is big. It's not like daddy's or grandpa's, but he is almost as big as Brother Casey. Brother Casey is big. The other wolves aren't as big as Brother Casey, and really not as big as Daddy. I didn't even know Levi was a wolf. Maybe more people are wolves and I didn't know.

I looked over at the black-lines lady. She smells bad too, but it's a different bad smell. She also smells like daddy, so I don't hate her yet. Maybe Levi took her too.

I should probably let her know that Levi is gone so she can escape if she wants. I can't because of mommy. If Levi does bring my mommy here without daddy, I have to protect her. This lady can leave, though.

"Hey," I whispered, poking at her shoulder. "Hey! Miss lady! Hey!"

She rolls her head around, and I see the black marks on her neck are really bad. There are little holes in the middle of the big black spot that's right where mommy's mark from daddy is. Weird.

I wonder if she got tattoos like Brother Casey. Brother Casey's tattoos look cool. These look yucky.

I lean over to get a better look while whispering louder to see if she's awake.

When her eyes open, her nose wrinkles like she smells a bad smell. I wonder if she can smell herself?

I ask her, and she just laughs at me. That's not nice. When someone asks you a question, mommy says it's rude not to answer.

Strike one, Miss Lady.

"Where is he?" she asks, looking around the tiny house car. She's probably looking for Levi. I wonder if she wants to run away now?

I told her what Levi, not dad, Levi, said, and told her about the bad words. I don't like the bad words when Levi uses them, but they're funny when grandpa and Brother Casey use them. I can't say it's funny, though. Mommy might not like that, and daddy said our job was to make mommy happy and safe.

I miss daddy.

I miss mommy.

It's okay, though. Grandpa is going to come, and daddy is going to protect mommy.

I ask the lady why she smells like daddy, but stinky. Sometimes people stink after fighting at the warrior building. Maybe she is stinky from fighting with Levi and just needs a shower. I didn't tell her that. Mommy said it's not nice to assume. I can't assume she was fighting. I'm not assuming she stinks, though. She does stink. She smells bad, but with the nice smell of daddy, and maybe grandpa too. It's weird.

She laughs at me again, which is rude.

Strike two, Miss Lady.

"My name is Harriet," she tells me. She is smiling, but she is also making a poop face. She is looking at me like she is sad, but her mouth is still smiling. She's weird.

Harriet was the name of grandpa's mate that he doesn't have anymore. I tell her about grandpa, and about how he's sad not to have his mate anymore, but how he feels better watching movies with me, but she laughs again.

Strike three, Harriet. I don't like her laughing at my grandpa being sad. She's still got the poop face too.

When she asks for my name, I don't want to give it to her.

"It's Nunya."

"Nunya? That's a unique name," she laughs with the poop face again.

I shrug. "I'm a unique guy." I test the word out in my head a few times, trying to decide what it means, then decide to just ask. "What's unique mean?"

She runs her fingers with the black lines through my hair, and I don't not like her touch. It feels nice, even though her hands are cold and she smells bad.

"Unique means different, but in a good way. Like you are one of a kind."

"Oh," I tilted my head, thinking about that. "But everyone says I look like daddy."

Her smile gets bigger. "You do look like your daddy."

My eyes got big. "Do you know my daddy?"

Is that why she smells like him?

She makes the poop face again, then nods her head. "I knew him very well. His name is Axel, right?"

I nod, excited that she knows him. He can save both of us. "He's going to come save me. He promised to save me and mommy from Levi," I told her, "And if Grandpa comes, he's going to..." I looked around, then lean closer, ignoring the stinky smell, because I didn't want to say this word too loud. "He's going to kick his azz."

I leaned back, looking around again. "Don't tell mommy I said that. I am just repeating what grandpa always says."

Harriet throws her head back laughing, which makes me laugh a little. She kind of looks like daddy when daddy laughs like that.

"Your secret is safe with me, young man."

Okay, maybe she isn't that bad. I'll take a strike back. Maybe she just likes to laugh, even when it's rude.

It's not rude right now, though. She says she will keep my secret.

She stops laughing, wiping her eyes that look yellowish instead of white where they are supposed to be white, then looks out the window. "Do you know where Levi went?"

I shrugged. “He was trying to call someone and got mad. He said he would be back and that’s it.”

Harriet nodded. “He was probably trying to call your mom again. He hasn’t been able to get through to her, no matter how much he calls.”

“Oh! I think daddy got mommy a new phone. Daddy has her other one in his desk. I found it when I looked for his iPad.”

My hands go to my cheeks and my mouth goes really wide open. “Oh no! I forgot!”

Harriet looks at me with worried eyes. “What?”

“Rosie! Miss Carli said that Rosie was going to call me tonight on mommy’s phone!”

Stupid Levi. I hate him. I hate him so much. He’s making me miss my phone call with Rosie.

“Whose Rosie and Carli?” Harriet asked.

“Rosie is going to be my mate! I can’t miss her call. Grandpa said you have to com-mune-icate with your mate, but I can’t if I miss her call!” I jumped off the bed, then walked over to the cabinets and drawers that are around a little, dirty yellow sink.

I start to dig through all the drawers until I find what I’m looking for. Spoons. There is a whole drawer full of wooden spoons. Cousin Courtney would be so proud of me.

I grab a lot of them, deciding to hide them around for emergencies, because if I miss my phone call and Rosie gets sad, I’m going to kick Levi’s azz myself.

“What are you doing?” Harriet asks me when I hand her one of the spoons, then tuck another under the pillow, and another under the bed.

“Mommy said no, but it’s an emergency. If Levi doesn’t give me a phone to call Rosie, I’m going to spank him.”

I stop, then look at Harriet, tilting my head to the side as I think. “Do you have a phone?”

She shakes her head sadly. “No. I lost mine.”

“How’d you lose it?”

She makes the poop face again. “I lost it when I made a bad decision. It was taken from me before I was punished.”

“Punished?” I quickly took the spoons in my hand and hid them behind my back. “How were you punished? What did you do?”

She looks down at her hands, a sad look on her face. He looks over her hands and arms. “You see these?” she points to the black marks.

“The tattoos?”

She laughs softly. “They’re not tattoos.”

“Oh, good! Mommy says tattoos last forever. That would be sad, because yours are ugly. Brother Casey’s are cool, though. If you want cool tattoos, you should ask Brother Casey to take you. He said not to tell mommy or daddy, but he’s going to take me and Cousin Calum to get one when we turn 18. I’m going to get it on my back, because mommy can’t see it on my back. Cousin Calum wants it on his forehead. Cousin Courtney isn’t going to like that.”

“No,” Harriet giggled, “I don’t suspect she will.”

“Do you know Cousin Courtney too?”

She nodded, the sad look on her face again. “I knew her very well too.”

“You knew everyone. Were you a member of the pack? Before you got punished? Did Daddy punish you? He punishes people sometimes. I can’t come when he does it. I have to stay with Grandpa. That’s why I don’t know you if daddy punished you.”

“Well, it wasn’t your daddy that did this to me,” she says. “I left the pack the same day you came, so that’s why you don’t know me. Your daddy wasn’t the one who did this to me,” she looks sad, “I was punished by vampires. They bit me, and vampire venom is poisonous to most wolves.”

“Why did they punish you?” Addison is a vampire, but she’s nice. She wouldn’t punish someone without a good reason.

“Like I said, I made bad choices. I let someone I thought I was indebted to influence my decisions, and I ended up hurting many people because of it.”

“Why?”

“Well, I thought I was wronged, and wanted to hurt someone because of it. I ended up hurting and causing problems for our son.”

“Oh,” I tilted my head, not fully understanding. “Did you try saying sorry?”

She smiles sadly. “Sometimes a sorry can’t fix it. Actions are the only thing that can. I’m hoping that I can show by my actions now how sorry I am to them.”

“Oh, well, you had better leave now while Levi is gone so you can do those actions. Levi is mean. He won’t let you leave when he gets back.”

She holds a hand out to me, and after staring at it for a little bit, I step forward and take it. I don't like her, she just smells bad. I guess I can be her friend for right now. Levi didn't like her either, I don't think.

"I'm going to do those actions right here. I'm going to try my hardest to keep you safe."

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Antonio POV

"Pull over," I told our driver after receiving a text that Felix had found something.

"What's wrong?" Rina asked me.

"I'm not sure. Felix needs to speak with me. If you will just wait here momen-"

"Don't even try it," she narrows her eyes at me, "If he found something, I want to know too."

I groan, but I know arguing is useless.

Felix gets out of the escort vehicle in front of us, where he has a team of trackers and some of our best fighters, and walks to the passenger seat of our vehicle with his laptop.

"My Lord, I was finally able to get a CCTV lead on the RV. It stopped for gas at a station near the werewolf lands yesterday morning. Levi Sullivan was the only one on the video as he pumped gas. He used a stolen credit card, but it was definitely him."

I cursed, punching the seat in frustration. We are always just a little late in getting him. "We need to turn around," I growled. We were almost to the childhood home of my Rina. We have been searching every RV park and campground between our coven and here, and are just now getting into town. Rina, I could see, was growing more anxious by the second. She hadn't been back here in decades.

"I don't think we do, my Lord. I noticed that Levi was on the phone when he was pumping gas, so I used the time stamp and records from nearby cell towers to determine the phone number he was using. He had called a local furniture store in the area, which was weird, but then I found out that the wolves had a furniture delivery scheduled for earlier today. There was even an issue with the delivery and the driver returned to the store with injuries from a crash.

"I then traced that number, and saw that the same number that called the furniture store had been bouncing signals off a cell tower near here all afternoon. The calls were never connected, so I couldn't determine the exact location, but I can determine that it is within 20 miles of this particular cell tower."

Felix turned his laptop around in his arms and showed us the map on the screen, pointing to an area inside a thin yellow circle.

"The last signal bounced about 10 minutes ago."

"That's a nature preserve not far from my mother's house," Rina exclaims, taking the laptop, zooming in on the space. "There," she points to one spot in particular, "There isn't much there, but high schoolers and rough kids use it as a hangout. It's too rocky to hike around and well-hidden, so it's not used by anyone else. It's like a hook-up destination and party spot in warmer weather."

My eyes tighten, contemplating how she would know that. I can't fault her for having a past. I have centuries more than she does, and even have a daughter of my own, but that doesn't change how much I don't like the idea of my love doing such acts with anyone other than me.

"Do you know how to get there?" Felix asks, checking the road maps. There are no visible roads leading into the area she pointed to.

She nods, "It's a dirt road. Only locals know it."

Good. That will cut out hours of mindlessly searching.

Something about what Felix said worries me. "You said the driver of the delivery truck was in an accident? Was that before or after the delivery to the pack?"

"I'm not sure, my Lord. They didn't say. I would guess after."

Hmm. What is the connection here? I don't want to anger them further, but my instincts are telling me to call the young Alpha and inform them of the progress of our search. If we are finally closing in on Levi and the former Luna, they will be more angry if we don't tell them, and something unfortunate happens again.

"Get me my daughter on the phone."