

# **His Hunt for Redemption**

## **Chapter 3**

**BRYNN**

I woke up to my father singing Happy Birthday to me. It was a tradition in our house and something I loved that we continued after my mother died.

“Happy birthday, sweetheart,” he said.

His strong arms enveloped me in a hug. My father was the best one that I could have ever hoped for. He was my pillar of strength, a comforting shoulder, and a papa bear all rolled into one.

“Thanks, Dad.”

He kissed my head and left me to get ready for my birthday breakfast tradition. Maya and Sebastian would meet me at Bessie’s Diner where Bessie would make a killer breakfast for us. This was a five-year-long tradition at work, and one we would continue next year as well.

I already had my outfit picked out. It was a dark pair of faded jean shorts and a red fitted V-neck tank top. I paired it with one of Maya’s gifts last year which was a beautiful lace fringe cover to go over the tank top.

Then I quickly French braided my hair and threw on light makeup. I loved how it looked. Maya was the one who taught me the art of makeup since I had nobody else to teach me. She said that I was her star pupil to this day.

I touched my mother’s picture on the way out of my room. It did not hurt me as much as it used to. They said that time healed all wounds, but I did not agree. Time dulled the wounds by masking it with other experiences in life, but it did not heal the wounds.

The night that my mother was killed in front of me would always be there even if time dulled it. It still haunted my nightmares because I knew in my heart that there was more to it than her being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Nobody else felt as confident about it, so I walled it off and dealt with it on my own. Actually, that was incorrect because Moira also helped deal with it. She had not been here yet, but she agreed with my thought pattern on it.

I pushed those thoughts away as well because today was a day for celebration. If my mother was here then she would be telling me to ‘think positive thoughts and embrace them.’

“Welcome to our Birthday Girl,” Bessie called out as I entered the diner.

I smiled and waved at her. She was the best. Bessie moved here from the South, so she was sweet and kind until you crossed a line. Then you had to deal with a woman who could tear you down with a single look better than Alpha Theo could accomplish when reprimanding someone.

Maya pushed me down next to Sebastian while she climbed over the side of the table like the crazy person that she was.

“Say ‘Bessie’s the best’ on the count of three,” she said, holding Maya’s phone in front of her face.

We did multiple poses for her before she handed the phone over to me for approval. I scrolled through them and loved each one. There were two serious ones and five funny ones. All seven were sent to me and Sebastian.

The three of us were complete weirdos, but we were each other’s weirdos. Nothing else mattered.

“Mind getting off me now, B?” Sebastian huffed.

“Maya’s the one who pushed me. Fine. I’ll get off you since my muscles are intimidating you for tonight’s challenge,” I teased.

Bessie gasped and set down our specialty coffees that she made herself. She had fancy coffee shop machines and all. This was the place that the pack came to for specialty drinks. The three of us were regular customers.

“Is our very own power-duo squaring off tonight?” she asked excitedly.

“Power-duo?” Sebastian and I asked at the same time, causing us to side-eye each other.

“Your father might have shared a video of you two sparring once or twice,” she explained.

I just sighed at what he did. I was not upset or anything but just a bit shy about it. He was insanely proud of his daughter, and that pride made me genuinely happy. It was one reason why I always pushed myself to do my best in everything that I did. He threw the biggest graduation party when I graduated years early. He was my biggest fan, and that always made me feel like I could accomplish anything..

“Yes. Seb and I are up tonight. You should film it this year from my phone since it has better camera software than my father’s does.”

Breakfast consisted of stuffed French toast which was topped with fresh fruit, hashbrowns, bacon with a side of bacon, and Bessie’s homemade birthday cupcake. It was always a mystery flavor. This year’s tasted like coconut mocha. Thankfully, she always sent me home with an entire batch of cupcakes.

We were stuffed by the time we finished eating. Shifters could definitely eat because our metabolisms were faster than those of humans. It also helped that the three of us were very active people as well.

I tried to pay Bessie for breakfast, but she downright refused to accept it. She never charged us on my birthday even though we always ate our weight in food. I gave her a big hug before we left.

I was kicked out of my house until further notice, so we ended up going over to Sebastian's place. Then I would get dressed at Maya's before heading home.

His house was amazing all thanks to his mother who owned an interior design firm that was responsible for most of the packhouse and other places around Dark Moon.

The two-story structure was open and spacious, but it was comfortable too. It looked homely and lived in. I always hated going into someone's house that lacked any form of sentimentality. The home was where a family bonded and expressed their shared identity.

We got through two movies before it was time to get ready. I gave Sebastian a comforting hug when he groaned again.

"It'll all be okay. You're not too squishy," I said, pinching his cheek.

"You're an ass," he snapped, rubbing that spot. I might have pinched it pretty hard, but he should have expected that by now.

"But you still love me. Don't get too dolled up, Seb," I called out before running out of the room. A dangerous growl followed behind me.

We made our way quickly back to Maya's house to get ready. I already had the perfect dress for tonight. We found it earlier this year, and I could not wait to see the finished look.

The A-line off the shoulder asymmetrical lace satin evening dress had sequins that fell to mid-thigh in the front but came down to my ankles in the back. The dusty blue color made the dress pop.

She loosely curled my auburn hair, and it fell down my back in perfect soft ringlets. Then she placed jeweled pins all over. That paired well with a classic makeup look.

I stepped back and stared at myself in the mirror. I actually looked a lot like my mother did at my age. Gone but never forgotten.

"What's the verdict?" I asked her as I spun around to face her.

"You're just missing one thing."

Maya passed me a rectangular box with a ribbon on it, and I carefully unwrapped it. Inside was a gorgeous white gold North Star necklace. It was absolutely beautiful.

“This is to remind you that you need to be your own North Star no matter what happens in life. You need to live by your own desires and not the desires of others,” she explained with a reassuring smile.

Maya took it from me and clasped it around my neck. I tried to not feel the weight of her words, but it was kind of difficult not to. Maya had always been someone with good intuition. She never did or said anything like this without a purpose.

“Relax, girlie. Let’s enjoy your birthday so that we can all watch you pulverize Seb.”

Those words were exactly what I needed to latch onto so that I could push the rest to the side for now.

The house was completely dark and quiet when we got there. The nostalgia of doing this every year brought a sweet smile to my face. Some people would see the predictability, but I saw the love within the predictability. That was what made it perfect.

“HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!” everyone screamed when the two of us walked through the back gate.

Maya and I made a performance of being shocked. We perfected the shocked look over the years, and we could fool someone who was new to this tradition.

My father came over and placed his hands on my shoulders, looking me over from head to toe. There was a sheen in his eyes when he met my own again.

I used to think it hurt him to see me look so much like my mother, but he told me that it was the opposite. The similarities reminded him of the journey they shared and the love they felt for one another. That love was what gave him the most precious gift in the form of his daughter.

“You look beautiful, sweetheart,” he said, pulling me into a hug.

“Thank you.” I placed a kiss on his cheek and hugged him tightly.

Many mates never recovered from losing their other half. It showed my father’s true strength to have come as far as he had. He once said that if I had not been here to keep him grounded that he would not have survived either. I was his anchor in reality.

My father was my anchor as well. I still struggled from time to time regarding it all, but he taught me how to move forward one step at a time.

One of the best lessons he ever taught me was that true strength was determined when tragedy fell. It was found in one’s ability to pull themselves up from the ground and fight another day. It was something that became my mantra over the years.

Hands covered my eyes as I was led somewhere. It was not hard to pick out Sebastian behind me, but I heard other footfalls following along. Where in the world were we going?

My heels clicked against the driveway, and I would be lying if I said that my curiosity was not piqued. Surprises were not always my thing because I preferred being prepared. Although, I knew that Sebastian would never surprise me in a way that would make me break his shin.

He uncovered my eyes. Said eyes landed on a sleek silver Corvette which had a gigantic red bow on the hood. It was this year's model at that. Sebastian's love of cars wore off on me over the years. I never really cared about having one because I enjoyed walking places and being outdoors.

I spun around and looked around at the fifty or so people who came to the party.

"What's going on?" I asked dumbly. I was still shocked to see that sexy beast in the driveway.

"It's a radical concept called a birthday gift," Sebastian said, smirking at me.

"You're so helpful." I rolled my eyes at his sarcasm. "I got that. Why is it the newest Corvette? Those are extremely expensive. Please tell me that you didn't get help from a loan shark."

He crossed his arms and lifted a brow with my statement. He, Maya, and I loved to bet on anything and everything around the pack. We never took it to an extreme though. It just kept things interesting.

"It's not just from me. It's from all of us. B, you do so much for this pack but never take any credit whatsoever. You do it for the sake of doing it. It's one reason why we all love you so damn much. We wanted to show our appreciation for you as a person as well as the incredible part of this pack that you are," Sebastian said.

I was completely dumbfounded and speechless. This was the first time that I had been speechless in my entire life. I was sarcastic, witty, diplomatic, or bitchy depending on the occasion. Speechless was an entirely new concept.

Zeva, one of the pups I tutored, walked up to me with a medium-sized teddy bear. Car keys hung around its neck. She held it out to me with the cutest puppy-dog look I had ever seen.

"Please accept it," she said.

They were completely evil. They knew that I could not turn down something from her. My resolve crumbled brick by brick until it was bulldozed completely by a pup that was not even 4'0.

I reached my hands out for the teddy and brought it to my chest while crouching down to kiss her cheek.

"Only because it was you. Was it Seb that arranged that part?" I asked her.

She nodded enthusiastically. My eyes met his, and I smirked as he gulped.

“C’mon then. I need to put the teddy in his new home, and you have to help me come up with a name,” I said.

She grabbed my offered hand. I unlocked the car and told her to get in on the other side. I might have died and gone to Heaven as I slid into my new baby. Light gray interior, push-to-start, electronic display, and all.

“What should we name him?” I asked Zeva, breaking away from my car-gasm thoughts.

“What about Carson?” she asked as she scrutinized him closely.

“Carson it is. Thank you for naming him. Do you want to hold onto him or leave him in here?” I asked her.

She hugged the adorable brown bear to her chest which was all the answer that I needed. I took the keys from her so that I could give them to my father for the night. I would hate it if this baby to be stolen because I left them here.

Everyone but my father had meandered back into the backyard, so I told Zeva that I would catch up.

“Thanks, Dad. This birthday tradition is one that I love very much,” I told him, wrapping my arms around him.

“That’s why I do it, sweetheart. You’re a straightforward person. You don’t placate people or sugarcoat anything. If you hated it then you would tell me. Instead, I always see legitimate happiness with it. It doesn’t matter if you’re mated away with pups of your own. We’ll still do something special each year.”

My fingers went back to the North Star with his words, and I rested my head on his chest. His words mixed with Maya’s weighed me down heavily, but I shoved them to the very back of my mind.

“Let’s get to the party that way we can get closer to the Main Event at the end,” I said with an evil chuckle.