

# **My Hockey Alpha #Chapter 111 The Walls We Built - Read My Hockey Alpha Chapter 111 The Walls We Built**

## **Chapter 111 The Walls We Built**

Nina

After our shower together, Enzo and I felt so exhausted from our experience that we crawled into bed despite the fact that it was broad daylight outside. When I finally awoke several hours later, it was dark in my room, and I found the warmth of his strong arms around me to be a welcome comfort.

Enzo continued to sleep beside me for some time. I laid with him, my eyes closed, as I listened to his soft breathing and steady heartbeat. Part of me wondered if all of this was a dream; maybe I was still locked up in my cell, completely oblivious to the real world. While I had no real way of knowing for sure, I let the feeling of Enzo's arms and the warmth of his body be a tether to what was real — and if it wasn't, and the real world was still just as cruel and cold, then at least I was having a sweet dream.

At some point, Enzo awoke with a start. His eyes opened, bright red and glowing in the darkness.

"Hey," I said as he suddenly sat up. "It's me."

He was silent for a moment, his head swiveling this way and that way in the darkness, before he finally relaxed somewhat. I sat up and turned on the lamp beside my bed, casting the dark room in a warm amber glow.

"What time is it?" he asked.

I picked up my phone and checked. "Only 6:30," I replied. "It's getting darker earlier now."

"Hm." Enzo laid back down onto his back, his arm under his head, and looked up at the ceiling. I stared down at him and felt my eyes continuously returning to his lips. When I relived our kiss at the campfire in my dreams, it had felt so real that I wanted to feel it again now, and without thinking, I leaned down to kiss him.

Our lips locked together for a brief, sweet moment. The kiss was soft and gentle, but at the same time, I felt a burning desire for him begin to rise inside of me. His hands came up, his fingers trailing along my waist, over my breasts and my neck, and then came to cup my cheeks. I pressed my hands into his chest and straddled him as our kiss deepened, a soft moan escaping his lips as I unintentionally pressed into his groin. He wrapped his arms around me and sat up. His kisses traveled down my jaw and across

my neck, and at the same time, I slid my hands up his bare back, having forgotten about his scars temporarily until my fingers grazed them.

He tensed. I didn't think much of it, and let my fingertips trail along his scars.

But then, he suddenly pulled away.

"I'm sorry," I said, quickly pulling my hands out from around his back and moving them to his chest instead. "I didn't mean to hurt you."

He shook his head. "Can you just... get off, please?" he said. His voice was low and somber. I did as he asked, but felt an addled prick stab me right in my heart.

"Enzo?" I asked, watching as he swung his legs over the side of the bed, then stood. He still wasn't wearing a shirt, and his scars were visible even in the dim light of my room. He didn't answer, but rather picked his shirt up off of the floor and pulled it on over his head, concealing them. "I really didn't mean to—"

"I'm sorry," he interrupted, his back still turned to me. "I can't do this."

Already, I could feel tears welling up in my eyes. "I don't understand if you're still mad at me over Ronan," I said. "I thought that we were of the same understanding that it was a setup."

He shook his head. "It's not that. I know that it was all a setup, but..."

"What is it? Is it because I touched your scars?" I asked. "If so, I really didn't mean to do it, and I'm sorry if I hurt you."

Enzo paused for a painfully long moment as he continued to stare out the window before he finally spoke. "It's not that you hurt me. It's that I don't want to hurt you. You and I both know that I have to go through with this arranged marriage."

I wanted to stop him, to tell him that he didn't have to go through with the arranged marriage, that we could run away together... But before I could say any of that, he quickly finished dressing and walked out of the room without so much as a 'goodbye'. I heard the front door open and close, and then he was gone. And I was alone once more.

My chest ached. I jumped up and ran over to the window to see him walking stiffly across the quad below. As tears streamed down my cheeks, I couldn't help but wonder if the beatings Edward gave him did far more damage than it seemed on the surface.

Enzo was different now, and it was my fault.

...

The following morning, I knew I would have to swallow my fears and return to normal life. I woke up and dressed, trying my best to ignore the three white scars running across my abdomen, and made my way to the dining hall to eat breakfast. I hadn't eaten anything since the day before Edward took me, and I was ravenous. I had lost visible weight, too; my clothes were loose on me already.

I entered the dining hall and grabbed breakfast, and was making my way over to a table when I turned around suddenly and nearly ran head-on into none other than Justin.

"Hey, Nina," he said.

My eyes were wide. The smile on Justin's face was just as plastic-looking as ever, and when I looked into his eyes, there was nothing behind them. It was almost as though he wasn't in there; he was just an empty shell that only looked like the Justin I once knew.

"Oh, hey," I said.

"Having breakfast?" he asked. I nodded, then he gestured with his tray toward a nearby table. "Wanna eat with me?"

I almost said no, but the longer I stood there, the more I realized that Justin needed just as much help as I did. There was no telling the horrors he endured while he was in Edward's torture chamber, and I was probably the only other person who would understand what that was like.

"Sure," I replied.

Justin's smile widened. We sat down together. I poked a bit at my eggs, still feeling as though eating might make me sick despite my hunger, while Justin bit down heartily into his breakfast sandwich.

"So," I said, wanting to probe for at least a shred of information, "what have you been up to?"

He shrugged. "The usual. You?"

"Well..." Part of me wanted to spill everything in the hopes that it would snap him out of the spell that Edward had him under, but I stopped myself as I realized that it could potentially cause him to have a mental breakdown right here in the dining hall... And I didn't want that to happen. "You know. The usual, too, I guess."

"Cool," he said. He took another big bite of his breakfast sandwich. I took a small bite of my eggs and, realizing that I had already lost my appetite again, pushed my tray away.

"Have you seen Edward lately?" I asked. "I was hoping to talk to him."

Justin stopped chewing. “Edward?” he said, his mouth full. I could see a hint of recognition flash behind his eyes, but then he continued chewing and shook his head. “Nope. Haven’t seen him.”

“Hm. Has he been away, or...?”

Just then, I was alerted to the sound of gasping coming from across the cafeteria, and looked up to see Enzo storming toward me. His hands were curled up into fists at his sides, but he wasn’t looking at me; he was looking at Justin with a burning fire in his brown eyes.

“Enzo,” I said, standing. “What are you—”

Enzo ignored me, brushing past me. I spun around and watched in horror as his fist shot out and he grabbed a handful of Justin’s shirt, lifting him up out of his chair and causing his tray to clatter to the ground, sending uneaten breakfast sandwich all over the floor, while students nearby murmured confusedly.

“What the hell are you trying to do, you little weasel?” Enzo growled.

Justin only stared back with wide, confused eyes.

## **Chapter 112 Bad Romance**

Nina

“Are you working for Edward? Huh?” Enzo snarled.

“What? N-No,” Justin said, squirming in Enzo’s tightening grip. Enzo had him pinned to the wall with a fistful of Justin’s shirt, and while he growled menacingly at Justin, onlookers began to murmur with worry and confusion.

“Enzo,” I said, reaching out and attempting to pry his fingers away from Justin’s shirt collar, “this isn’t like you. Let him go.”

Enzo snapped his head toward me. He glared at me for a long few moments, and I could see the hint of red peeking out through the soft brown of his eyes. He was angry, but there was also a hint of something else in his face. Jealousy. I felt my heart begin to race faster than it already was as our faces lingered closer to one another.

Finally, he tore his eyes away from me. “You’re a coward,” he said to Justin before finally releasing his grip on Justin’s shirt.

I looked over at Justin then, who had an expression on his face that I couldn’t quite read. It almost looked like a mixture of pleasure and confusion, as though the brainwashing Edward had performed on him made him crave Enzo’s fury, but there was

another, more innocent, part of him that didn't understand what was happening. "Come on," Enzo said to me, putting his arm around my shoulders and guiding me away. "Get away from this guy."

I followed Enzo for a few steps before stopping and shaking my head. "No, Enzo," I said, taking a step back. "What's gotten into you?"

"What's gotten into me?" Enzo asked. He bent down so his face was closer to mine and lowered his voice in order to keep anyone else from overhearing. As he spoke, I could smell the leather on his jacket, and our closeness made me shiver. "What's gotten into you that you would be so stupid as to eat breakfast with Justin knowing fully well that he's one of Edward's pawns?"

"By that logic," I replied, feeling myself begin to fume as my hands curled up into fists at my sides while simultaneously being strangely attracted to Enzo's sudden burst of territoriality, "you shouldn't be talking to me, either, because Edward brainwashed me as well. For all you know, I could be working for him right now."

Enzo and I glared into each other's eyes for several long moments. His eyes burned with a mixture of desire and anger before he finally scoffed and pulled away. "Whatever," he said, turning on his heel, "if you wanna be manipulated by Justin and get yourself into trouble again, then be my guest."

With that, Enzo stormed away and left me with a pang in my chest. "Enzo! Wait!" I called after him, but he didn't stop or turn around. I watched as he disappeared through the doors of the building, wondering to myself just how much Enzo had changed because of his torture.

When I finally turned back around, Justin was still standing there with wide eyes. As I began to approach, however, he quickly walked away without another word, leaving me alone with the murmuring onlookers. By this point, I had completely lost my appetite... So I left as well and tried to push my pain and confusion down for long enough to go to my classes that day.

...

After classes, I returned to my dorm with an aching feeling in my body and a desire to go straight to sleep.

Lori and Jessica were sitting in the kitchen, speaking in hushed tones, when I walked in. They stopped almost as soon as I entered and looked up with wide eyes, almost as though they'd been caught in the

middle of something.

“Am I interrupting?” I asked as I set my bag down on the counter and kicked my shoes off.

Lori and Jessica were silent for a moment before looking at each other, then back at me.

“Someone leaked proof of Enzo’s... heritage,” Jessica said. She stood and walked over to me, then handed me her phone. I furrowed my brow as I took it from her, but then my eyes widened as I saw what was on the screen.

Not only had someone posted pictures of Enzo’s physical fitness test results on an anonymous Twitter account, but they had also posted numerous pictures and videos of Enzo showcasing his inhuman speed, his extreme strength, and even his glowing red eyes. There was also a video of him... Of us. It was taken on the night that he fought Ronan in the woods. I ran out of frame at the very beginning, which was when I had run after the stalker, but the camera stayed focused on Enzo and showed him shifting and fighting Ronan. It was taken from a completely different angle from where the stalker had been standing, so I knew it was someone else who took the clip.

“Who would do this...?” I said, my hands shaking as I looked back up at Jessica and Lori with wide eyes.

Jessica shrugged and shook her head apologetically. “I don’t know.”

“I wanted to say that it could be someone from one of the opposing hockey teams,” Lori interjected, “but it just doesn’t add up. If they wanted to out Enzo on his werewolf identity, then why would they also risk exposing the fact that the other hockey captain is also a werewolf? Ronan, right?”

I nodded. “You’re right. It’s gotta be a third party. The Crescents don’t want humans to figure out their identities just as much as the Fullmoons. But I don’t know who would do this, or why.” I handed Jessica’s phone back, then, without thinking, immediately put my shoes back on.

“Where are you going?” Lori asked.

“I need to talk to Enzo,” I said as I imagined him sitting at home, fuming over this when he was already dealing with the stress of everything that had happened recently. “I don’t want him to be alone right now.”

Before Lori and Jessica could protest, I grabbed my bag off the counter and made my way over to Enzo’s dorm. When I arrived outside his door, I could hear the sound of music coming from his apartment; I knocked, but the music seemed to drown me out, so I knocked louder.

Finally, after knocking for a third time, the door swung open.

Enzo stood in the doorway, swaying back and forth slightly, with a bottle of whiskey in his hand.

“What are you doing here?” he said, almost abrasively.

I frowned and brushed past him. As I looked around, I noticed that his apartment was in shambles, and there was another empty whiskey bottle lying on the floor by the couch. I sighed and walked over to it, picking it up and turning back to face him. “I was worried about you,” I said, holding up the whiskey bottle and shaking it lightly. “It seems as though my worries weren’t unfounded.”

Enzo scoffed and walked over to the couch, where he flopped down and sloshed a bit of whiskey on his shirt. He held the bottle out to me. “Want some?”

I shook my head and folded my arms across my chest as I glared down at him. “I take it you heard about the Twitter leak.”

He only shrugged and took another swig of whiskey. When he was finished, he looked up at me. “It’s whatever.”

“It’s not whatever,” I said. “Did it have something to do with your outburst this morning?”

“Of course not,” he replied with a scoff. “I only did that because I think that Justin is a manipulating little weasel, and...” he paused, his eyes wandering down my body and back up again as I watched him swallow a knot in his throat.

“And what?” I poked.

He shook his head. “It’s nothing.”

“It’s jealousy, isn’t it?”

Enzo’s eyes widened momentarily at my words and told me all I needed to know. Then, he took another swig out of the whiskey bottle.

“You’re ridiculous,” I whispered, turning on my heel and walking over to the door. Suddenly, I heard the sound of feet hitting the floor behind me just as I was opening the door, and saw a hand shoot out over my head. He pressed his palm firmly against the door and shut it abruptly before I could leave, towering over me with his tall and muscular frame. I turned slowly to look up at him, and saw him breathing heavily with a lustful yet bitter look in his eyes.

“Enzo—”

He kissed me before I could say anything else. I felt his hand work its way around my waist and pull me closer, and heard the bottle clatter to the floor as his tongue pressed



through my lips and into my mouth. For one brief, sweet moment as our bodies melted together, I smelled that same scent that I had become so familiar with in the tunnels... but it faded quickly as Enzo suddenly pushed me away. Too quickly.

Before I could say anything, Enzo's face turned a deep shade of red and he stared down at the floor.

"I'm sorry," he said, his voice sounding choked. I knew he wanted to say more, but it was as though his body wouldn't let it come out. "You should leave before I hurt you."

"Hurt me?" I took a step closer to him. "You can't—"

"Just go, Nina," he growled. When he looked back up at me, his eyes were red and full of pain. "I can't be doing this with you anymore."

A sob caught in my throat. I opened my mouth to speak, but nothing came out. Enzo reached behind me and opened the door for me, his own face wrought with pain as he stared down at the floor, avoiding my gaze.

"Go

## **Chapter 113 The Scarf**

Enzo

"Just go, Nina," I said. I felt my eyes begin to glow red, which I didn't want her to see — but it was already too late. "I can't be doing this with you anymore."

The pained sound that came out of her mouth made me want to pull her in and hug her tightly, but I couldn't. Keeping her close to me would only cause her even more pain. I was there to protect her, but nothing more.

"Go," I said, opening the door and averting my gaze to the ground. Without a word, Nina spun around and ran out of my apartment. I shut the door behind her, then leaned against it and sank down to the floor, leaning my head back against the wood.

What Nina didn't know was that, after my torture in the tunnels, I had a dream when we spent the night together in her dorm. It was a dream about my fated mate, and dreams like this were almost always prophetic.

During the dream, I found my fated mate. I couldn't see her face, but I knew it was her from her scent. The scent was so sweet and tantalizing that I could hardly control myself. I reached out to touch her, and she reached out as well, locking our fingers together. During that dream, I knew: being close to Nina would only hurt her, because no matter how much I cared for her, she wasn't my fated mate. Even if we wound up denying fate and tried to be together, I knew that I would only hurt her down the road. If



we were together, I would only break her heart more by ending things with her or even being unfaithful without realizing it. Nothing could deny the power of the fated mate bond, and because Nina had no wolf, we couldn't be each other's chosen mates. It would only end in heartbreak.

What she also didn't know was that before the tunnels, when I last saw my father on the morning after the fateful party... My father had threatened to do something to her. He didn't say what he would do,

exactly, but he said that I'd never see her again if I continued my relationship with her. And I couldn't risk her getting hurt because I couldn't control my impulses.

Between these two things, I had to keep my distance from Nina.

That didn't mean, however, that I wouldn't be there for her and protect her. Edward was still out there, and so were Ronan and Lisa. Justin was right here on this very campus, and there was no telling what sort of trickery he would use to get Nina in his grasp. This 'Sister' person seemed hell-bent on capturing Nina, and I was determined to keep that from happening.

As I sat there, my eyes closed as I tried to push away the ache in my chest, I felt my phone vibrate in my pocket. I opened it, then let out a deep and exasperated sigh when I saw who was calling.

It was my father.

"What do you want?" I asked when I answered the phone.

"Your carelessness has gotten our secret spread all over that town," he said. His voice was low and angry, and I could hear that he was speaking through his teeth.

I sighed and passed my hand over my face. "I'm handling it. I just need to figure out who leaked it."

"And then what?" my father replied. "Everyone already knows. My company's stocks are starting to plummet."

"I don't know," I admitted. "I can get them to take back their statement — admit that it's fake. I'll daze them."

My father chuckled wryly. "You've already done enough," he snarled. "I'll clean up your mess, just like I always do. From now on, I want you to focus solely on winning that hockey tournament. And enough of

letting that girl distract you from what you need to do. Don't forget what I told you in the hockey arena: I have ways that will ensure that you never see her again."

“That won’t be an issue anymore,” I growled through gritted teeth. As I spoke, it felt as though my throat was being constricted. It pained me more than words could explain to have to say goodbye to Nina.

“Well, just to be safe, I sent you something,” my father replied, his sinister tone suddenly lightening as though we had just been having a casual family phone call this entire time. “Did you open my package?”

I looked up from where I was sitting to see the pile of mail on my kitchen counter. I had put it there on my first day back from the tunnels, but I hadn’t looked at it at all. I was far too distracted to be opening mail.

“No,” I replied, standing. “I’ve... Been busy.”

“Open it now, then.”

I sighed and tucked my phone into the crook of my ear and my shoulder, then rifled through the mail to pull out a small box addressed to me from my father. I then grabbed a pair of kitchen scissors out of the drawer and cut through the packing tape, opening the box to reveal a simple red scarf.

“What is this?” I asked, pulling the scarf out. As I did, my senses filled with the same scent from my dream. It made my mouth water and my heart skip, and admittedly made blood rush to my nether region.

“It’s a gift,” my father replied. I could practically hear his smile through the phone. “From your fated mate. A little motivation to help you win that tournament. Smells like her, no?”

I nodded, entranced by the smell of the soft scarf in my hands, before I remembered that my father couldn’t see me through the phone. “Uh— Yes,” I replied. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome. I want you to keep that scarf with you, especially when you’re thinking of getting distracted by that human girl again. Do you understand me? I don’t want you to think about her anymore. If you do a good job of that, I’ll let you meet your fated mate a little earlier before the wedding.”

“When would that be?” I asked.

My father paused. “If you win the tournament, you can meet her on the day of the last match.”

...

The next day, I woke up early to go to hockey practice. People were already beginning to rally outside the arena; they were calling me a monster and shouted at me as I

walked past, but I kept my head down and gripped my mate's scarf tightly in my hand. I had to focus on winning this tournament — I had to meet her.

When I entered the arena, everyone was already there — including Nina. I supposed that I had expected it, since she was still the team doctor, but it still made me uncomfortable. I stared at the floor as I walked past her, ignoring her painful expression, and began to drill my teammates harder than ever before.

Maybe being so hard on them was a mistake, but I had to do it if we were going to win against werewolves. We still had a long way to go until the final match, so that meant that we would have a lot of competition to make our way through before the final match.

Unfortunately, due to my harsh drilling, Matt fell on the ice and smashed up his hand pretty badly.

“Bring him here,” Nina called from across the ice. I watched as a couple of the other players helped him up as he groaned in pain, clutching his hand, then helped him to skate over to the exit.

“That’s enough for today,” I said. “You guys can all go.”

Nina led Matt to the locker rooms while the rest of the team took off their skates and filed out of the arena, but I stayed behind to keep practicing my own drills. I took my time skating back and forth across the ice, lining myself up with the goal from various angles and flicking the puck in... But the mobility I lost in my shoulders from Edward's beatings made it difficult. Fio was still weak from the poison Edward gave me, and although our mate's scent made him a bit stronger, it still wasn't enough. Finally, I gave up and headed toward the locker room to get changed.

When I entered, I realized quickly that Nina and Matt were still there. They had their heads leaning close to one another as she wrapped up his hand with a bandage. He said something, and she laughed.

For some reason, in that instant an inexplicable amount of jealousy took over me. For the first time in days, I felt Fio's full presence as I rushed toward Nina and Matt. Without thinking, I grabbed Matt by the shoulder and yanked him to his feet.

“H-Hey!” Matt exclaimed.

“Enzo, what are you doing?” Nina shouted, jumping up and putting herself between us. “I was still bandaging his hand.”

“I-I’m fine, I think,” Matt said, stumbling away from me. “I’ll go to the infirmary.”

“Matt, wait—” Nina called, but Matt was already gone. She turned toward me then, her eyes narrowed, but it only fueled my burning desire for her. I pushed her up against the locker, pressing our bodies

close as a low, hot growl rumbled in my throat.

“You’re mine,” I said. “Not his.”

I leaned down to kiss her, but before I could, she pushed me away with tears in her eyes. “You’re scaring me,” she whimpered.

As she said those words, I came to my senses. I looked down at where I was standing, feeling my face get hot as I realized what I had just done.

“I-I’m sorry,” I stuttered, taking a few steps backwards while Nina stood with her back pressed up against the lockers, her eyes wide and tears streaming down her cheeks. “I don’t know what came over me... I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

I had to get away from her. Before Nina could say anything and before I could lose control again, I turned on my heel and stormed out. I took a deep breath once I was out of the locker room and pulled my mate’s scarf out of my pocket, burying my face in it and inhaling deeply. As my mate’s scent filled my senses, I quickly forgot all about the jealousy I had for Nina...

And I forgot that she also had a faint scent of her own in the locker room

## **Chapter 114 Midnight Diner**

Nina

It was almost as if something possessed Enzo when he tried to kiss me in the locker room. At that very same time, I felt Cora’s presence inside of me. As I watched him walk away, I could feel her sadness permeate through me.

“What was that?” I said out loud once I was alone.

“I’m really sorry,” Cora said, “but I wanted to test something. I released a little bit of my scent to see if it would attract him, and it did.”

I shook my head. “First of all, warn me before you do that next time,” I replied in my mind after realizing that I would seem utterly insane if someone came in and saw me talking to myself. “Second... Does that mean I’m his mate after all?”

“Not necessarily, but it is interesting. I’d like to try it again, if I can gather the strength.”

I bit my lip, thinking about Cora's proposition as I gathered my medical supplies and walked out of the locker room into the completely empty arena. Her proposition was tempting, but... Maybe Enzo was right about his fated mate. If this mystery woman really was his fated mate, then maybe it would be cruel of me to try to drive them apart.

...

That night, I went to work at the diner. It felt nice to return to a shred of normalcy as I walked around taking orders and cleaning tables, and it was just busy enough to keep me occupied instead of thinking too much about Edward and Enzo.

Toward the end of my shift, however, James came in and sat at the counter. I hadn't seen him at all since I overheard him in Edward's house. He seemed a little haggard, and looked like he was wearing

yesterday's clothes, which was out of the ordinary for him as he was normally very clean and put-together.

"Hey," I said, hesitantly approaching as my mind raced with a million possibilities. Was he secretly working with Edward and was coming to spy on me or lure me elsewhere? Did he know that Edward's disappearance had something to do with me and he was going to try to get revenge on me for making his secret lover vanish?

But, neither of those things happened.

"Hey," he replied, sitting down in front of me. "I'm craving a burger."

I nodded, pulling out my notepad. "One burger coming right up," I said, jotting his order down and sticking it through the kitchen window for the cook.

James was silent for a moment. He looked like he wanted to say something, but he seemed to be choosing his words very carefully.

"So..." His voice trailed off for a moment before picking back up. "Werewolves, huh? And you knew all along?"

I felt my face get hot. James, likely seeing how red I became, offered a friendly smile. "It's okay. I'm just curious."

"Um... Yeah," I replied. I rubbed the back of my neck nervously and let out a tense chuckle. "Pretty crazy, huh?"

Much to my surprise, James merely shrugged. "I guess. Although, I always wondered what was up with those physical fitness records."

The mention of the physical fitness records reminded me of the times that James had shown them to me. Aside from Tiffany, who apparently knew all along and never would have revealed something like that, only James and I had access to these records. Was it possible that James was the one who posted the files online?

“Speaking of those files,” I said, “You last had them, right? Do you think there’s a chance someone stole them or something? I mean, it’s a pretty big deal for this to get out.”

James narrowed his eyes then. “You don’t seriously think that I was the one who snitched, do you?” he replied, poking his index finger into the center of his chest and giving me an incredulous look. “You guys are my friends. I would never do something like that.”

I shook my head vehemently, feeling a little stupid now for even assuming such a thing. James, despite his apparent hidden relationship with Edward, had done nothing except being an extremely good friend since I’d met him. He didn’t even seem to be aware that Edward himself was a werewolf — if anything, James was probably just someone who got mixed up with the wrong man.

“No, of course not,” I reassured him. “I know you wouldn’t do something like that.”

James smiled weakly. Behind me, the cook rang the bell, and I turned around to take James’ burger and placed it on the counter in front of him. When I turned back around, however, I saw another unexpected guest walk in through the door: Enzo.

A lump rose in my throat. Was he going to come in and accuse me of flirting with James now, just like he had with Matt?

“Should I release a little scent?” Cora asked.

“No!” I abruptly replied out loud without thinking. Both James and Enzo suddenly looked at me with confusion on their faces.

“Huh?” James asked, his mouth full of burger.

I felt myself blush. “Sorry,” I replied. “I’m just tired. I meant to say hello.”

Neither James nor Enzo seemed convinced, but regardless, Enzo sat down next to James. James glanced up for a moment; there was a flash of something behind his eyes that I couldn’t quite read.

“C-Can I get you anything?” I asked Enzo.

He nodded, his brown eyes fixed unwaveringly on me in such a way that it was all too reminiscent of the way that he used to look at me when we first met. For the first time in a long time, I felt like prey beneath his gaze. “Grilled cheese, please. And fries.”

“Gotcha.” I wrote his order down on my notepad, then tore the page out and turned around to give it to the cook.

“Oh, and Nina?” Enzo called.

I froze. I could feel his eyes boring holes into my back. Was he going to say something cruel again? Was he going to ask why I was talking to James? For some reason, a thousand different possibilities swirled around in my head.

I slowly turned around to face him. “Yes?”

“And a chocolate milkshake too, please. Extra thick.”

I let out a small sigh of relief. “Coming right up,” I said, managing a small smile before I scurried over to the milkshake machine. I made his milkshake extra thick just the way he asked, and added a swirl of whipped cream and a cherry on top before setting it down in front of him. He mumbled some words of thanks as he took it and began to sip. Much to my surprise — and my relief — he stopped staring intently at me and instead pulled out his phone and scrolled while he waited for the rest of his food.

“I’m gonna go now,” James suddenly said, standing.

I furrowed my brow as I looked at the burger and fries still sitting on his plate. “Do you want a box or anything?” I asked. “You took, like, two bites.”

James shook his head and dug his wallet out of his pocket. “Just lost my appetite,” he said, tossing a wad of cash down on the counter. “I’ll see you later.”

Before I could stop him, he quickly turned on his heel and walked out of the diner.

Strange, I thought to myself as I watched him walk across the parking lot through the window. He had his hands in his pockets and seemed to be looking around nervously as he walked very quickly.

...

For some reason, Enzo stayed well after he finished his food. He continued to sit at the counter on his phone, occasionally asking me for a little more coffee or something extra to eat. Even after the last customer left after midnight and I began to clear the tables one last time, he was still there.

Finally, I worked up the courage to ask him to leave.



“Sorry,” I said, walking up to him and handing him his check. “I hate to kick you out, but I have to close up.”

Enzo merely nodded and looked at the check, then took out some cash and set it down on the counter before he stood.

“I’ll be waiting outside,” he said.

I frowned. “Why?” I asked. I wanted to ask him why he was so keen on being around me after he had essentially just told me that he didn’t want anything to do with me the other night. I also wanted to tell

him that I was a bit frightened after the way he acted in the locker room, but I didn’t.

“I said I’ll protect you, didn’t I?” he asked. “I don’t want you to be walking home alone in the dark.”

His words gave me a small ache in my chest. That was the Enzo I had come to love — and yet somehow, that part of him was getting smaller and smaller every day after what Edward did to him. It pained me to see it.

“Alright,” I said with a sigh, nodding. “I’ll be out soon.”

Not long later, after I had finished cleaning up the diner and counting out the register, I grabbed my coat and my bag and walked out. Enzo, as promised, was waiting for me in the parking lot on his motorcycle.

He handed me a helmet as I approached. “Hop on.”

I didn’t protest. I put the helmet on and climbed onto the motorcycle behind him, tentatively wrapping my arms around his waist. He started up the bike and drove off.

As we rode down the winding roads that led us back to campus, the cold autumn wind in our faces, I couldn’t help myself from leaning closer against his back.

And as I did, I came to realize that his back was tense beneath my touch

## **Chapter 115 Nightmares**

Nina

Enzo drove me home that night. As I got off of his motorcycle, I wanted so badly to stay with him. We could drive away on his motorcycle together and never return to this place, but at the same time, I knew that he was right about our relationship. If he truly had a fated mate, it wasn’t my place to tear him away from her.

“Thank you,” I said, standing beside his bike and shivering in the chilly autumn wind. “I appreciate your kindness.”

Enzo simply nodded before driving away. As I watched him go, I blinked away tears.

I returned to my room and tried to get some sleep, but I couldn't. Every time I fell asleep, I would have relentless nightmares about Edward returning to torture me or kidnap me. Finally, after an hour of tossing and turning, I began to feel claustrophobic in my bedroom and decided to go outside for a bit. As I put on some warm clothes and slipped on my sneakers to go out, I couldn't help but think that my time spent in Edward's little dungeon had impacted my ability to be in an enclosed space for very long.

The air was cold and brisk when I went outside, but it felt refreshing on my hot skin, and it was peaceful. With everyone else asleep, the campus was dark and quiet.

I walked for a bit with my hands in my pockets, staring at the ground as I thought about everything. Finally, I looked up at the sky and realized that the stars were clearly visible, so I stopped in one of the campus's many small parks and laid in the grass. Maybe I could just fall asleep out here — if only that would be a possibility.

My heart started to ache a little bit less as I looked up at the stars. It was funny to think that, just a few months ago, I wasn't even remotely aware of werewolves, and now it turned out that I actually was one myself. What was even funnier to me was that a few months before that, before I even met Justin, I had

absolutely no interest in love and now I was pining away for the exact opposite of the type of guy I would have ever even thought about. I was solely focused on work and school back then. Sometimes, I wished it could just go back to that. It was so much simpler before.

Suddenly, my train of thought was broken by the sound of footsteps echoing on the sidewalk through the quiet night. I lifted my head up to see who was coming, prepared to run or even fight if it was Edward or Lisa, but relaxed as I saw who it was.

Enzo.

“What are you doing out here?” he said, stopping in front of me and blocking my view of the stars from where I lay.

I shrugged. “Couldn't sleep. Didn't wanna be inside.”

“You're not planning on sleeping out here, are you?”

I chuckled. “What are you doing out here?”

Now, it was Enzo who shrugged. "I saw you through my window. You made me kinda worried. You're endangering yourself by being out here, you know."

"Well, stay with me, then," I said, patting the grass next to me. "I don't wanna go back inside."

Enzo hesitated for a moment before finally giving in and sitting down beside me with a sigh. I returned to looking at the stars, and saw him glance over at me out of the corner of my eye before he tilted his head back and looked up along with me.

"You can see all of Orion tonight," I said, pointing to the big constellation of the hunter in the sky. I traced my finger along the trio of stars that made up Orion's Belt, then up to his torso, then his club.

"Hm," Enzo replied, laying back on the grass beside me and following my finger with his eyes. "Nice night for stargazing, I guess."

We were silent for several minutes, just quietly taking in the stars and listening to the sound of the crickets around us. At one point, I looked over to see that Enzo was looking at the sky intently and with wonder, almost in a childlike way. It was cute.

"Oh, look!" he exclaimed suddenly, pointing with his hand that was closer to me. "A shooting star. Make a wish."

I grinned and squeezed my eyes shut, then made my wish.

"What did you wish for?" he asked.

I shook my head. "If I told you, then it wouldn't come true."

Enzo sighed and finally lowered his hand. As he did, it brushed my hand, and although he quickly jerked away, I felt my face start to blush. I propped myself up on my elbow, facing him, and looked at him — but then, something caught my eye.

"What's that?" I asked, pointing at the red scarf clutched tightly in his hand.

He paused for a moment and took in a sharp breath, clutching the scarf even tighter. It was a delicate scarf that was meant for a woman, not a man. There were little designs stitched into it.

"Uh, it's nothing," he said, shoving it in his jacket pocket. "Just a... thing."

"Just a thing?" I asked, smirking. "Enzo, I know we're not supposed to be romantically involved, but I still consider you a friend. You can still talk to me."

He hesitated again before finally sighing and speaking. "Fine. My dad sent it to me, as... motivation to win the tournament. It belongs to my fated mate. It has her scent on it."

I knew I wasn't supposed to care, but I did. Hearing this made my heart ache, and I felt a knot form in the pit of my stomach. "Oh," was all I could say before I rolled back over onto my back and looked up at the sky once again. "That was nice of your dad to do that."

Enzo didn't answer. We were silent once more for some time before my curiosity got the best of me, and I spoke.

"What's it like?" I asked, blinking away the tears that were beginning to well up in my eyes. "Your mate's scent."

Enzo paused. It seemed as though he didn't want to answer, and rightfully so. But finally, and much to my surprise, he did answer after a few moments of silence.

"It's... nice," he said.

"Just nice?"

He shrugged. "Better than nice. I can't really explain it. It's like... You know how sometimes you smell something, like a specific soap or a candle, and it reminds you of when you were a kid?"

"Mhm," I replied. As he spoke, I kept my eyes on the stars, praying that he didn't notice the tear that was rolling down my cheek.

"Well, it's like that," he continued. "Except I know I've never smelled it before. Like it's just a part of me. Somehow, I've always known it without ever having actually experienced it. It's comforting."

Just then, I saw another shooting star. I closed my eyes, wishing... Wishing that none of this was true, because when I was in the tunnels, the scent that came from Enzo's cell was exactly like that.

Was it possible to have an unrequited fated mate?

I opened my eyes again to see that Enzo was sitting up now, looking at me. I quickly wiped the tear off of my cheek with my hand, hoping that he hadn't seen it — but he had.

"I'm sorry," he said, putting the scarf back in his pocket. "I shouldn't have said anything."

I shook my head vehemently. “No,” I replied, sitting up now myself. “It’s okay. I’m happy that you feel comfortable enough being open with me. But... I’m tired now, so I’m gonna go home.”

I stood, and Enzo stood along with me. We walked in silence back to my building, stopping in front of the door once we reached it.

“Thanks for sitting with me,” I said.

Enzo nodded, then stared back down at the ground. I took in a deep breath and turned around to go back inside, but just before I did, I stopped. I bit my lip, turning back to face him with a burning question on my tongue. He was already walking down the steps.

“Enzo?” I called. He stopped and turned back around to look at me.

“Yes?”

“After everything we’ve felt for each other, you don’t think that there’s any chance—”

Enzo shook his head and interrupted me. “No, Nina. I’m sorry, but now that I’ve experienced her scent, I know that she’s my fated mate, and there’s no denying it.”

I felt tears well up in my eyes again. “But all of the times we wanted to be together... All of the times that it felt as though we couldn’t resist...”

“Love is different from lust,” Enzo replied. His voice was dark and low. “I’m sorry. But I think that all we ever really had between us was lust. It was doomed from the start.”

“Okay.” That was all I could say. My voice came out in a soft, choked whisper, so quiet it could have been mistaken for the breeze. Without another word, I went back inside, and the last thing I saw before shutting the door was Enzo walking across the quad with the red scarf in his hand

## **Chapter 116 Rotten Tomatoes**

Nina

Somehow, I managed to sleep that night, if only for a few hours before I had to be up for class. The news of werewolves had thoroughly spread its way through campus by now like a wildfire, and everywhere I went, people were whispering about Enzo.

“He’s a monster,” I heard one girl say from behind me while we were waiting for class to start. “I don’t know why anyone would want to compete with him. We should just boycott the games from now on until they replace him with someone normal.”

I felt myself fume at this comment, and turned around to glare at her.

"I think we should all be more accepting," I said, narrowing my eyes.

She laughed abrasively. "Oh, that's rich coming from you," she said. "You two have been thick as thieves all semester. How do we know that you're not a werewolf, too?"

"And what if I am?"

Suddenly, the girl's eyes widened. She opened her mouth to say something else, but stopped herself as the professor came in and began the lesson.

After class, I walked to the dining hall with Lori and Jessica. Along the way, we started to notice people walking toward the hockey arena with picket signs in their hands. One sign in particular caught my eye: it was the picture of a dog lifting its leg like it was going to urinate with a big red X through it, and below that, it said, "Don't let dogs piss all over our campus!"

I felt a growl escape my lips, and I went to shout something at the guy carrying the sign, but Lori grabbed my arm and stopped me before I could.

"It's not worth it," she said, pulling me away. "There's no convincing these people. They're a bunch of jerks with no empathy for anyone who's even the tiniest bit different."

"Yeah," Jessica chimed in. "Besides, there are plenty of people who are supportive of werewolves. I just joined a whole Twitter group of people who think that werewolves should be allowed to attend our school and play in our sports."

My friends' words were reassuring, but I still had my doubts. Suddenly, I had an idea.

"They're protesting before the game tonight, right?" I asked, to which Lori and Jessica nodded. "Let's protest against them. Show them that they can't just bully werewolves out of existence."

Jessica scrunched up her nose. "I don't know..." she said nervously. "I don't like getting involved in these sorts of things. Remember that one time when people were protesting against the new professor that was super racist? It turned into a huge brawl and tons of people got arrested."

"Yeah," Lori said, "but that professor got fired, too. So the protests did work."

I nodded. "Lori's right. Besides, we can leave if anything bad starts to happen. We don't need to engage in any fighting."

Jessica paused, biting her lip nervously, before she finally relented. "Alright," she said. "Let's have lunch, then we can go and make our signs. I'll notify my Twitter group."

...

A few hours later, we had our signs and headed over to the hockey arena to meet up with the rest of Jessica's group.

When we arrived, I was stunned to see the massive protest that had already begun. There were countless people who were protesting against werewolves — meanwhile, there were only ten of us,

with myself, Lori, and Jessica included. As we met up with Jessica's group, we quickly realized that our voices were immediately drowned out by the crowd of anti-werewolf protesters, many of whom were shouting at us angrily for being 'traitors'.

"Uh, I dunno about this," Jessica said with a shaky voice, holding her sign to shield her face. "There are so many of them."

"Don't worry, babe," Lori said, stepping in front of Jessica and shielding her with her body. "I'll make sure no one messes with you."

Just then, a girl from the other side cupped her hands over her mouth and screamed at Lori and Jessica from across the line, "Hey, traitors! You're just a bunch of sheep getting bossed around by the werewolf-fucker, Nina, aren't you?!"

"Hey!" Jessica suddenly shouted, revealing her angry face from behind her sign. "Don't talk about my friend like that!"

"Aw, what, are you gonna come over here and fight me?" the girl said, stepping into the middle of the line and cocking her head.

"No," Lori interrupted, pushing Jessica back and standing in front of her, throwing down her sign, "but I will!" She pushed up her sleeves and began to rush at the other girl, but before she could, I grabbed her by the arm and yanked her back. My action resulted in a chorus of boos coming from the other side, and the other girl stuck her tongue out before disappearing into the crowd again.

"Lori," I said, squeezing her arm, "it's nice that you wanna stand up for your girlfriend, but try to tone it down a notch. It doesn't help our image if we let them get under our skin and start a fight within the first five minutes of coming here."

Lori nodded angrily, picking back up her sign. I watched as she grabbed Jessica by the hand and rejoined the rest of the group.

When I went to join them, however, I saw an oddly familiar head of blonde hair in the anti-werewolf crowd...

It was only a glimpse, but I recognized that hair and that sweater vest anywhere.



“James?” I called, furrowing my brow, then cupped my hands over my mouth and shouted louder. “James!”

Unfortunately, he was already gone. The pit of dread in my stomach remained, however. Why was James in the anti-werewolf crowd? Surely there was some sort of explanation; I trusted him when he said that he was our friend, and that he would never do something like that. As I walked back to meet up with Jessica and Lori, however, I couldn't shake that feeling of unease. What if it really was James who leaked Enzo's secret?

No, I thought to myself. James wouldn't do that.

“What's wrong?” Jessica asked as I approached.

I shook my head, taking up my sign to join the protest. “Nothing,” I said, chalking it up to a simple mistake. Maybe someone else was just wearing a similar sweater vest to James. In fact, I was sure of it.

We spent the next forty-five minutes protesting until our throats and our bodies were sore. Surprisingly, a few people from the other side actually listened to our speeches, and came over to join our side. It was only a few, but it was better than nothing. Who knew; maybe if we worked hard enough at it, we

could get more and more people to understand that not all werewolves were monsters, and eventually we could even have the majority over them. Needless to say, I was optimistic.

That optimism was quickly snuffed out when the hockey team started pushing through to get to the arena.

“Monsters!” people screamed.

“Animals!”

“Liars!”

The hockey team just pushed through quietly, keeping their heads down as they clutched their duffle bags close to their chests. I could see Enzo at the back of the group, shouting to them to just keep going and get inside. His eyes scanned the crowd and landed on my group, then stopped on me. He shot me a confused, as well as concerned, look and furrowed his brows. I smiled at him over the crowd reassuringly, holding up my sign that read, “The Big, Bad Wolf is just a fairytale!”

Even from where I stood, I could see a bit of a smile twitch at the corners of Enzo's lips as he read my sign. Seeing him smile during a time like this, after not seeing him smile at all since before Edward took us, made my heart skip and made my body feel light.

As he approached, I kept the sign held high and kept my eyes focused on him as I projected my thoughts outwards, just as I had that night in the woods when we found out that Justin had been turned into a rogue.

"I'm always on your side."

His eyes widened, indicating that he had gotten my message.

But then, as if everything was moving in slow motion, I saw the same girl from before — the girl that tried to instigate a fight with Lori — step out from the crowd. She had something red and round in her hand, and an evil smirk on her face. I watched as she pulled her arm back, and threw the object directly at Enzo.

Without thinking, I lunged forward and jumped in front of Enzo. The object hit my shirt with a splat, leaving my white shirt streaked with a watery red color, clumps of gooey seeds, and a horrific smell.

It was a rotten tomato

## **Chapter 117 Not a Monster**

Nina

As I looked down at the rotten, smelly mess of tomato guts on the front of my white shirt, the people around me began to laugh hysterically.

"Werewolf-fucker!" the girl who threw the tomato shouted, laughing maniacally.

"You're protecting a monster!" another guy yelled.

The crowd erupted into a mixture of mocking and angry chatter, and all I felt was Enzo's arm wrap around me. He began to usher me toward the hockey arena, shielding me from a barrage of other items being thrown. I had never expected it to get out of hand like this.

We rushed toward the arena. Enzo flung the door open and helped me in, shutting it firmly behind us. I could still hear the muffled sound of the rioting crowd outside, and I hoped that my friends got out before anything bad happened.

"Why did you do that?" Enzo asked, turning to face me.

I felt my face get hot. "I don't know," I said. "I just sort of did it. You've done so much for me... Taking a rotten tomato to the front of my shirt was the least I could do."

Enzo sighed, running a hand through his curly hair, then gestured toward the locker room. "Come on," he said. "Let's get you a clean shirt."

I followed him to the locker room. Once we were inside with the door shut, the muffled sounds of the protesters faded away completely, leaving us with a welcome silence. Enzo walked over to his locker and dropped his duffle bag on the floor. I followed, then watched as he retrieved an extra hockey jersey with his number on it out of his locker.

“Here.” He held it out to me, then turned his back and folded his arms. Just before he did, however, I could see that his cheeks had turned slightly red, and I wondered if he turned his back to hide his face.

“Thanks,” I said. I pulled my dirty shirt off over my head and tossed it in the trash, not even wanting to bother with trying to get the rotten tomato smell out of it in the wash. Even if I did get the smell out, I would probably not be able to wear it without remembering the sickening scent and gagging.

I slipped the jersey on over my head. It was huge on me, and almost reached my knees. The sleeves alone, which were supposed to be short on Enzo, came down to my elbows. I felt silly wearing something so oversized, but at the same time, it was oddly comforting; it smelled like him. That sweet, woodsy scent that I had become so accustomed to.

“You can turn around now,” I said.

Enzo turned. His brown eyes widened momentarily as he looked at me, but then, a smirk spread across his face. I pouted and folded my arms across my chest, which made him smirk even more.

“Don’t make fun of me,” I pleaded.

He shook his head, making his curly mop of brown hair fall into his eyes a bit. “I’m not making fun of you,” he murmured, averting his gaze to the floor. “You look... cute.”

My heart skipped at his words. My embarrassed pout turned into a slight smile, and I looked down at myself.

Suddenly, Enzo seemed to stiffen. I looked up to see him staring intently at me, his eyes glowing red. There was a hungry expression on his face, and he subconsciously licked his lips before stepping toward me. As he closed the distance between us, I dropped my arms from where they were folded across my chest and back to my sides, looking up at him with my brain scattered. He had just told me that we couldn’t act on our impulses, but now, he was pressing me up against the locker again.

I felt like his prey again, but at the same time, it made my panties wet. A low growl rumbled in Enzo’s throat as he towered over me, pressing his palm into the lockers above my head. I tilted my face up to look at him, and for a long moment, our lips hovered tantalizingly close to one another. I pictured him lifting up the hockey jersey he

loaned me and running his hands along my body, eventually pulling down my jeans just enough and thrusting himself into me...

But then, the door opened. Enzo quickly seemed to come to his senses. The glow in his eyes faded, and he jumped away from me before anyone saw.

The team flooded in, chattering to each other about the protesters and the upcoming hockey game, but the throbbing feeling in my panties and the feeling of my heart leaping in my chest remained.

"Man, someone's gotta do something about those protesters," Matt said.

I glanced over to look at Enzo, who now had his back turned to me as he rifled through his locker.

"I know," Bryce replied. "Enzo, are you gonna say anything about it at the hockey game tonight?"

Enzo shook his head. "Nah. They'll get over it. Campus security will take care of it if they get too out of hand, and besides: there's no convincing these people."

Suddenly, I chimed in. "Actually, my friends and I were rallying for werewolves — we actually got a few people to put down their signs and join us. There are more people who are supportive of werewolves than it seems." As I spoke, the entire team jumped and turned to face me, almost as though they hadn't even realized I was there. I quickly came to realize that I still had myself pressed up against the lockers, and stepped away.

"Thanks for that, Nina," Matt said with a smile, but then looked down at the jersey I was wearing and furrowed his brow. "But... Why are you wearing Enzo's jersey?"

"There was an incident with a rotten tomato," Enzo interrupted. Then, turning to me: "Would you mind leaving the locker room now, actually? We've gotta get changed."

I felt my face go red and nodded sheepishly, scurrying off to the door. My heart still pounded from my interaction with Enzo, and as I headed for the back door of the arena, I couldn't get away from the dizzying, mouth-watering scent that was on his jersey.

More importantly, however, I needed to understand why he had suddenly been so aroused by me just a few minutes earlier, only for him to suddenly stop and look at me coldly as he asked me to leave the locker room.

I had a pretty good reason as to why.

"You released that scent again, didn't you?" I asked Mina internally as I stepped out of the back door to the hockey arena and was relieved to find that there were no protesters there.

“...Yes,” she replied. “I’m sorry. I couldn’t control it this time. The scent on his jersey made me unable to resist.”

I sighed. The scent on his jersey made me unable to resist, too — but he had a fated mate already, and that was final. When I got home, I would have to take his jersey off.

Tonight was the next game in the Half-Moon Tournament, and I had to be clear headed as the team doctor...

But even more importantly than that, I had to accept fate and move on from Enzo Rivers

## **Chapter 118 The Family Business**

Nina

That night, I returned to the arena for the hockey game. There were still protests happening outside, but there were fewer people now that campus security was standing around — and apparently, as Lori and Jessica explained to me on our way there, several students were arrested for throwing objects and starting fights. After the mini-riot, more students also realized that such negativity was toxic, and decided to join the pro-werewolf club. I was relieved to hear this.

The hockey game that night was a landslide victory on our part. Although the crowd on our side of the arena was much smaller than it normally was and our cheerleaders had completely boycotted the game, our team played hard. Enzo used a lot of different tactics to outsmart the other hockey captain, and I began to wonder as I watched them if the other captain was even nearly as skilled in hockey as Enzo, or if he was only placed in that role because he was a Crescent werewolf. It made me think, as our team scored goal after goal, that there really was nothing special about werewolves in particular that could help them win this tournament over skilled hockey players.

I was also shocked to see that Enzo was not only performing incredibly well despite his recent injuries, but so was Matt. In fact...

Matt’s performance was far above what it used to be, and his injured hand was perfectly fine now. It was almost superhuman.

...

The next morning, I went to class after another uneasy night of sleep that was full of nightmares. I could practically feel the dark circles under my eyes as I walked to class, and even the coffee I bought at the dining hall didn’t seem to be helping much.

How much longer would these nightmares last?

I arrived at class with Jessica, and vowed to focus solely on my classwork. I couldn't let Enzo, Edward, anyone or anything else invade my thoughts anymore. Now, my grades were the only thing that I could focus on.

At the end of class, however, the professor called me down to his desk.

"I'll catch up with you at the student center," I said to Jessica before swallowing the knot in my throat and walking down to the professor's desk.

"Nina," the professor said with a concerned look on his face, "I've noticed that your grades have been slipping, and you were out without any sort of excuse for almost all of last week. This isn't like you; is everything okay?"

I gulped, thinking about the real reasons behind why I was gone for all that time. How could I possibly explain to my professor that I was missing from class because I was being held hostage by the campus counselor for days on end and was brainwashed into believing that the entire past four years of my life were a fantasy?

"Well?" the professor asked.

"I was just dealing with some personal issues," I said, which wasn't entirely a lie. "I'm sorry. Is there any way I can make up for the work?"

The professor sighed and folded his arms across his chest, leaning back in his chair. "I don't normally do this, but I like you and I know that you're a good student," he said. "Tell you what: there's a symposium next week. If you give a presentation, I'll award you with some extra credit. But this is just a one time thing, okay?"

I let out a sigh of relief. "Thank you so much, professor," I said with a smile. "I promise I'll do my best and I won't let my grades slip again."

The professor nodded, then let me leave.

After lunch with Jessica, I decided to head to the library to get started on my presentation. Much to my surprise, I spotted James crossing the quad from afar. I waved, then jogged up to him. I secretly just wanted to pry about the protest.

"Hey, James," I said with a smile as I approached. "Where are you headed?"

James looked a little nervous as he adjusted his bag on his shoulder. "Uh... Nowhere in particular," he said. "What about you?"

"I was just heading to the library," I replied. Then, after biting my lip for a moment: "Did you hear what happened at the protest yesterday?" I asked. I waited to see his reaction, but all he did was shrug.

“Yeah, I heard a bit about it,” he said, his eyes shifting from left to right and giving him an uncharacteristically suspicious appearance. “I guess lots of people aren’t thrilled about this whole werewolf thing.”

Now, I was starting to get apprehensive about James’ behavior, so I decided to pry just a little bit more. “They sure are,” I replied. “Whoever leaked this information is probably feeling pretty bad about it right now.”

James didn’t answer right away. He paused for a few moments, unblinking, then cleared his throat and opened his mouth to speak — but before anything came out, his eyes caught something behind me, and he closed his mouth again.

I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked up to see Enzo standing beside me. His eyes were fixed unwaveringly on James. Was he about to have another outburst of jealousy, or was he suspicious of James as well?

“Nina,” Enzo said suddenly, turning to look at me and breaking his gaze from James. “Do you have that jersey I gave you? I need it back.”

I swallowed, then nodded and dug into my bag for it. “I was gonna find you later to give it back to you,” I said. “Thanks for letting me borrow it.”

“No problem.” Enzo paused, then turned back to face James. “Did you hear that some psycho at that protest hurled a rotten tomato at Nina?” Enzo asked. His voice was low, and almost accusatory. “Whoever leaked this info should’ve thought about these consequences before doing it. Someone could get hurt from all of these protests.”

James’ eyes widened momentarily. He cleared his throat again and shifted from one foot to the other. “Uh, yeah,” he said, moving to walk around Enzo and me. “They really should’ve. Um, anyway, I’ve gotta get to class. I’ll see you guys around.”

Before Enzo or I could say anything, James suddenly turned on his heel and stormed off. He moved so quickly, in fact, that a folded up piece of paper fluttered out of his pocket and landed on the sidewalk.

“Wait, James—” I called, grabbing the paper, but he was already gone.

I turned back to Enzo and gave him a confused look. “Was he being weird?” I asked.

Enzo nodded, then looked down at the paper in my hands. “What is that?”

I shrugged and turned it over in my hands, wondering if it would be appropriate to read it or not. I was curious, but it could be anything. It could be personal — it could be a love letter to Edward, for all I knew.



Finally, my curiosity got the best of me, and I opened it. My eyes widened as I read what was on the page. Enzo, seeing this, snatched it out of my hands.

“Dear James,” he read, glancing up at me briefly, “I’m so proud of you for what you did. The truth is important, and you did the right thing by taking my advice and making sure that people are aware of this sort of thing. I understand if you feel a little guilty, especially since you considered him to be somewhat of a friend — but rest assured that the world will be better off with another one of those monsters taken care of. Now, the next part will be even harder, but your mother and I believe in you. Once you get it over with, you’ll realize that it’s not so bad after all. Welcome to the family business, son. Love, Dad.”

Enzo stared unblinkingly at the page for several moments. I felt my chest start to burn with the realization of what was at hand. It felt too deliberate that the paper suddenly fell out of James’ pocket like that at just the right moment. It wasn’t intentional, was it? Like some kind of warning? Or was James really that frazzled from whatever was going on in his personal life that he genuinely was so careless to let it happen?

Finally, Enzo crumpled the paper into his fist. “That little weasel,” he snarled, beginning to storm past me, but I jumped in front of him and placed my hand on his chest to stop him before he could do anything rash.

“Enzo, think rationally about this,” I pleaded. “Please. Just take a step back and don’t do anything without really thinking about it first.”

Enzo growled and tried to step past me again. Once again, I put myself in front of him, this time pressing my body against his to keep him from going. “Just breathe,” I begged. “No one needs to get hurt.”

As I pressed my body against his, I saw his red eyes finally flicker down to me and soften a bit as he looked at me. His fury seemed to be placated for now...

But as we stood too close together and the smell of his sweet, strong scent filled my senses, and as our breaths came out onto each other in little white clouds in the cold autumn air, I wasn’t sure what would happen next between us

## **Chapter 119 Something in Her Eyes**

Enzo

As I read the letter that fell out of James’ pocket, my eyes widened. I always knew that guy was off about something, and he’d been acting weird ever since my information was leaked. The information that was leaked included my physical fitness test files, and the only other people aside from him who had access to those files were Nina and Tiffany, and neither of them would ever do something like that.

I felt a low growl roll like thunder in my throat as I saw him disappear across the quad. All I wanted in that moment was to run after him and throttle him.

It wasn't even just about the information being leaked; it was also about the fact that he clearly came from a family of werewolf hunters. My mind flickered back to the night we went camping in the woods, when he came running and screaming like a child while Nina was left defenseless against a werewolf. Did he know then, too? He had seemed uncertain about what was coming out of the woods for Nina, but that all could have been an act for all I knew.

"That little weasel..."

Without thinking, I started to walk around Nina to go after him, but I was suddenly stopped by the feeling of her palm pushing into my chest.

"Enzo, think rationally about this," she pleaded, her voice shaking with fear. "Please. Just take a step back and don't do anything without really thinking about it first."

I looked down to see Nina staring up at me with a frightened expression on her face. She was really protecting this guy? Would she protect him even after he somehow killed me?

I pushed past her again, but this time, she jumped in front of me and pressed her body up against mine. I could've plowed past her, but I didn't. Something suddenly assaulted my senses... The same

thing that kept making me lose control around her, even when I was supposed to be cutting her off romantically.

That scent... It was faint, but it was there. It was also oddly similar to my mate's scent, but I knew it was coming from Nina. I was certain her wolf hadn't emerged yet, and I was also sure that she didn't even have a wolf yet, but then again...

Our bodies stayed pressed together. I could feel her warmth in the cold air, and I could see our breath coming out in white clouds, mixing together as we stared at each other. Her cheeks were rosy from the cold. Her hair poked out of her hat in two, long braids, and she wore a black hoodie beneath her thick flannel coat. Her tan skin, brown eyes, and black hair stood in stark contrast to the gray atmosphere that had taken over the campus. During a time of year that the landscape had lost its color, she added a pop of warmth. To me, she embodied the color of autumn. She was autumn.

Her scent began to overwhelm me. I felt my eyes start to glow, but I didn't care at that moment. She stayed close to me and began to raise up on her tiptoes, her long eyelashes brushing her face as she slowly began to close her eyes. I bent my head down, relishing in the feeling of our lips touching.

No, I thought to myself. This wasn't right. I could feel myself losing control, and I couldn't let it happen. Before we kissed, I suddenly staggered backwards, shaking my head.

"I can't keep doing this," I whispered, more so to myself than to Nina.

She looked up at me then with so much pain on her face. I felt like an asshole for what I was doing to her, but I knew that it would be better to let her go before I really hurt her. I shook my head again, dispelling the images of her beautiful body out of my mind, then turned on my heel.

"Wait!" she said. I felt her small hand grab my wrist and I stopped, not so much as looking at her because I couldn't even bear it. "Promise you won't do anything rash until we figure out what's really going on," she said, surprising me. I had expected her to say something about our relationship, but

once again, Nina's kindhearted nature came out. Even in the face of potential evil, she was calm and level headed and didn't want anyone to get hurt.

Somehow, that was a comfort to me: that Edward hadn't entirely broken Nina. He may have scarred both of us, but at least she would always be kind and gentle and caring. That was all that mattered.

"I won't," I said, still not able to bring myself to look at her. She let out a sigh of relief behind me, then released her grip on my wrist. Without another word, I stormed off, and when I was out of Nina's sight I pulled my mate's scarf and shoved my face in it, inhaling deeply. My mate's scent calmed my nerves and made me momentarily forget about my feelings for Nina, but at the same time, I realized even more now that both of their scents were oddly similar. I shook my head again. Maybe I was just picking up my mate's scent from the scarf and mistakenly thought it came from Nina. She had no wolf, and therefore, no scent. I was certain of it.

It wasn't until I got home later that I realized I still had the letter crumpled up in my fist.

...

The next morning, I woke up early to go to hockey practice. My back felt even more stiff after a night of bad sleep and from the cold air, but I figured that it would fade with enough time. The more I kept my mate's scarf around, the stronger Fio seemed to become, and he even started speaking to me a little again. He was excited about our fated mate, but also understandably a little confused about Nina. I told him not to think about her too much, because I needed to focus on winning this tournament. He obliged.

As I crossed the quad, however, I stopped in my tracks and felt my grip tighten around my mate's scarf — because ahead of me, I saw none other than Nina and Justin talking by the fountain.

They looked to be having a serious conversation as they sat on the edge of the fountain. They sat close to each other... Too close for my comfort.

"No," I said to myself out loud, shaking my head again. I had a mate. I couldn't get jealous over Nina. If she wanted to get back together with Justin, then that was a choice she was allowed to make. Assuming that he really was as innocent in all of this as she claimed, of course, then maybe their shared trauma would bring them closer together. Maybe they could even be mates, if he still had the effects of the Mad Wolf serum.

As I was telling myself these things, my eyes stayed fixed on them.

All of these platitudes to make myself feel better faded when I saw them hug. I felt my heart practically stop for a moment, and my head began to spin. I felt my eyes start to glow... I was losing control again. How? Why?

I didn't know the answer to those questions, but I did know that I had to get myself far away from them before I acted out of character again. If I stayed any longer, I would only lose control and attack Justin again, as well as confuse Nina even more about our relationship. No; I had to keep calm.

Before I could do anything stupid, I put my head down and stormed past.

## **Chapter 120 Shared Trauma**

Nina

Enzo and I almost kissed.

But we didn't. He stepped away before we could. I understood why he did that, but it still hurt. At the very least, even though he left almost immediately after, I made him promise not to hurt James; I wanted to get to the bottom of this before we did anything rash. For all we knew, James wasn't even planning on doing anything bad. We didn't even know what the letter truly meant in its entirety.

That night, however, I had countless horrible dreams. In one dream, I was back in Edward's tunnels and he was forcing me to drink my medicine. When he poured it down my throat, it turned into a thick sludge that made me choke. In another dream, I was running toward Enzo, but something was holding me back and I never reached him before he disappeared.

In my final dream, I saw Enzo standing in front of me. He was smiling and holding a woman's hand. I couldn't see her face because it was covered by a wedding veil, but when they turned toward each other and he lifted his veil and kissed her, I knew it was his fated mate despite still not seeing her face. I sobbed, trying as hard as I could to get between them and stop them, but as I

did, Enzo suddenly grabbed me by my throat and throttled me. I struggled against him as he lifted me off of the ground by my neck, my limbs flailing while I clawed at his firm hands. The last thing I saw before I started to lose consciousness was the image of his glowing red eyes staring angrily at me.

Suddenly, I woke up to the feeling of someone shaking me and the sound of Lori and Jessica's concerned voices.

"Nina? Are you okay?" Jessica asked.

I cracked my eyes open, then furrowed my brow. "What are you doing in my room?" It was still pitch black outside, and when I glanced over at the digital clock on my dresser, it was only three o'clock in the morning.

"You were totally freaking out," Jessica said. "We heard you yelling and got worried about you."

I frowned, sat up, and rubbed my eyes.

"What happened?" Lori asked.

"I keep having nightmares about what Edward did to me," I said quietly. "They won't stop. And they've been getting worse."

Lori and Jessica both looked at each other in unison.

"You know," Lori said, sitting on the edge of my bed, "the whole town knows about werewolves now. If that's what was stopping you from turning Edward in to the police before, then it's not stopping you now."

I shook my head. "It's not just that. I don't know what he's capable of, and I still don't know who exactly he, Ronan, Lisa, and whoever else are working for. Besides... I have no evidence. It'll be just like that time that I tried to turn in the stalker and they didn't listen to me because she stole the only evidence I had."

Lori and Jessica were silent for a moment before Jessica suddenly spoke up.

"Maybe you should get some evidence," she suggested. "You said the tunnel has two entrances, right? Why not go back and get some pictures?"

My eyes widened at the prospect of going back in there. I didn't know if I could do it... The very thought of going back in those tunnels made me want to vomit, and all of a sudden, I felt myself starting to cry.

Jessica and Lori both wrapped their arms around me.

"We're here for you," Jessica said. "Whatever you need. That's what friends are for."

...

I hardly got any more sleep that night. By six o'clock in the morning, I gave up entirely and just decided to wake up and get to the library early to work on my presentation. At least that could distract me.

Around eight o'clock, I had to go to class, and by that point the effects of the sleep deprivation were really starting to take a toll on me. No matter how much coffee I drank, I could hardly keep my eyes open... but I had an exam that day, and I couldn't miss it.

I tried my best during the exam, but it wasn't enough. Soon, my eyelids began to flutter as I rested my chin on my hand, and then before I knew it I was fast asleep on my desk right in the middle of the exam.

I awoke with a start to the sound of the professor dropping a textbook on my desk and quiet laughter around me.

"Tired, Miss Harper?" the professor asked.

I blinked, then rubbed my eyes. "I'm so sorry," I said. "I didn't get much sleep—"

"There are no excuses in this class," he interrupted. "The exam is over, and it looks like you're only halfway finished. I'll be docking points for this; next time, try not to stay up all night partying."

I went to say that I wasn't up partying, but what was I supposed to say after that? If I mentioned anything about the nightmares, I'd only get more ridicule, and by that point the professor had already taken my test and the rest of the class began to pack up.

So, I swallowed my pride and left the classroom.

I felt entirely downtrodden as I walked across the quad. I was having nightmares, losing sleep, my grades were slipping, and of course there was my relationship with Enzo, and James' letter and strange behavior... The list could go on.

All I wanted to do was go back to my room and cry.

And that was exactly where I was heading when I heard someone say my name from behind me.

"Hey, Nina." I stopped and turned around to see Justin standing behind me.

“Oh. Hey,” I said.

He looked like he hadn’t been sleeping much either, judging from his messy hair and the dark circles under his eyes. For a moment we just stared at each other before he finally spoke.

“Can we talk for a few minutes?” he asked, pointing at the bench by the fountain. I nodded hesitantly and followed him over.

“I just want you to know that what happened in the cafeteria the other day was actually really helpful,” he said once we sat down. “I think it unlocked something in me, so to speak.”

I furrowed my brow. “What do you mean?”

“I’ve been having a lot of nightmares lately,” Justin said. “I didn’t know what they meant initially. They usually involved a man torturing me... But when you mentioned Edward, and then Enzo asked if I was ‘working for Edward’, I realized that the man I saw in my dreams was Edward. After that, I started remembering all sorts of things...”

“He did some horrible things to you, didn’t he?” I asked.

Justin nodded. I could see tears beginning to form in his eyes, and without thinking, I pulled him into a tight hug. He wrapped his arms around me and buried his head in my shoulder as I rubbed his back.

“He did the same thing to me,” I said. “I’ve been having nightmares, too.”

As I said this, Justin only hugged me more tightly... But at the same time, I looked up to see Enzo walking past quickly with his head down. I knew then that he saw us hugging, and he was certainly upset about it judging from how hard his jaw was set.

I pulled away from Justin suddenly and watched Enzo storm away.

Justin seemed to notice this and stood, nodding to himself. “You should go and talk to him,” he said quietly. “I have to go to class.”

Before I could stop him, Justin turned and walked away.

I sighed, standing, then jogged after Enzo.

“Enzo!” I called as I caught up to him. He didn’t look at me, but didn’t quicken his pace to get away from me, either. “What you just saw—”

“It’s fine,” he said suddenly, stopping in his tracks. When he turned toward me, I saw that his eyes had a painful expression behind them, but he seemed to be trying to hide it.



I frowned, wishing that he would just be honest with me. Why did he have to hide his true emotions for me after everything we'd been through together?

He then pulled the red scarf out of his pocket and held it up for me to see. As I looked at it fluttering in the wind, I felt my stomach drop. "It's okay if you want to be with someone else," he muttered. "I've got a mate. Maybe it's time for you to find one, too, Nina."

"But Enzo, I—"

He only shook his head. "I have to go to hockey practice," he said. "I need to focus on winning this tournament, and whatever is happening between us only keeps getting in the way."

My heart broke, leaving me with a feeling of hollowness in my chest. I couldn't stop him before he turned and walked away, still clutching that red scarf.