

My Hockey Alpha #Chapter 151 A Promise - Read My Hockey Alpha Chapter 151 A Promise

Chapter 151 A Promise

Nina

My heart dropped at the girl's words.

"Too merciful?" I asked. "What did I do to you to deserve any of this?"

The girl merely shrugged. She seemed so nonchalant that it made me sick, but before I could say anything else, she suddenly looked at her watch. "Oh!" she said, grinning at me. "It looks like it's time for me to go. Enzo will be ready for me any minute."

I opened my mouth to ask her what she meant, but before I could, she opened a portal and vanished. Was she meeting Enzo to marry him already? I felt a pit form in my stomach at the thought. What if they mated and he forgot all about me, leaving me in here until the day I died?

No, I thought to myself. I couldn't lose hope.

...

I couldn't be sure exactly how long I was trapped there. It could have been hours or even days simply because it felt as though there was no real passage of time; the sun never rose or set, and it was always in that constant state of eternal twilight.

I tried at first to see if there was a way to leave, but the girl, whose name I still didn't know, wasn't lying when she said I wouldn't be able to get out. There seemed to be some sort of invisible force field around the place, like a spell had been cast on it. I could still walk out a ways into the woods all around the cabin, but about half a mile into the woods was when I would encounter the invisible dome keeping me there. No amount of force could break through it. It was impenetrable, and it made me wonder if I could even be seen from the outside or if the force field made me invisible, too. I really was trapped there forever, it seemed. But I held out hope that Enzo would come for me. He always came for me.

I spent my time there reading mostly once I realized I couldn't get out. There was a supply of canned food in the cabin, which I cooked on the little wood stove. Some firewood had already been chopped for me, so I was able to heat the cabin. How long had it taken for her to build this place? Or was it even a physical place at all? Perhaps a witch made it with magic, which would explain the invisible barrier. Sometimes I wondered if I was even awake at all, or if this was fabricated in my head and I was really put under a spell somewhere, unconscious.

Sleeping wasn't easy. It was too quiet, and I was lonely. Thankfully, I didn't really feel tired, so I just stayed awake most of the time and read books or walked around. The only thing that kept me going was knowing that Enzo would come for me, as always. If I didn't have that hope, I knew I would go insane, because even my wolf seemed to have disappeared, leaving me with no one to talk to.

At one point, however, after being there for what felt like ages, I suddenly shot up in bed when I heard the distinct whirring sound of a portal opening outside.

Not only that, but I smelled something familiar, warm, and comforting... Enzo.

I jumped up and ran to the door. "Enzo!" I yelled, flinging the door open. I felt my heart leap as I saw him standing on the lawn, looking confused — but I was quickly accosted by the girl from before. My twin.

She jumped in the way and pushed me backwards. Her hand shot out and she grabbed a fistful of the front of my shirt as she forced me back into the cabin.

"Hey!" I said, holding up my hands in surrender. "What are you—"

"Listen," she snarled, her face mere inches from mine, "I'm only doing this because I pity you, and because I don't want anything to happen with my marriage... So don't think that I'm doing this because I have any sort of warm feelings toward you. Understand?"

I gulped, blinking as I nodded rapidly.

"Good," she said. "Now get out there." She pushed me back toward the door, still holding onto my shirt. She then flung the door open and shoved me outside. I fell on my hands and knees in front of the cabin, but I didn't care because Enzo had come for me after all.

"Nina," he whispered, running up to me. He helped me stand, then pulled me into a tight hug.

"You came for me," I murmured into his chest.

Meanwhile, behind us, the girl tapped her foot impatiently. "Hurry it up," she said, her tone of voice grating and annoyed. "We've got a dinner to get to, Enzo."

"Can we have a moment of privacy, at least?" Enzo asked.

I glanced over my shoulder. The girl sighed annoyedly, then waved us away dismissively with her slender hand and retreated into the cabin. Once she was gone, I grabbed Enzo's hand and pulled him further away from the cabin, toward the pond. We stopped there and looked at each other in the dim light.

“Who is she?” I whispered. “I know she’s my twin, but... Is she your mate?”

Enzo nodded soberly. He glanced over at the cabin, then back at me. “She’s the Alpha King’s daughter,” he whispered. “Her name is Selena. Listen, Nina... I told her I would stay with her if she let you go. I’m not sure if I’ll be able to see you again after this, but you have to understand that I only did it to help you get home... I wouldn’t choose to stay with her otherwise. She’s nuts.”

I felt my stomach twist into a painful knot, and as it did, tears started to prick at the backs of my eyes. I shook my head vigorously. “No,” I whimpered. “You can’t stay. Isn’t there some way?”

Enzo sighed and pulled me into another hug. I sobbed into his shirt, but he only stroked my hair. I knew, deep down, that he was trying his best, and that the politics behind this marriage were too important... But it didn’t make me feel any better about this situation. If it wasn’t for the Crescents, he could come home with me. Would this be the last time I ever saw Enzo?

Enzo then pulled away. We looked into each other’s eyes for the longest moment. I wanted to kiss him so badly, and I could tell he wanted to kiss me, too. But then, the screen door to the cabin creaked and slammed and Selena came storming over to us. “Lori and Jessica are rogues,” Enzo whispered, his eyes full of pain, as she approached. I felt my heart drop, but before I had the chance to react, Selena grabbed my arm and yanked me away from him roughly.

“That’s enough of that,” she growled. “Come on. Let’s go.”

She pulled me over to a clear area on the lawn, then made a motion with her hand. As she did, a swirling portal began to open. “This will take you back to your precious campus,” she said. “Don’t show your face again. Understand me?”

I nodded, but I couldn’t look at her. I could only look at Enzo. And as she shoved me through the portal, the last thing I saw was Enzo’s pained, somber face staring back at me

Chapter 152 Wreckage

Nina

The last thing I saw before Selena shoved me through the portal was Enzo’s pained face staring back at me.

Then, suddenly, I was back in my home realm. I was exactly where Edward had first taken me through the portal before, but before I could even collect my bearings, I was alerted by the sound of a rogue’s howl coming from the direction of the campus. I had to move and get somewhere safe before I could do anything else, no matter how long I

wanted to spend writhing on the forest floor in sadness. The rogue howled again, but sounded a little closer this time.

I cursed under my breath and scrambled to my feet, whipping my head this way and that frantically before I decided to run in the direction of the town. The campus was likely crawling with rogues now, and although I wanted to go back and search for my friends, my best bet was to go where there would be fewer rogues for now, and where Lisa and Ronan would be least likely to be wandering around. Not only that, but hopefully I could find supplies.

As I ran, the thought of the gun shop just outside town where I went before crossed my mind. However, as I thought about the possibility of shooting and killing any of my friends or classmates, I decided that I'd rather try my luck hiding out until the Fullmoons came to help... If they were still coming to help.

The closer I got to town, the more I realized that there was a very good chance that the Fullmoons would lose against the Crescents even if they did come. With this many rogues on the loose, I wasn't sure how well even the Fullmoons would fare if they tried to fight. Would they give up on the town entirely?

The town started to come into view. I slowed down my pace and took more caution as I made my way through the woods, always on the constant lookout for rogues or Crescents. Thankfully, it was mostly quiet; until I got to town.

When I got to town, I nearly let out a yelp of surprise when a rogue walked right past the building I was about to come out from behind. I quickly clapped a hand over my mouth, pressing my body against the wall of the alleyway. I didn't even breathe.

I could hear the rogue's slow, ragged breaths. Even though I held my breath, I could still smell its fetid stench. It lingered in front of the building, sniffing the air. I couldn't move; I could only squeeze my eyes shut and try not to cry.

The rogue lingered there for what felt like an eternity. I swore that it could hear my racing heart as it slowly began to shuffle toward me...

But then, suddenly, I heard the sound of a distant gunshot. So did the rogue, who suddenly stopped its sniffing and let out a loud, keening howl before scampering away.

I wasn't sure who shot that gun or where they shot it from, but they may have just saved my life.

Now that the coast was clear, I finally released my breath and let out a sigh of relief before slowly poking my head out from between the buildings.

The quaint little strip of shops that I had become so accustomed to as being a safe, cozy place was now nothing but wreckage. Shop windows were shattered, debris lined

the streets, and cars were left abandoned in the middle of the road. The little town that had once been a lively place filled with voices, laughter, and music was now dead silent, save for the howling wind that blew down the street.

I gulped and slowly stepped out from between the buildings, keeping down and darting behind cars and trash cans as I crossed the street toward the abandoned convenience store. I didn't know how long I would be waiting for the Fullmoons' help, so I knew that I needed to gather any food and supplies I could carry.

When I entered the convenience store, it seemed to be mostly untouched. Even in the state of things, I felt a little guilty as I grabbed a backpack off of a shelf, ripped the tag off, and then began to fill it with canned food and other supplies. It felt as though I was stealing, even though I was only doing what I had to do to survive.

I was filling the bag with first aid supplies when I suddenly heard the sound of broken glass crunching underfoot. Without a moment of hesitation, I quickly darted behind a shelf and crouched down; a human was clearly approaching, but I couldn't be certain who it was.

The footsteps stopped outside. Then, my heart leaped into my throat as I heard the door open, causing the little bell to tinkle against the glass.

I heard the footsteps begin to meander through the aisles of the little store. There was the sound of the stranger taking some things off of shelves and clearing his throat.

If this was Ronan or any other Crescent, I would have to make a run for it. They were coming closer, and my only option was to make a break for the door and run as fast as I could... But, as I shifted in my crouched position, I made the grave mistake of stepping on a plastic wrapper that sent a loud crunching sound through the shop. My heart stopped at that moment. The stranger stopped, too.

I heard the sound of a gun cocking.

"Come out. I have a gun."

Wait... I knew that voice.

"J-James?" I called out.

"Nina?"

I felt my heart leap. I quickly jumped up and came out from behind the shelf, my eyes filling with tears of joy. We stood there in disbelieving silence for several moments before he lowered his gun and ran to me, throwing his arms around me.

Neither of us spoke for the longest time. We held each other like that in the middle of the store, swaying back and forth as we both sobbed into each other's shoulders.

Finally, I pulled away and took in James' appearance. His face was dirty, and his clothes were a bit tattered, but he looked otherwise healthy and uninjured.

"Where have you been?" he asked quietly, his voice shaking.

"It's... A long story," I replied. "Too much to tell now."

James nodded understandingly. "I found a safe place to hole up in," he said. "It's not far. But it's getting dark, so we should go now."

I nodded, just happy to have found one of my friends. We quickly grabbed some more supplies before James poked his head out of the door, checked to see if the coast was clear, then waved for me to follow.

"Was that you who shot that gun earlier?" I asked as we walked.

James was quiet. I could tell from his somber reaction that it was, in fact, him. My mind flickered back, then, to the letter that Enzo and I found and the presentation that James apparently made at the symposium. "Have you been killing werewolves?" I asked.

"We can talk about that later," he whispered, picking up his pace as the sun sank further behind the hills. "For now, let's get to safety."

Chapter 153 Safehouse

Nina

James and I quickly and quietly made our way through the abandoned little town. As we walked, keeping to the rapidly growing shadows, I couldn't help but notice the occasional blood stain on the ground or torn bits of clothing. The most disturbing thing that I saw was a child's teddy bear laying discarded on the ground and covered in blood; I swallowed when I saw it, telling myself that maybe the child who that teddy bear belonged to just dropped it and it happened to get stained with blood, but there was a sinking feeling in the back of my mind that it wasn't such a happy outcome.

Finally, we made it to the residential neighborhood. James led the way with his gun in his hands as the sky began to darken. He eventually led us to a small house, then down the outside stairs to the cellar. With a final glance over his shoulder, he pushed the door open and shut and locked it once we were both inside.

"Help me move this barricade back," he said. I helped him push the piles of furniture and other heavy objects that he'd used as a barricade back into place. Finally, we could

relax a little, and James led me upstairs where all of the windows were shut tightly and the blinds and curtains were closed.

“Whose house is this?” I asked, looking around with confusion.

James merely shrugged as he dropped his backpack on the kitchen table and began to rifle through it for cans of food. “I don’t know. I just started trying doors, and the basement door at this house was unlocked.”

I frowned, glancing around at the surroundings. There were no photographs or any signs of clutter. The furniture was sparse. It must have been a rental — or maybe that was what I just kept telling myself so I wouldn’t feel so bad for commandeering someone’s home.

As James opened some cans of soup and cooked them on the stove, I started to ask questions.

“Where were you when it started?” I asked. “And how did you wind up here?”

James let out a wry chuckle. “I was in town, thankfully. The attack started on campus, so it took a little while for things to spread. People started packing their things up and running out of town as soon as the first group of rogues appeared, but I hid. It’s not like I would have had anywhere to go, you know?”

“What about your parents?” I asked. “Couldn’t you have gone home to them?”

All of a sudden, James froze when I mentioned his parents. I couldn’t quite tell if it was just a sore subject from him, or if he wasn’t telling me everything. As I thought back to his father’s letter about the ‘family business’, it made me wonder if he intentionally stayed here.

Finally, he only shook his head. “I figured it would be better to just lay low here,” was all he said. I decided not to question further. I watched as he poured the soup into two bowls, then handed me one. I didn’t realize it before, but I was starving.

We ate in silence for a while before James led me upstairs, where there were two bedrooms. It seemed that he already claimed one, so I took the other.

Thankfully, it hadn’t been quite long enough for the town to lose power or running water, so although we had to keep the lights off so as not to be seen, I was still able to take a shower... And after everything I’d been through, the hot water cascading over my body was sorely needed.

When I was finished, I stepped out and dried off before returning to the living room, where I heard the sounds of James clanking around with something metallic. As I descended the stairs, I could see that he was sitting in the living room.

And he was cleaning his gun.

He didn't see me at first. He was being so meticulous, almost robotic. I watched from the darkness as he slowly and methodically cleaned each part, then put it back together.

Then... He loaded it. I caught a glimpse of the box of bullets; they were silver.

For killing werewolves.

"James," I said without thinking, emerging from the shadows, "are those silver bullets?" My voice shook as I spoke.

James merely nodded and stayed focused on his work. "Of course," he replied.

I felt a pit begin to form in my stomach. "James... These are our classmates."

"Not anymore." He finished loading the gun, then, to my horror, he cocked it. He then looked up at me with a slight, sinister smile on his face. The pit in my stomach grew larger as I looked at him. In the darkness, with only the dim light of a small lamp, he looked almost demonic. Half of his face was cast in an amber glow, while the other half was so dark I couldn't even make it out.

"But they can be cured," I continued. "Tiffany made an antidote. I think it works. If we can find her medical bag, I know she had lots of it in there. And besides, there are werewolves who are on our side —"

James stood now and slowly walked over to me. "Nina," he said softly, reaching out and squeezing my shoulder, sending a chill down my spine, "they're not gonna get better. There is no antidote, no such thing as a werewolf being on our side. They're all monsters. They need to be purged."

"P-Purged?" I stuttered. "None of these people asked for this. You could at least try the antidote and see for yourself."

James was silent for a minute. The air between us was so thick and heavy that I felt as though I would suffocate as he continued to tower over me. He took a step forward, then another, backing me up against the wall.

"You know," he said with a dry smile, "I know you're one of them. I've been watching you for a while; I know you've been showing signs. The speed, the healing abilities... I gave you the benefit of the doubt, though. I knew that you were innocent, and that you didn't ask to become a monster. You never showed any signs of shifting, so I figured if I could just get you away from Enzo and make you see how evil he is, then you would understand. I like you, Nina. We make a good team; think about how many of those monsters we could take down between the two of us."

I frowned, shaking my head as my heart raced even faster and a wave of nausea washed over me. “No,” I whispered. “That’s not true. This isn’t you, James. Whatever your father told you—”

“My father?” James asked with a chuckle. “This isn’t about him. I could care less what he wants. But my mother... My mother never asked to be murdered by a werewolf. And I’m determined to take down all of those monsters one by one for her sake. If you’re only going to get in the way of that, then...”

He paused, backing me further into the corner as his face darkened.

“...I’ll have to kill you, too.

Chapter 154 Gone Mad

Nina

“If you’re only going to get in the way with that, then... I’ll have to kill you, too.”

As James spoke, his voice was dark and sinister. He slowly backed me into a corner, leaving me nowhere to go. I felt a slight chuckle escape my lips, wondering if he was just joking... But he wasn’t. As I looked into James’ dark, grim face, I knew now that he was being one hundred percent serious, and suddenly the knot in my throat grew so large I could hardly breathe.

“J-James...” I stammered, pressing my back up against the wall, “...This isn’t you. I know you don’t want to hurt me.”

“You’re right,” he responded in a low, even voice. “But you’re leaving me no choice. I can’t let you leave here if you’re just planning on helping those dirty, disgusting monsters.”

“I-I won’t do anything,” I pleaded. “Please. I’m on your side.”

James chuckled. “I’m not stupid, Nina. I know you’re full of shit. Enzo sent you here, didn’t he? Are you his little minion?”

As he spoke, his voice hissed through his teeth and his hand shot out. He grabbed my wrist tightly, pinning it against the wall and making me cry out in unexpected pain.

“James!” I said as I wriggled beneath his grip. “Enzo didn’t send me. I swear. You can trust me.”

He still didn’t believe me. His grip only tightened around my wrist while his other hand worked its way up to my throat. I tried to kick him as I thrashed to get free, but he was suddenly much stronger than I ever imagined and I felt so weak beneath his touch.

Where was my wolf's strength when I needed her? Ever since I met Selena, I couldn't feel my wolf's presence at all.

"Ugh, you reek of those beasts," James growled as he held me, his fingers slowly wrapping around my throat. "It's disgusting."

"What about Edward?" I pleaded. "He's a werewolf, too. He's more evil than Enzo. You were in love with him, weren't you?"

James' eyes widened at the mention of Edward, but he shook his head and tightened his grip around my throat. I felt my airways begin to constrict, and I tried to pry his fingers away with my free hand as I started to choke. "Don't bring Edward into this," he snarled, staring down his nose at me. "You don't know anything about our relationship."

I felt my vision begin to fade as I gasped for air. James' fingers around my throat felt like rope, burning into my skin and twisting, tearing it. "J-Ja—" was all I could choke out. He began to slide me up the wall by my neck. I wriggled helplessly, gasping for what little air I could, but it was no use.

James was going to kill me.

"Consider this a mercy," James said. "If I don't kill you now, someone else is bound to kill you in a far worse way down the road... Assuming you don't become a mindless rogue like the rest. Goodbye, Nina. You were a good friend, once."

My vision began to fade in and out. James' face flashed in front of me. I felt myself begin to fall limp, and my eyes fluttered shut...

But I saw another face as my vision went to black.

Not James' face, but Enzo's. Enzo's sad, lonesome eyes staring back at me as Selena pushed me through the portal.

I had to hold out hope that he would come back for me. I had to stay alive for him.

Suddenly, I felt my wolf's presence; it was faint, but it was there nonetheless. She gave me what little strength she could to kick, and I felt something soft come into contact with my foot. There was a grunt, then I felt myself fall down to the floor, gasping for air as my vision began to flicker back to life.

"Ugh..." James groaned from the other side of the hallway. "Bitch..."

I glanced up to see him leaning against the wall, rubbing his head. He opened his eyes to look at me, then twisted his face into a menacing scowl and lunged for me. I rolled away, still choking for air, but he just managed to miss me as he reached for a handful of my hair.

I scrambled to my feet, then over to the kitchen, where I grabbed my bag. James roared angrily behind me, running after me. I wanted to scream, but I couldn't; my throat felt as though it was on fire. Without a look back, I ran over to the back door, grabbing the shelf that James used as a barricade, and slammed it down on the floor. It just barely missed him; he jumped back, cursing, and I used that fleeting moment to fling the door open and bolt out into the night.

There was a fence blocking my path, and James was coming out now. I could hear him cock his gun, so I flung my bag over the fence and leaped up, grabbing the top of the fence and not caring that the wood splintered into my palms.

The gun went off, but he missed. I scrambled as I heard him cock the gun again and say something vile, but I was finally on top of the fence. I swung my leg over and fell to the ground on the other side.

The gun went off again. A plank on the fence exploded from the force of the bullet. A bolt of searing pain shot up my leg and I cried out, but I had to keep going. Without a second wasted, I grabbed my bag off of the ground, scrambled to my feet...

And I ran.

I ran as fast as I could, for as long as I could. I squeezed through fences, crossed back yards, cut myself on thorny bushes until eventually, my wounded leg gave out under me and I collapsed to the grass, panting and sobbing.

When I looked down, there was a red stain blossoming outwards on my pant leg. I cried as I groped along the back of my thigh in search of an exit hole, but there wasn't one; the bullet was still inside.

James never followed me — at least, I didn't hear his footsteps anymore — but at that moment, I thought that he achieved his goal anyway as my head began to reel from the extreme blood loss, which was only exacerbated by the exertion.

This was it. I wasn't going to make it; I couldn't run anymore, couldn't cry for help.

All I could do was fall back on the grass, arms outstretched, and stare up at the stars.

It really was a beautiful night. The sky was clear of clouds. Above me, I could make out Orion's constellation. The different shades of blue in the night sky swirled together, whirling around as my vision began to distort and flicker in and out, but Orion stayed steady, strong. The crickets around me chirped happily, completely oblivious to the horrors that were happening here in this very town.

A smile started to spread across my face.

"It's a girl!"

A man's voice called from a distance. I heard footsteps pounding closer. The sound of someone falling to their knees next to me. Everything was muffled as I slipped out of consciousness.

"She's been shot!"

And then... A face came into view, blocking Orion

Chapter 155 A Light in the Darkness

Nina

I was jostled awake by a bump and a swaying sensation, followed by the feeling of a searing pain shooting through my leg and the sound of a car engine. I groaned as my eyes flickered open.

"Oh! Honey, she's awake."

"Hold on. I'm pullin' over. Coast clear out there?"

"Hmm... Mhm. I don't see anything."

As my eyes adjusted, I saw the forms of two people sitting in front of me. Judging from the long leather seat beneath me and the two seats in front, I was in the back of a car. A truck, too, I surmised from the hollow and tinny sound of the engine as it sputtered to a stop.

I groaned again. The man in the driver's seat got out of the car while the woman in the passenger seat turned around to face me. I blinked a few times, and as her face came into focus, I saw that she was an older woman with graying brown hair and a round, soft face.

"You sure woke up quick," she said with a smile, reaching out and squeezing my hand. Her hand was warm and soft in a motherly sort of way, and it eased some of my anxieties.

"Wh-Where..."

The door by my feet opened. I looked up to see an older man standing there. He was wearing a flannel shirt tucked into a pair of jeans, which emphasized his slight beer belly. He had a baseball cap on and had a gray mustache on his upper lip.

"Howdy, young lady," he said with a grin. "Let me see that leg. That okay?"

I felt myself stiffen, and instinctively looked up at the woman. "It's okay, hon'," she said softly. "Dan's real good at this sort of thing. Aren't you, honey?"

“Yup. Decades huntin’ and trappin’ll do that to ya. You get real good at pickin’ out bullets so it don’t spoil the meat.” My stomach turned at the thought, but Dan only chuckled. “Don’t worry. I don’t eat human.”

He reached out and peeled back the white bandage around my leg a little bit, and I let him, although it made me wince and grit my teeth. He eyed my wound for a second before nodding to himself.

“How’s your head feel, sweetheart?” the woman asked. “I’m Laura, by the way. That’s my husband, Dan, although I guess I already told you his name, didn’t I? Anyway, we found you last night in real rough shape.”

“Um... Water?” I croaked. Laura smiled and nodded. Dan held out his hand for me and helped me sit up, and once I’d chugged an entire bottle of water in one go, he pointed at my leg with a confused expression on his face.

“Your leg’s lookin’ mighty healed already for someone who was shot less than twelve hours ago,” he said.

My eyes widened. I couldn’t tell these people about my healing abilities.

But, it seemed that they weren’t looking for answers. “Well, either way,” he continued, “you’re lucky we found ya out there.”

“Mhm,” Laura chimed in. “You were nothin’ more than a hop ‘n a skip away from meeting the big old man in the sky,” she said, pointing upwards with a grin.

I swallowed, leaning my head back on the headrest. The pain in my leg was still unbearable, and when I searched for my wolf’s presence, it was nothing more than a flicker. She must have used up any strength she had left to help me fight off James.

“Thanks,” I said quietly, then peered out the window. It was just barely morning; the sun still hadn’t come up yet, but it was bright enough to see everything through the slight tinge of blue. “Where are we?”

Dan sighed, then looked around. “Just a few miles north of town,” he said. “We’re headin’ out that way where there ain’t any of them... What are we callin’ em, honey?”

“Prowlers,” Laura said proudly. Then, whispering: “I came up with that one myself.”

I couldn’t help but smile a little bit at the older couple’s good humor, but at the same time, I knew I needed to get home. I couldn’t leave town, not with my friends still there.

“Anyhoo,” Dan continued, “I heard there’s a safe zone just a little ways further north. This... disease, or whatever it is, spreads like wildfire. Just before the news stations went out, I saw that all of the towns in the nearest fifty-mile radius are crawlin’ with the

Prowlers. I dunno if the rest of the world even knows, if I'm bein' honest. We've always been sorta remote out here, and well... You know how the folks 'round here are. They rather take things into their own hands."

"Help is on the way," I replied. "I can tell you that much."

Laura and Dan's eyebrows raised, but they said nothing. There was a bit of a silence before Laura spoke.

"You're coming with us, right, honey?" she asked. "You don't wanna go back there."

Her eyes were pleading and full of worry, but I shook my head. "I can't. I have to go back for my friends."

Dan and Laura exchanged glances. "Hon', I'm afraid your friends are probably beyond the point of help," Dan said. "You were the first uninfected human we saw in days."

I shook my head again. "No. There's an antidote."

"And what do you think a single little girl like yourself is gonna do?" Laura asked, sounding a bit flabbergasted now. "Cure everyone in town?" I swallowed; I hadn't thought that far ahead. I only cared about my friends, and I wasn't going to take no for an answer. Dan, seeing this, finally nodded slowly and let out another sigh.

"Well," he said, "we can take you back to town if you really want. It's your decision. But with that leg..."

"I'll be fine," I said. "Thank you."

Laura opened her mouth to speak, but shut it again and turned around in her seat. Dan nodded once more and shut the door, then came around and got back into the driver's seat. No one spoke as he pulled away from the side of the road, then swung the truck back around in the direction of the town.

We were close enough to town, so it didn't take long before Dan stopped the truck right on the outskirts. I got out first, limping on my injured leg despite Laura's protests, and grabbed my backpack out of the back of the truck.

"You sure about this?" Dan asked.

I nodded solemnly. "Thank you for everything," I said, "but I do need to go back."

Laura sighed and put her hands on her hips. "Well... Good luck," she said quietly.

"Thank you."

“Here,” Dan said, reaching into the back of the truck and retrieving a double-barreled shotgun. “Can you shoot?”

“It’s okay, I don’t—”

“I said, can you shoot?”

I nodded. Dan shoved the gun into my hands, then gave me a box of bullets.

Silver ones. I recognized the box as the same one from the gun shop that the woman gave me before.

“You use those if you need to,” Dan said. “Pump, shoot, then run. Don’t bother lookin’ to see if it’s dead or not. And if you come across a human who’s not all there, like the one I’m assumin’ shot you last night... Aim for the chest. The bullets have a good spray to ‘em, so you don’t have to be too accurate.”

I nodded solemnly, my hands shaking as I gripped the gun tightly. “Thank you,” I said quietly.

Dan only gave me a single, grim nod before they both walked back over to the truck and opened their doors.

“Keep an eye on that leg,” Laura said over her shoulder. “If the Prowlers don’t kill you first, the infection’ll kill you for sure.”

“I’ll keep an eye on it.”

With that, Laura and Dan soberly got into their truck. I watched as they drove off, watching the truck fade into the distance, before I took a deep breath and turned back toward the town.

As I limped toward my destination, I only had one goal in mind: I had to find the antidote and save my friends

Chapter 156 Stealth Mission

Nina

With the way that my leg was feeling, my journey across town was slow and painful. I didn’t seem to be healing anymore, since my wolf was too weak for some reason, so each step was agony. But I had to keep going. My friends were still out there somewhere and I needed to find the antidote and help them.

I stuck to narrow alleyways, darting between abandoned cars so as not to be seen. Not only did I have to worry about rogues, but I also had to worry about James now, and

there was no knowing where he was right now. For all I knew, he was out here looking for me.

Eventually, I somehow made it to the outskirts of the campus. I cut through the woods, wincing as I limped over fallen trees and struggling to climb in and out of ravines, but by the time the sun started to get high in the sky, I made it.

I could see the hockey arena from here, as well as Tiffany's pink Jeep. Just thinking about her made me want to vomit. I couldn't help but wonder what the Crescents did with her body... But I couldn't think about that right now, because it only brought me immense pain. Tiffany would have wanted me to do everything I could to get the antidote.

Since it was the middle of the afternoon, I didn't see any rogues around. They must have been resting during the day, as they were stronger in the moonlight. This was a bit of a relief, but it didn't mean that there weren't any Crescents wandering around, either in their wolf forms or their human forms. I had to be cautious as I quickly made my way across the athletic field.

I was out in the open now. I pushed myself as fast as I could go, but I could only go so fast with my leg. By the time I made it halfway across the athletic field, beads of sweat were forming on my forehead just from the exertion that it took to keep myself upright.

Finally, however, I made it. I crouched behind Tiffany's Jeep and peered around it as I looked for any Crescents. I didn't see any, so I pushed through the pain in my leg and warily made my way into the hockey arena.

The arena was thankfully empty. I let out a sigh of relief and crouched behind the rink barrier as I made my way toward the door that would lead to the infirmary.

But as I got to the doorway, which stood wide open now that a rogue had bashed its way through the door and knocked it off its hinges, leaving the crumpled remains of the door strewn aside, I heard something.

I heard the sound of voices.

My breath caught in my throat. I cupped my hand over my mouth, steadying my breathing, as I slowly peered around the corner and into the door.

Inside the infirmary, there were at least five Crescents. I recognized some of them from Ronan's team.

They were milling around the infirmary; a few were sitting at the table, digging through bins of medical supplies, while another was sitting on one of the infirmary beds and groaning in pain.

“Ugh...”

“You’re fine, Josh. It’s just a cut.”

“Yeah, but it hurts!”

I took this moment while they were all distracted to quickly scan the infirmary for an antidote, but from where I was crouched, I couldn’t see well enough. Besides, I wouldn’t be able to get in there anyway without being caught; it was too small of a space, and it was full of Crescents.

I would have to get out of here and somehow make it to my next destination: the woods, where Tiffany’s body was dragged off to.

...

It was sunset by the time I made it across campus in the direction of the cabins. I had to stop at one point to change the bandage on my leg and slather some antibiotic ointment on it, gritting my teeth and stifling my cries of pain as I touched the wound. It was still open and bleeding; what little healing my wolf had managed while I was asleep was undone now by all of the walking and running I did.

But I was finally here.

I circled around, avoiding the cabins as I was certain that Crescents would be there. Even Lisa or Ronan, who I hadn’t seen so far, could be there, and for all I knew they may have been on high alert for me. But, as I remembered how they had taken not only Tiffany’s body but also her medical bag in the direction of the cabins, I was certain that they had the antidotes there. Whether they knew what the antidotes were or not was still a mystery.

I quietly approached the cabins from the side, using the growing shadows to my advantage — and, just as I figured, the smell of a campfire eventually came to my senses.

After that, I heard the distinct sound of laughter, music, and people talking.

“Ah, man, you should’ve seen the look on her face! P-Please don’t b-bite me!” one male voice said in a mocking tone while also sounding thoroughly drunk. The others laughed in response. It made me sick to my stomach.

I kept approaching the cabins, staying low and quiet as a mouse, until I finally made it to the back of one of the cabins. From here, I could see the glow of the campfire as well as the shadows of the Crescents walking around, casted on the side of the adjacent cabin.

“When is Ronan coming back, anyway?” one girl said, her speech slurred from alcohol. “I haven’t seen him or his girlfriend since they took what’s-his-name. I hope they didn’t chicken out or something.”

I furrowed my brow. Were they talking about Ronan and Lisa? I didn’t know who they were referring to either when they mentioned Ronan and Lisa taking someone.

Holding my breath, I slowly peered around the side of the cabin. I couldn’t see much from here, but thankfully none of the Crescents were facing in my direction, so I took it as a chance to dart over to the adjacent cabin to get a new angle. As I did, I caught a glimpse of exactly what I was looking for: Tiffany’s medical bag. It was laying in the dirt, right by the steps of the first cabin I had hidden behind. Assuming it still had anything in it, it seemed as though they didn’t see it as being particularly valuable.

“I dunno,” the male voice responded. “I’m sure he’ll come back.”

“And if not?”

There was a silence between the Crescents, filled only by the sound of their music playing. I froze in my place, just as I was slowly beginning to creep out to reach for it, my heart pounding in my chest.

“If not, then I guess we’ll appoint a new leader. I volunteer, of course.”

The other Crescents laughed, causing the first Crescent to stutter nervously. As they were laughing, I took my chance; I quickly darted forward and grabbed the bag, then took off as fast as I could back into the forest, ignoring the blistering pain and unmistakable throbbing in my leg.

I wasn’t sure if they heard me, or even noticed anything. I didn’t stop to find out, either. I ran, and kept running, until I was a good distance away, before diving behind a large tree and peering around nervously.

Around me, the forest was quiet. No one had followed me.

Letting out a sigh of relief, I opened Tiffany’s medical bag in my lap.

I nearly jumped for joy when I found the antidote inside

Chapter 157 Rescue Mission

Nina

The antidote shined up at me like a beacon of hope from Tiffany’s medical bag. Even just while looking at it, I felt a few tears of joy begin to well up in my eyes — but the mission still wasn’t over. I needed to find my friends and cure them, then get everyone

to safety. Once I finished that, my priority would be to find a way to get back to Enzo and get him out of Selena's grasp before it was too late. Without Enzo, I wouldn't have a chance at saving our campus.

Enzo had mentioned that he saw Lori and Jessica as rogues... My best guess was that he saw them in the tunnels when he was fighting the rogues off. Even though the last thing I wanted to do was to go down into those dark tunnels again, I knew that I would have to go; and it was starting to get dark, which meant that there would be more rogues coming out soon. I would have to be quick, but thankfully the forest entrance to the tunnels was close by.

Checking to make sure that the coast was clear one last time, I quietly climbed to my feet — trying my best to ignore the shooting pain in my leg — and began to limp toward the tunnel entrance. Admittedly, I was a bit shocked that the Crescents didn't seem to be looking for me after I stole the medical bag; maybe they just assumed that the rogues would get me since it was getting dark out.

Somehow, after limping through the rapidly darkening forest for what felt like hours, I made it to the hatch in the woods. I checked once more to make sure that I wasn't being watched before I slowly opened the hatch and climbed down, swallowing my fear as I descended into the dark tunnels.

The last time I was in these tunnels, I had developed a sudden ability to see in the dark, but that ability seemed to have disappeared now that my wolf's presence was gone. Thankfully, there was a small emergency flashlight in Tiffany's medical bag, so I flicked it on and began to make my way down the tunnels.

I wasn't walking for long before I was suddenly hit with a wall of musky stench that made me gag.

Stumbling backwards, I quickly pulled my shirt up over my nose as my eyes began to water from the smell.

There were rogues down here; I was sure of it. And there were lots of them.

I held my breath as I slowly crept forward. Eventually, I rounded a corner and realized what the horrible smell was coming from: dozens of rogues sleeping, scattered around the tunnels and the adjoined rooms in big, furry piles. They must have decided that the tunnels would be a good place to sleep... But how could I possibly find Lori and Jessica like this?

I had to push forward, though. Somehow, I knew that Lori and Jessica were in here; I just had to find them. Taking a deep, shaky breath, I slowly began to make my way forward. I took an abundance of caution as I painstakingly made my way around the piles of sleeping, fetid rogues. Thankfully, they seemed to be sleeping deeply and didn't notice as I quietly made my way through.

At one point, I felt my toe bump into a rogue's leg. I instantly froze, feeling my heart leap into my throat as I waited for the rogue to jump up and kill me.

Thankfully, it only snorted in its sleep and moved its leg out of the way.

Letting out a silent sigh of relief, I kept going. Eventually, the tunnel began to break off into offshoots of small rooms, each filled with rogues. I took my time in the doorway of each room to peer in and scan for Lori and Jessica, but somehow I knew that they weren't there. I couldn't explain it, but I just knew that I would be certain when I found my friends.

And I was.

I finally came to the last room in the hallway. I was just about to give up and head toward another offshoot, or even leave the tunnels and get to safety for the night, when my eye suddenly caught two

sleeping forms in the corner. They were curled up tightly together, sleeping deeply with their limbs intertwined.

It was Lori and Jessica. I was certain of it.

Biting my lip, I slowly and silently made my way over to them. I could hear my heart beating out of my chest as I set down the medical bag as gently as I could, cringing at the quiet sound of the zipper, followed by the sound of the glass bottle of antidote clinking as I picked it up and inserted one needle into it. I pulled the plunger up on the needle, filling it, then filled another needle.

Then, taking one needle in each hand, I held my breath and quickly injected both of the rogues at once.

The rogues wriggled, their eyes shooting open in unison as I pricked them. As their eyes focused and they began to realize that there was a human amongst them, they began to bare their fangs and growl quietly, their wretched breath blowing into my face.

All I could do was hold my breath and stay still, quiet, waiting for the antidote to work as I prayed that I was right about this being Lori and Jessica.

Suddenly, just as I was certain that the antidote wasn't going to work and that they were going to kill me, the rogues began to shift back. Fur turned into flesh, fangs turned into regular human teeth, and growls turned into confused whimpers as my friends looked around wildly.

A tear rolled down my cheek. I quickly put my finger to my lips, silently begging them to stay quiet, then pulled my friends in for a tight group hug. For what felt like a long time, we just held each other, silently sobbing as the rogues slept soundly all around us.

Somehow, my intuition had been right. My friends were cured.

But we weren't safe. I couldn't explain anything to them now, even though they were utterly confused having not remembered anything about being rogues, but I had to get them out of here first and get them to safety. The rogues would be waking up soon, and if we weren't out of here by then, we would all be killed or turned into rogues. At this point, I couldn't decide which of those fates would be worse... But I also knew that if I died, I would never see Enzo again, and that, along with saving my friends, gave me the strength to keep going despite the horrifying pain in my leg and the deep pit in my stomach.

Thankfully, my friends seemed to understand the severity of the situation as I silently gestured for them to follow. I grabbed the medical bag in one hand, taking Jessica's in another as she held Lori's hand, and together we slowly made our way back to the tunnel exit.

Toward freedom... Or something like it, at the very least

Chapter 158 Dangerous Indifference

Enzo

I hardly even had time to process what had just happened before the portal closed and Selena suddenly grabbed my arm, yanking me out of my stupor as she opened another portal nearby.

"Come on," she snarled as her nails dug into the skin of my arm. I felt so numb at this point that I couldn't even feel it. "Let's go. It's almost time for dinner and you're filthy."

I couldn't say a word as we stepped through the new portal she opened and wound up back in my room at the mansion. It felt as though the world was spinning around me. My mind scrambled already to think of ways that I could get back to Nina, but without the knowledge of how to open a portal on my own, I would be stuck here until I could find someone who knew how. At the very least, I took some solace in the fact that Nina was smart and strong and that she could take care of herself until either the Fullmoons or I came to her rescue.

"Here," Selena said, pulling me over to the bathroom and turning on the faucet to fill up the tub. Then, her eyes darkened into a sultry expression and she smirked up at me. "Do you need some help bathing?"

"Um— No, thanks," I said. I really wanted to yell at her to get the hell away from me and that I'd never want her to touch my naked body, but I knew that it would only make matters worse. If I wanted to get back to Nina, I would have to keep things friendly with Selena and make her believe that I wasn't going to leave; if she didn't believe me, I was

certain that she would find a way to trap me here, being as powerful and as rich as she was.

Selena frowned. "Fine," she said with a huff, turning on her heel and storming off toward the door. "Dinner is in an hour. If you're not presentable by then, you're going to be in trouble... So I'd advise hurrying up with your bath. There are clean clothes in the closet, and you can throw the ones you're wearing away, because they're disgusting."

"Alright," I said, restraining the urge to snap at her once more. "Thanks. I'll see you in an hour."

With that, Selena scurried out of my room. I let out a sigh of relief when she was gone, then closed and locked the bathroom door before taking my clothes off while the tub filled.

...

An hour later, on the dot, I stood outside the dining room. I had cleaned myself well and was wearing the stiff suit that was left for me in the closet, which was a little too small around my arms and neck and caused me to keep tugging at the collar uncomfortably.

Finally, the doors opened. The Alpha King, Selena, and my father were already waiting by the table for me. There was another woman there who I recognized as the Luna, the Alpha King's wife. She had long white hair and red eyes, and didn't speak or make any sort of facial expression. I stared straight ahead as I entered, too angry with my father to even look into his eyes.

"Welcome, Enzo," the Alpha King said, gesturing to the chair next to Selena. She was wearing a thin silk gown that was a blood red color, and had her hair pulled back into an intricate braid. For a moment, I forgot that she wasn't Nina, and I thought that she looked beautiful... But as I quickly reminded myself that she really wasn't Nina, she suddenly became much less attractive in my eyes.

With a forced smile, I sat down beside Selena.

As the servants brought out our decadent meal of roast duck and red wine, the Alpha King already began his negotiations with my father. I felt almost like nothing more than an accessory, a commodity to be traded for military support. Now that the deal had been sealed, in their eyes, I no longer mattered; what only mattered was their prior agreement.

"Now," the Alpha King said, unfurling his pristine white napkin with a flourish and laying it across his lap, "onto the topic of the town of Mountainview..."

"My men have begun making preparations to take the town back," my father said. "From what I hear, a few of the locals have taken matters into their own hands and have been

putting up a good fight, but the town is quickly being overrun with rogues created at the Crescents' hands. With this many rogues, my men alone won't be able to handle it all themselves."

The Alpha King nodded thoughtfully as he cut up his roast duck, then popped a piece into his mouth and spoke with his mouth full. He gestured with his fork as he spoke.

"The rogues won't be a problem," he said nonchalantly. "As we all know, rogues are unintelligent and easily fooled. We can easily take them all out, and then deal with the Crescents afterwards."

I furrowed my brow and cleared my throat. "Sorry," I said, setting my fork down while my duck still sat on my plate untouched. "But those rogues are all innocent people who were turned against their will."

Both my father and the Alpha King, as well as the Luna, slowly turned to look at me. My father's eyes were wide and disbelieving, as though he really expected me not to speak throughout this entire meal. Meanwhile, the Alpha King only looked sickeningly indifferent.

"Well, casualties are bound to happen," the Alpha King said. "It is war, after all."

"But there's an antidote—"

"Yes, well, unless you have that supposed antidote on hand, and a large enough supply of it to cure everyone who has been turned, it's really not helpful... Is it?" the Alpha King interrupted.

I was speechless. Were they really being so indifferent about the lives of innocent people? These were my friends, my classmates... What if Nina had been turned into a rogue? Would they kill her, too?

Suddenly, Selena chimed in and placed her hand on my leg, making me tense up.

"What my mate is trying to say is that he only hopes you will do your best to minimize casualties... Right, Enzo?" she said, turning to look at me with a plastic smile spread across her face.

I could only stare down incredulously at my plate. Without another word, and having completely lost what little appetite I had before, I abruptly pushed my chair back and walked out.

...

I wasn't alone for long when I suddenly heard the sound of footsteps approaching me rapidly. I was standing on a small balcony that overlooked the forest below, leaning

against the railing with my head bowed as I tried to think of ways to get out and get back to Nina. When I glanced over my shoulder, I saw my father approaching and immediately felt my blood begin to boil.

“What the hell was that, Enzo?” he said, stopping a few paces behind me. “You embarrassed both of us.”

I merely shrugged. “Why should I care?” I asked. “Those are innocent people. There is a cure for them, and you’re just going to let them die, because there are always casualties in war?”

My father fell silent for a moment before sucking his lower lip and letting out an agitated sigh. “It’s not that simple,” he replied. “The outcome of this war is far more important. The town of Mountainview will go back to normal eventually...”

I shook my head. “You went to college there,” I said quietly. “You were one of the Peacekeepers. You experienced friendship there, joy, love. What happened to you? Did mom’s death really turn you into such a horrible excuse for a person?” I turned then to face my father, whose eyes were wide with disbelief, but I wasn’t finished. “You know, sometimes I wish that it was you who died, and not mom.”

My father’s eyes widened even further. We stood like that for several moments, just staring at each other in pensive silence, before he abruptly turned and stormed off without a word.

If it weren’t for my father, I knew I could be with Nina right now. Being around Selena, experiencing her scent and her abhorrent personality, knowing that Selena and Nina would be fated to have the same mate, made me realize how much I needed to be with Nina instead. I would never love Selena in the same way I loved Nina, even if we did mark each other, but my father’s selfish plans were getting in the way of that. Not only that, but he was toying with the lives of thousands of my friends and classmates, all for the sake of winning some petty war.

However, as I stood there in silence, I couldn’t help but wonder if I took my words too far

Chapter 159 A Change of Heart

Enzo

After dinner and my brief conversation with my father, I decided to go back to my room for the remainder of the night where I could plan out my escape in peace. I spent some time pacing back and forth in my dark room, wondering how I could get out of this mansion and find someone who could open a portal for me.

I wasn’t in my room for long, however, when I heard a knock on the door. Someone tried the handle before I could even answer, but it was locked. Then, suddenly, I heard

a key slide into the door. The door came unlocked and opened, revealing Selena standing there.

She was still in her red dress with her hair perfectly styled. Without a word, she stormed across the room and shoved me down on the bed, taking me by surprise, then lifted her skirt and climbed on top of me. I hardly had any time to even react before she began kissing me roughly.

"You're so hot when you stand up to my daddy like that," she moaned, kissing my ear and my neck. "I love a man who has so much self confidence."

Gulping, I gently pushed Selena off of me and wriggled away from her, causing her to frown.

"What's wrong?" she asked, pushing her lower lip out in a pout. "You're not seriously still thinking about her, are you?"

Truthfully, of course I was only thinking about Nina... But I shook my head and sat up, taking Selena's hand in mine. "Of course not," I lied. "I promised I would love you... I'm just not ready quite yet to take things further."

Selena was silent for a moment, glowering at me. "You're saving yourself until marriage?" she asked.

I nodded. "Yes." Another lie.

Thankfully, my lie seemed to satisfy her. She stood and smoothed down her skirt, flashing me a coy smile. "That'll only make it more exciting, I suppose," she said in a sing-song voice. "I suppose the wedding is only just a few days away. I can wait."

A few days? I had thought that the wedding would still fall on New Year's Eve, just like my father told me... Why was it so rushed now?

Before I could get any words out, Selena quickly spun around and sauntered over to the door. "Well... I'll be going to bed, I suppose," she said. "My room is just down the hall. I'll leave the door unlocked, just in case you change your mind..." She brought her hand to her lips and blew me a kiss, then bit her lower lip before sauntering out of my room.

Finally, I was alone again.

The wedding couldn't seriously be in just two days... That would mean that I had to get out of here now. There wasn't enough time to sit here and puzzle over what to do.

I sat in my room, waiting for a little while in case Selena came back, before I silently crept over to the door and poked my head out. The hallway was dark and quiet, and I was able to slip out unseen.

As I walked briskly and quietly down the hallway, I didn't have a specific plan in mind; I only knew that I would get out, run as far and as fast as I could, and eventually I was bound to find someone who could open a portal for me. Maybe I could even find Luke and we could go home together. I was confident that he was still alive, somehow, and decided that I would head back in the direction where I last saw him. Hopefully, he would still be around there... Without Edward, of course.

I came to a set of winding stairs and quietly made my way down, taking care not to let my shoes click on the marble floor as I stayed on my toes. When I got a little ways away from the mansion, I would shift so I could run faster. But for now, I couldn't shift until I was certain no one would see me. If anyone

saw me shifting, it would certainly raise the alarms and I would probably wind up being caught again before I could make it very far.

When I came down to the bottom of the steps, I looked both ways down the dark corridors before choosing to go left. This place really was like a maze, and it was entirely unfamiliar to me; I could only hope that I was going in the right direction.

Suddenly, a guard rounded a corner and started to come my way. I quickly darted into a small alcove behind a plant, holding my breath...

But someone clapped their hand over my mouth.

I started to panic.

"Shh..." It was my father. My eyes widened in surprise; why was he here? Was he trying to help me hide, or was he trying to stop me from escaping? Either way, we both stayed silent as the guard approached. Thankfully, the guard turned down another hallway before crossing our path and we both let out a sigh of relief. My father released his grip on me and I stumbled away from him, narrowing my eyes.

"What are you—"

"This way," my father interrupted, gesturing for me to follow. I watched as he briskly walked down the hallway, then decided to take my chances and follow him.

Did he have a change of heart for some reason?

My father walked over to a doorway and looked over his shoulders before silently pushing the door open, then stepped inside. I followed. The room was just a small storage room, hardly big enough for the two of us.

"What are you doing?" I whispered once my father closed the door behind us. He reached up then and pulled on a string to turn on the light; once I could see better, I could tell now that his eyes were red, as though he'd been crying.

“Enzo, what you said earlier really struck me,” he said quietly, grabbing me firmly by both shoulders as he looked deeply into my eyes. “I’m sorry. For all of this.”

I was taken aback by my father’s sudden change of heart and didn’t know what to say. Before I could even say anything, however, he spoke again.

“I’m going to help you get out.”

My eyes widened. “Dad... What about the arranged marriage?”

He only shook his head. “I realize now that I saw Selena; she looks so similar to Nina. I’m certain now that Nina is the lost princess, so I’ll tell the Alpha King. He’ll be thrilled to have his second daughter back, and I’m certain that he won’t go back on our agreement if you want to marry Nina instead.”

I was still shocked. “Dad, I— I don’t know what to say,” I muttered. “Thank you.”

My father paused, staring down at the ground. Then, without a word, he reached out with one hand and moved his index finger and his middle finger together in a circular motion. A portal swirled to life in front of us.

Once it was open, my father pulled me into a tight hug, which took me by surprise. “Save Mountainview, Enzo,” he said. “Save Nina. It’s what your mother would want.”

Then, suddenly, the doorknob turned and the door flung open. There stood Selena, dressed in her silk robe with wide, disbelieving eyes. Without a word, my father shoved me as hard as he could through the portal, and it began to close.

The last thing I saw was Selena grabbing my father and holding a knife to his throat from behind, her eyes red with fury as she stared into the portal

Chapter 160 Rogue Killer

Enzo

The last thing I saw before the portal closed entirely was the image of Selena grabbing my father from behind and holding a knife to his throat. Her eyes, red with fury, were burned into my psyche. I lunged forward in a desperate attempt to somehow reach back through and pull my father to safety, but it was too late; the portal was already closed.

I was alone.

It took a few minutes to realize where I was exactly, but I finally came to the realization that I was just outside of town, just a few feet away from the road.

The road, which normally had at least two or three cars on it at any given time despite how quiet the town of Mountainview normally was, was now dead silent. The eeriness of it all made me shudder, but I had to push forward. If I didn't save the town and save Nina, my dad putting himself in danger for me would be entirely in vain.

As I walked toward the town, I kept mulling over Selena's actions in my mind. I was certain that she wouldn't go so far as to kill anyone, especially not my father. Sure, she would threaten him or throw a tantrum, but killing the Alpha of the Fullmoons wouldn't put her in the best position with her own father, and besides — I didn't think that she really had the capacity to kill anyone, anyway. If she did, she would have just killed Nina before rather than going through all of the trouble of setting up a strange little magical prison for Nina.

In my eyes, Selena was just a scared, spoiled little girl. Maybe I was wrong in thinking this, but telling myself that my father would be okay kept me going, and that was the most important thing.

Eventually, I came to the town. It was equally as lifeless as the road, with abandoned cars scattered throughout the streets. There was trash and debris everywhere from the mad dash of people trying to

get away from the rogues. Thankfully, I didn't see any bodies yet, which was a relief. My best guess was that the Crescents really only wanted to turn people into rogues to add more numbers to their army, not kill them. And thankfully, rogues could be cured thanks to Tiffany's antidote.

Not only would saving the town ensure that my father's consequences for helping me wouldn't be in vain, but it would also ensure that Tiffany's horrible death wouldn't be in vain. By using the antidote to save the town, her legacy would live on... But first, I had to find Nina, and then the antidote.

Night was beginning to fall as I walked, which meant that rogues would be coming out of their hiding spots soon to roam around. I hoped that Nina was safely hidden away somewhere, but I couldn't be sure. I couldn't pick up her scent, either, so I was at a loss as to where she was.

Suddenly, as I was walking down the street, I saw someone ahead of me come out of a house with a shotgun in their hands. I quickly crouched behind a nearby car before they saw me, then peered around the side of the car and watched closely.

It was James.

He had a dark, grim expression on his face and seemed to be marching down the street with purpose, headed away from me. Maybe he knew something about where Nina was? But as I considered calling out to him, I remembered the letter that Nina and I found as well as his sickening presentation at the symposium, and it reminded me that I

couldn't be entirely trusting of him. For all I knew, there were silver bullets in that gun. At the very least, however, I could follow him to see where he was going.

I quietly followed at a distance, darting behind cars and trees and staying low, as the sky darkened above. James kept walking forward with purpose, clutching his shotgun confidently.

Suddenly, I saw the form of a rogue ahead of him. It was meandering along, not even noticing his presence at first. James could have easily run and hid from the rogue and waited until it passed by, but he didn't.

Without so much as a moment of hesitation, he raised his gun and shot at the rogue. He hit it right in the head, killing it instantly.

I guessed, then, that I was right. James was indiscriminately killing rogues on sight without any concern for the fact that these were innocent people who didn't ask for any of this. It made my blood boil, and without giving it another thought, I quickly ran out from behind the car and sprinted up behind James.

He swung around, his eyes wide, but I managed to tackle him and knock the shotgun out of his hands before he could get his bearings. The gun went sliding across the pavement; James tried to reach for it, but I put my knee on his arm and pinned him down as I sat on top of him. I could feel my eyes glowing and my fangs protruding as I raised my fist to punch him. What was even worse was the fact that he didn't even seem scared. He was grinning up at me, as though I was only proving a point to him.

But then, suddenly, I felt hands on my arms and felt someone lifting me off of James as I growled and yelled obscenities.

"Enzo! Chill!" a familiar voice said.

I spun around, my eyes widening as I saw none other than Matt standing there. We stood there in disbelief for a moment before both letting out a sigh of relief and hugging tightly. Matt slapped my back heartily as he hugged me, then pulled away.

"I'm so glad we found you," he said. "We were really worried."

I heard a noise behind me and turned around to see James being lifted off of the ground by the rest of the hockey team. He struggled, but without his gun, he was defenseless as they restrained him.

"You monsters are gonna get what you deserve," he snarled, glaring up at me through his eyebrows as the team tied his hands behind his back.

"Where is Nina?" I asked, storming up to James as he struggled against the rest of my team who were, thankfully, all accounted for.

James only chuckled. "I shot that bitch yesterday," he said, causing my heart to leap into my throat. "I doubt she made it."

"You... Shot Nina?" I growled, my chest heaving with anger. In a fit of rage, I pulled my fist back and punched James as hard as I could square in the nose. He was instantly knocked out, and I heard a crunch beneath my fist. When I pulled it away, there was blood pouring out of his now-broken nose, and I didn't even care how bad it would hurt when he woke up.

No... Nina couldn't be dead. I would know if she was; our bond was too strong. She was my true fated mate — I was sure of that now — and I was certain that my wolf would feel it if something happened to her.

Suddenly, as the team stood in shock at what I just did to James, we heard the distinct sound of raucous howling coming from the direction of the campus — the cabins, to be exact.

In that instant, I heard something else: Nina's voice, inside my head, calling for help.

Matt and I didn't need to speak to know what we had to do. "Take James back to the safehouse," he said to the team. "We'll meet you there."

Then, with a single nod to each other, Matt and I shifted and ran off into the night