

The Unclaimed Human Luna

Chapter 21

Conner

It was going to be a long drive with his wolf ticked off at him, and for more than one reason, it seemed. The bloody beast wouldn't sit still inside of his mind for the first few hours of the drive out to Seattle.

Atlas was very unhappy with him, even more so, when he pulled over to refuel and decided that he and Adam should get dinner as well. Atlas nearly went ballistic inside his mind, at stopping. For with every minute they were stopped off for anything, the time for the moon setting and their window to scent Eliza out was ticking away, and his wolf knew it.

In the end, Conner snapped at his own wolf, that it was more or less his own bloody fault, that if he had not receded so far away, that he didn't know what was going on around him. Which left Conner in complete control of running his own mouth and actions. It was likely that he, Atlas, wouldn't have allowed Conner to say such harsh words to her, or that he'd not have let her leave.

Conner knew it to be true, he also knew that Atlas would never have allowed them to leave for the mating ball. Which would have taken him right back to the pack, and then they'd have known, likely just a few hours after she'd left, that she was gone. His beast would never have allowed him to leave the pack knowing she was there, and the full moon was upon them.

Especially considering he'd pushed all his Alpha Wolf needs at Conner and tried to have Conner Mate her that very morning. It was bloody lucky Conner had realised just what was going on, he'd been lost to the Mating of her as his wolf had wanted him to be.

If he'd not realised that they were about to knot her, the fallout of his and Atlas's actions would have been terrible. They could have seriously injured her, and he knew that wouldn't have gone down well with his father, or her mother at that. Certainly, wouldn't have gone down well with himself or Atlas, for that matter. It would have devastated both he and his wolf. To hurt one's own Mate like that, to know it was their fault and see her in so much pain. Would likely render themselves to agony.

She would have ended up inside the pack hospital. Could well have rendered her so damaged that she'd never be able to have children. Would have been in the pack hospital for a long time, and she would likely hate him for it. Could well have had to

Mark her in the hope she'd turn and get her wolf to heal her injuries the very next day. Not something that was done.

This was the very reason that Atlas had left him, hidden himself away from all, his need to have his mate had nearly seen them hurt her and possibly irrecoverably as well. He'd stayed away to stop himself from wanting to be near her, until he'd felt the moon rising and would be setting soon, had only come back then so he could claim her.

Atlas himself, had realised that he was out of control where Eliza was concerned, but now she was missing, had left and no one knew exactly where she was at this very moment. Somewhere between the pack and her grandmother's house was all he could presume.

Conner got pulled over for speeding along the highway. He hadn't even realised that he was speeding, and could only think it was Atlas's doing. His wolf's thoughts encroaching on his actions, his wolf pushing his foot down on the accelerator little by little without Conner realising he was being influenced by his own beast. Knew it to be true when he felt amusement roll off his wolf as he told the highway patrolman, he was sorry and hadn't realised he was speeding. Had to accept the speeding ticket and be polite and remorseful at the same time. Didn't need that officer being all on his back or ticked off and having a reason to arrest him.

Let Adam drive after they were pulled over. Atlas, it seemed, was not only amused but proud of himself for asserting control over Conner without him even realising it. Conner could be a bit of a lead foot at the best of times, but he had no idea how long Atlas had been pushing his foot down.

Adam pulled the truck back out onto the highway as Conner looked at the remaining time to get to their destination in Seattle, realised his bloody wolf had made up not only for their meal break time, but that they were now ahead of schedule by thirty minutes as well. "Don't speed Adam, one bloody ticket is enough." He muttered.

Heard Adam chuckle "You're going to lose your license, you know."

"It is likely." He nodded "I guess you'll be driving everywhere when that happens, huh." He muttered.

"Yes, what's wrong with Atlas? Kade and I can sense him every now and then."

"He doesn't want to be disinherited. Is determined to get to Eliza and bring her back...I guess you could say. I didn't even know I was bloody speeding."

Heard Adam really laugh at him now, "Pushing you with his own agenda, I see."

"That he is." Conner nodded with a heavy sigh. It just wasn't the agenda everyone thought it was going to be. No, his wolf, wanted to scent her out as his Mate and bloody

claim her for himself, something that Conner did not want. That thought got him an aggressive snarl from his wolf.

He ignored it as he always did, there was nothing he could do at this point. But he knew that it was going to be a battle of wills, when the time came, and they did scent her officially. Atlas wanted her and Conner did not. He had no idea who was going to win that battle either.

All he knew was that they both had to want to Mark her, to be able to claim her for themselves, and right this minute he and his wolf were at odds over it completely.

He felt the moon set as did Atlas, felt annoyance roll right off of his wolf at the fact that right this very minute he should be standing in front of Eliza inside their pack. Scenting her out and they were not.

Also knew Adam felt it, heard that man sigh heavily "Sorry Adam."

"You'd better mean that," Adam muttered, "there were three unaffiliated packs there and just about sixty unknown she-wolves or newly turned 18 in the New Moon Pack, I'd never met, under a full moon before."

"I know. I am sorry." And he was they all deserved the right to attend mating balls and find their mates. "If father had trusted me to go on my own, I would have left you there as well."

"I don't think that is wise. Not with your current attitude towards Eliza."

"Mm," was all he could say on that front, though it was for a very different reason. He knew being alone with her probably wasn't a good idea. He'd likely Mate the hell out of her the moment he was alone with her. The minute they stopped for the night, and he was completely alone with her, in a hotel room with her because she wouldn't be getting one on her own, not with her being a flight risk. He knew Atlas would be pushing his own agenda with her. It would be even worse if they had sent her out as their Mate prior to that.

Conner could feel Atlas's amusement roll off him 'Like you wouldn't enjoy it.' Atlas snorted at him. Conner ignored his beast, but knew he was bloody right. The scent of her arousal was too strong for him to ignore, he loved the smell of it, enjoyed feeling like it was the sweetest air he'd ever breathed. Breathed it in until it consumed all of his thoughts and nothing else mattered to him.

Pulled his thoughts away and looked at the time of their estimated arrival, and sighed, it was going to be in the wee hours of the morning. He knew that he was not going to be able to wait for a decent hour to knock on Sloan's door.

Knew damn well Atlas was not having the phase of the moon pass where he could scent her out, which was going to be 5am or roughly thereabouts. Knew that Atlas was going to be in control of his entire body, whether he liked it or not, if Conner tried to stop him or delay them.

Then Adams' eyes were going to be wide open and know exactly what was going on. Knew that he would have to report to his father when they got back, everything he'd seen. It wouldn't go down so well.

His father was not so dumb, that he wouldn't realise that Conner hadn't known what she was to him. That his words about her not being welcome, would all be because he didn't want to have a human Mate.

Then all hell was going to break loose inside that pack and he was going to incur his own father's wrath, he was likely going to end up beaten and in the cells for his behaviour towards the girl. Even worse, if he Alpha Ordered him to tell him everything that had gone on between her and him. Might see himself getting chained and lashed for that. He'd certainly be made to stay away from her. Until he or his wolf begged to be near her, the man was going to punish the hell out of him.

A Mate is a Mate. Would be his opinion, it was the entire pack's opinion. He himself just had other thoughts about it. Considering his own needs and the way he liked to f**k, how rough he liked it, he knew no human could ever handle him when he got going.

'Bullshit,' Atlas shot at him. 'El, handled all of you, every time.'

Conner knew that was true, and his need to have her increased her need to have him and the more she had been turned on, the more he was as well. It was that cycle he'd believed would happen when he found his Mate. Only she was human and not wolfen. That still bugged him. She could give him human children and not a pup, not a wolfen Heir to the pack. Even if it was a boy, it could still be just human. He couldn't hand the pack over to a human. It just wasn't right. It's not how things were done.

They traded driving every few hours and he made Adam tell him when he was speeding, knew his wolf was going to make him, wanted to get there well ahead of the moon setting.

They arrived just after 4am and he was out of the car before Adam even had the hand break on, "Conner, look at the time." He called out to him as he was getting out of the car.

"I'm aware of the time." And he was if he didn't voluntarily go and knock on the door Atlas was going to be ripping out of him to do it for himself. "Father will expect me to lay eyes on her right a way." He muttered.

Jabbed his finger at the doorbell and heard it ring inside the house, waited a little impatiently for any light to come on, jabbed that doorbell again. Atlas was sitting up and he could feel the excitement of being this close to where Eliza was. She would have gotten here hours before they had, could well have been here a whole day before they got here. He didn't know.

Though they didn't see her car on the street or in the driveway, that was odd. The house did have a double garage, it was likely parked inside. They also couldn't smell her from out here, but with her scent already so delicate, if she hadn't been outside recently, he doubted they would.

He needed this woman to open her door, and was actually a bit on the antsy side himself, standing here waiting for someone to answer the door. He had no idea how old this woman was, and wondered if Eliza would answer the door herself. Tried to prepare himself for the battle with his wolf, over not yanking her into his arms, burying his fangs right into her and claiming her the moment they saw her.

"You alright Conner" Adam asked him a minute later.

Conner realised he was actually breathing, long slow steadying breaths as he stood here waiting for the door to be answered. A light had come on upstairs in the house finally, "Yeah, just worried I won't be able to get her to come home." He murmured.

"You need to apologise to her first, I imagine."

He nodded, though he had no idea if an apology would work, after what had been going down between them in that bedroom of hers, and the way he just up and left and never said anything to her. After he'd just lashed out at her, and hurt her on purpose, in an effort to make her stay away from Marlo.

"Perhaps your father should have sent Marlo. If he is her mate, it would help."

Turned his eyes right on his future Beta, couldn't help the angry look that he shot him, Atlas wanted to punch him right in the face, saw Adam take a step back and raise both hands "You think I'm not capable of apologising and being polite and persuasive?" he grated out.

He could hear someone coming down the stairs inside the house, and turned his attention to it as Adam shook his head. "No, I'm sure you can. Just look at you right this minute." His tone dripped sarcasm.

The door opened and a woman smiled "El...who are you?" she frowned right up at him.

Had been expecting Eliza, he realised, so she wasn't here yet "Morning Mrs Hunt. Sorry about the hour. My name is Conner Greystone, I'm here to talk with Eliza."

He could see where Eliza got her eyes from, Sloan Hunt had the same silver-grey eyes as Eliza did. He'd also heard her state she'd gotten them from her father. An inherited trait, she also had that black hair that Eliza had, Sloan also didn't look very old either. Felt Atlas smell her and saw her eyes narrow right on him. Didn't smell anything other than human.

"El is not here, you must be Logan's son." She stated as her eyes moved to passed him to Adam. "Who's he?"

"This is my friend Adam, just along for the company."

"I doubt that." She frowned right up at him, looked him right over he was big at six four, as was Adam at six two, they were also muscled up to the hilt. Though this didn't particularly seem to bother her at all. No fear came from the woman. She was tall at maybe five foot ten, was of slim build, barely looked to be in her mid thirty's, he thought absently as he looked at her. He could see just where El got her looks from, looked a lot like her grandmother, just much younger.

"Do you know when you're expecting Eliza?"

"No, she said a day or two."

That made him frown, "Decoy address." Adam sighed "Smart girl."

"I don't know where she is." Sloan told him, and went to close the door.

He put his hand on the door. "Are you certain? Brittney is very worried about her; we just want to know she is safe."

Saw her eyes narrow right on him for a long moment, "So do I, from what I heard, she's not happy out there with you, and your father."

"I'm aware of that. Likely my doing point of fact Mrs Hunt." He even sighed, a real sigh "I didn't want a stepsister any more than she wanted a stepbrother." Shook his head a little "My manners were lacking; I need to apologise to her."

"Is she welcome out there?"

Looked right at her and nodded "My father is very happy to have her as part of the family. I was a jerk to her, I will rectify that." He could actually say that he was, and mean it, because it was true, he'd been more than a jerk to her.

"I think you only speak half-truths, boy."

He blinked at her statement, she was calling him a liar. Felt Adams hand on him as he stepped up and moved him aside to speak with the woman himself. "Mrs Hunt, may I call you Sloan?"

"No, you may not." She looked right at Adam.

"I'm sorry to have disturbed you so early in the morning, my friend here is a little impatient at the best of times. I thought it best to speak with you after breakfast, but as you are probably aware, Brittney is worried about her daughter. We are just trying to ascertain her whereabouts so we can talk to her. Try and get her to come home willingly."

Conner was watching her, she was staring hard at Adam now, a bloody truthseer, he thought to himself. One of those rare things where a human could discern a lie from the truth. Adam had picked it up quickly himself. Everything Adam had said was the truth on his part. Conner was going to make that girl go back to the pack. He'd not spoken the truth.

He had to or he was losing his title. Though Adam didn't have all the facts around he and Eliza, that man was going to find it harder to do than he thought.

Adam thought the best option was to talk to her and get her to want to come back on her own, so it would all ring true to the woman, "I have yet to see her, she hasn't arrived. As I said earlier told me a day or two. I guess went somewhere else first."

"Thank you, Mrs Hunt, if you could call and let Brittney know when she arrives, I'm sure she would appreciate it."

"Hmm, I guess that will depend on what El has to say to me. When she gets here, and I will question her about a lot of things. To get to the bottom of this matter. Good night."

"Good night." Adam nodded and stepped back from the door as she closed it.

"Just bloody great." Conner muttered as they headed back to his truck.

"I suggest we call your father and have him question Brittney about her friends and where she would go."

"I'm tired to be honest Adam." And he was. She was not here, and the moon phase was almost over. His wolf was not happy, not angry though either, just...disappointed, he thought. Sighed to himself as he got into his truck and called his father to tell him she was not there. "Not expected for 1 or 2 days if at all."

Heard his father sigh "I'll figure it out and get back to you." he clicked the line closed.

"Find us a hotel close by. We'll sleep while he figures it out."

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Chapter 22

EI POV

Four days of glorious freedom she got, though only three of them were with Cordi and her friends. The first one had been her driving. They'd gone shopping more than once, that cheque from Logan she'd banked had actually cleared. It was a freaking miracle; she'd not actually expected it to at all.

Her phone did ring a lot, though she just let all calls go to the message bank, she didn't want to talk to her mother at this point, or Logan for that matter, and she recognised his number now. She was finally starting to feel normal once again, though a couple of texts came through that caused pain to touch her, hadn't known who they were from till she'd read that first one.

"Eliza, where are you? I need to talk to you. Conner." The first one had read. She had sat and stared at that text message. What he wanted to talk to her about, she didn't know he'd made himself plainly clear to her twice now, how she'd stupidly let him touch her that second time she still didn't understand.

The second one had come hours later and had read "Please Eliza, where are you? I'm worried about you." she did not believe that for a single second. She'd not answered either of them, Cordi had looked at them and raised an eyebrow at her.

"Do you believe that?" she asked her.

"No," Eliza shook her head. "It's likely he's been sent to look for me and is trying to get me to tell him where I am. So, he can collect me and take me back is all." She'd not told anyone at this point, not even her mother where she actually was. Her grandma knew she was back in California, had told her last night, but not where. She just said it would be a few days still before she came that way.

The only person she was talking to back there in the Gated community was Marlo. She knew he did actually like her as a person, and when he'd text her, just to get her to say she was okay, she'd responded to him "I'm alright Marlo, sorry I left. I just don't feel like I fit in there."

"You do El," he'd replied, "I miss you, please come home."

She'd let that one go, he'd only known her a few days and that place was not her home, here in Santa Ana, California with her friends, was her home. He'd started texting her a lot after that, had tried to call her but she'd declined it till last night, that was.

He'd begged her to answer the phone, told her he just wanted to hear her voice and make sure she was alright, told her he wasn't going to stop calling until she answered, and he hadn't and, after the sixth consecutive call, both Collin and Cordi had g*****d "El, just talk to the boy for two seconds so he'll stop calling."

So, she'd picked up the call, the next time it had rang "Hey El, I told you I wouldn't stop calling." He'd chuckled.

"Hi Marlo, I'm fine really."

"Are you sure, you've been gone three days El, and no one knows where you are, not at your grandma's like you said you would be."

"No," she'd admitted, "not yet anyway, I will get there."

"El, please just come home."

"That is not my home, Marlo." She told him and it was the truth.

"Who are you with...I just want to know you really are safe."

"I'm not going to tell you Marlo, you'll just tell Logan."

"I won't, I promise you."

She thought about that for a long, quiet moment, and had sighed, she didn't know if it was the truth or not, "I'm with some friends, that's all you need to know, Marlo."

"El..."

"What is it, Marlo?"

"Conner and Adam are out looking for you. Logan sent them to find you and bring you home."

"Yay." She muttered and heard him actually chuckle.

"Why would you tell me that?"

“Because I’m your friend El, is why. A heads up. They will find you. It’s kind of part of what they do around here.”

“Good luck to them.” She’d sighed and clicked the line closed.

Her days were numbered, and she knew it. Had always known it, is why she had been working on a way out for later on, though it was likely to be much harder now after running away. Wasn’t likely going to be allowed out of that gated community of his, or Cult or whatever the hell it was for a long while.

Was going to have to play at being ‘the good daughter’ and gain some trust, knew she could count on Cordi and Collin to help her out in a pinch. They were still on summer vacation, and it was only a full day’s drive out to where she was going to be. If she let them know the day before she made her bid for freedom, they could meet her somewhere. They’d already told her that.

Did know she had to go back, needed to get her passport and birth certificate, she had her whole college fund now, there was nearly twenty thousand dollars in there, she’d always planned on getting a job and working while studying to help pay her tuition and her parents had been going to help as well.

Now it was just her, she was really going to need a plan now, even just trying to get back into her university of choice was going to be hard. She had written them an email this morning to explain her current situation and that she did not want to withdraw from her degree. That it had been her new stepfather that had done that without her permission, and she still wanted to attend. To please reinstate her application.

She had no idea if it would work or not. But she could only try it and see. She had no idea what strings Logan had pulled to get her withdrawn from that place, it should not have been allowed due to it having nothing to do with her at all. She’d not written them or signed anything with her name on it. How they just let someone else pull her from their university she didn’t know.

She was in the backyard with Collin and Cordi, actually having a nice time. Xavier had turned up and hugged her all tight and told her he’d missed her. She’d leaned away from the k**s he’d tried to plant on her, couldn’t do it. Not after being with Conner. It wasn’t right.

He’d frowned down at her and then let her go and asked what the matter was. “It’s nothing.” She’d shaken her head. “Just got a lot going on is all. I’m sorry.” She’d not sext him once since that first night with Conner it had felt very wrong, was still talking to him but had shut that down quickly. He’d been a little shocked by it. But had apparently let it go.

“Where’ve you been?” she asked him, he’d not been here all weekend.

“Ah, my dad had me at some stupid function, for the weekend. Collin only just let me know you were back. So here I am to spend time with you.”

She'd smiled up at him, his soft brown eyes always smiled back at her, they'd sat around and had a barbeque and were just hanging out, she'd snatched his bottle of beer off him and told him he was too young to drink it. Run off with it and he'd just grinned at her. It was something they'd always done, none of them were old enough to drink, but Collin always managed to get beer for them.

It was just like old times, and she was actually having fun and had managed to forget about her worries for now. Collin was yelling at Xavier to get her, she wasn't that fast 'Just grab the girl already.' He yelled after she swiped the six pack that was next to Collin.

It was their normal, sometimes it was her. Other times it was Cordi, though that usually ended in Cordi and Collin getting a little hot and heavy. Though sometimes it had led to her and Xavier, getting hot and heavy as well, back before she'd been made to leave.

She ran from him, as she always did. Screamed when he jumped in front of her, turned and shot the other way, only to have Collin jump up and bar her way, looked from one to the other smiling at them, “You won't get away from me Eliza.” Xavier taunted her all deep and trying to be scary she thought. Saw him move, tossed the beer at him and bolted away. “Don't let her get away.” Collin yelled after him as she ran round the pool away from him.

Saw him stop in front of her and was just about to grab her when he was suddenly down on the ground, “Don't you f*****g touch her.” a deadly warning filled the air around her, and she saw Conner pinning Xavier down to the ground, found both Collin and Cordi right in front of her and she was shoved backwards.

“Get her out of here Adam.” She heard Conner yell and turned to see him coming up behind her, and got yanked between Cordi and Collin.

Saw Adam stop and look right at Cordi as she stood between her and him. She also didn't expect her friends to just jump between her and them like that “Adam.” She heard Conner grate out. Though his eyes were on Collin now, was still holding Xavier down to the ground, she could see he had a hand on the back of his neck and a knee between his shoulder blades.

“I don't think it's wise, Conner.”

“What the hell are you doing?” Eliza shot at him. “Let him up, what is wrong with you?” she pushed past Collin and tried to shove at him to get him off Xavier, only to have Collin snap an arm around her waist and step backwards with her.

Watched as Conner got up slowly "You don't want to do that," He grated out and yanked Xavier off the ground by his neck. Was gripping it tightly she could see how white his knuckles were.

"Let him go." Collin grated right back.

She did not understand what was going on. "Wait," it was Cordi. "Everyone just stop, El. Who exactly are these two?"

"That's my stepbrother Conner and his friend Adam."

Heard Collin snort "Well now, ain't that an interesting turn of events!"

"Let her go."

"I'll let go when you let my friend go." Collin stated right back.

"How about everyone just let go." Eliza muttered herself "What is wrong with all of you?"

"Nothing at all." Collin murmured and released her. Saw Conner shove Xavier away from him quite violently at that. The man stumbled a little and she reached out to help him, only to have Conner latch right on to her and pull her away from him.

Glared right up at him as he pulled her towards him and backed away from everyone, "Are you alright Eliza?"

"Of course, I bloody am." She shot at him, trying to shake herself free of him, couldn't, he wouldn't let go. "What is wrong with you? They're my friends."

She saw his eyes move right towards her. "Really, this lot, are your friends?" saw his eyes move right round them. "Sounded like they were trying to take you."

"We were just playing around. It's what we do."

"Conner, is it?" Xavier stated, "You might want to let my girlfriend go."

"Not your girlfriend." Conner shot right back, and she was suddenly handed off to Adam. "Put her in the car Adam."

"I'm not going anywhere with you." Eliza snapped at him, annoyed with all the man handling that was going on. Struggled against Adam, who shushed her and told her to just wait, his voice was soft and his grip wasn't all that tight. Looked at him and he smiled at her, "A bit of a turf war going on I think."

"What?" she was more than confused.

“Are you sure about that? I’ve known El for a very long time, we’ve been dating for a while now.”

Eliza frowned at that, no they weren’t, just dry hump the hell out of each other occasionally, they were not dating.

“Not anymore you won’t be.” Conner grated right back.

“Do I not get a say in anything?” She yelled at them all.

“No.” both Conner and Xavier stated at the same time,

“Do you really want to fight me?” Conner asked him, and she heard the amusement in his voice. He was a lot bigger than Xavier, though she did know both Collin and Xavier trained in martial arts, nearly every day Cordi went on about how she loved watching Collin, he trained shirtless.

“I think everyone should just calm the hell, down.” It was Cordi and she walked over and put herself between both Conner and Xavier. “I think a proper introduction is needed.”

“Conner Graystone, Heir of the Wandering Moons Corporation. This here is Adam Blakely, my right-hand man.” She heard Conner introduce himself and Adam.

“Collin Chatswood, second heir to the Lake Valley Corporation. That is Xavier, my right-hand man.”

“I’m Cordelia Blackwood, Collins’ fiancé.” Cordi introduced herself. “Now that the formalities are done let’s all just take a breath and relax.” Saw Cordi look right at her and sigh “You confirm they are known to you.”

She just nodded, Cordi and Collin both knew about Conner and her, Cordi had more details but they both knew his name. Knew that Conner and Adam were the ones looking for her to take her back. They’d been there for her conversation with Marlo.

Watched as Conner turned and walked away from them over to where she was, slid his eyes over her “Are you injured, in anyway?”

“Why do you care?” she shot at him.

“Enough with the attitude Eliza, just answer the question for once, please.” He sighed, looked angry but also concerned at the same time.

“I’m not injured, in any way.” She answered him.

“Good. Let’s get your things and go then.”

“What, you can’t just tell me what to do.”

“Alright, alright, alright.” It was Cordi. “Some courtesy would be nice on your part Conner, don’t you think. How about you ask El nicely to go with you.”

“Doesn’t know how to be nice.” Eliza muttered as Adam finally let her go.

El walked inside the house with Cordi, dodged Conners hand when he tried to grab onto her, heard his frustrated huff of annoyance with her. Heard Cordi chuckle at it herself. “Got yourself in a bit of a pickle I see. He’s a big bastard ain’t he.”

“There ain’t no pickle, and yes he is, they all bloody are out there.” She muttered “Do they know each other?”

“Not that I know of, but corporations like their fathers could well be rivals in business. It’s why I insist on the introduction. I kind of figured, with the way you describe that place and how wealthy your stepfather is, there was likely to be a corporation behind him.”

“A large one.” She heard Adam state and turned to see him following them. “I will go where you go for the moment.”

“Why?”

“Because that is what Logan’s orders would be.”

“I don’t care what Logan wants.”

“I don’t know these people, El, please just bare with it for the moment.”

“I have known Cordi since I was like 5. We went to the same school our entire lives.”

That raised his eyebrows, and she heard Cordi chuckle softly as she looked at Adam. Found something amusing, it seemed. She sat on the lounge next to Cordi, who offered Adam a chair.

“I see you’re not so hot-headed as your friend.”

“I am not. I see you’ve got excellent communication skills.” He smiled at her.

“What is going on?” Eliza asked. She was very confused, only understood why Conner and Adam were here, to collect her and take her back.

“Negotiations.” Adam told her as he leaned back in his chair.

“I’m not something to be negotiated.” She shot at him and got up, saw him stand as well. “I’m going to my room, you don’t need to come.”

"I go where you go El, I can help you pack for our trip home."

"If I don't want to go?" she shot at him, knew she had to, but that didn't mean she had to go without a fight.

"Conner is likely to pick you up and put you in his car whether you like it or not. He's under orders to bring you back."

"I don't give a crap, what Conner wants." She snapped at him and walked off to her room, and found Cordi in there with her a moment later.

"El, I don't think Conner is going to take no for an answer."

"I know, he's an a*****e who does what his daddy tells him to." She muttered.

Heard Cordi chuckle, they both knew she was going to go back, had to, to retrieve her passport. Saw her sit on the side of the bed and look right at her, "I want to ask you some questions, but now is not the right time." She sighed, "Call me when you get to the Wandering Moon Corporation, from the privacy of your room, preferably."

"I hate my life sometimes, Cordi."

"I know, it's not fun right now." She nodded.

Saw her bedroom door open sometime later and Conner was standing right there. His eyes were on Cordi for a long minute, narrowed right on her, then those blue eyes of his moved right to her. "When you're ready, Eliza, we will take our leave."

"I'm not ready Conner, could take me hours to pack." She shot at him.

Saw his jaw tighten "Please don't make this difficult Eliza, come with me. Your mother is worried about you."

"That does not mean I want to go anywhere with you."

"I understand my last words to you were severely harsh. I apologise for them. Now please can we pack and go."

"What's the rush?"

Saw him take a deep breath in, and stare right at her for a long moment. "Fine, when you are ready, Eliza. I will be out the front waiting for you." he stated, and then just turned and walked away from the doorway. Probably the nicest thing he'd ever said to her, no sarcasm or tone in that sentence at all.

Sighed and flopped down on the bed, "I hate having to go back. Knowing he's there." She muttered and found Cordi's hand snapped over her mouth, frowned at her and pulled her hand away "what?"

"You shouldn't say things like that, some people have good hearing."

"It's not like he cares, Cordi." She stared up at the ceiling as that familiar pain inside her chest welled up once more, stared up at the ceiling for a long time, didn't say anything at all, found Cordi right there next to her, hugged her and murmured softly, barely above a whisper "If s**t gets really bad just call, Collin and I will come get you."

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Chapter 23

Conner POV

They got the call from his father at 9 pm to state that Marlo had finally managed to get Eliza to pick up the phone, that she'd stated she was with some of her friends. Which meant she had to be in Santa Ana, California. A snarl ripped out of him, they had been waiting around all day here in Seattle for her to turn up at her Grandmother's.

Everyone believed she was on her way there, including her grandmother. Eliza, it seemed, was good at deception. Atlas was furious, she'd run away from them and hidden herself away, he'd missed the opportunity to actually scent her out on the full moon, and now he was going to have to wait on the next one. Conner wasn't overly bothered by that at all, but Atlas was completely furious.

Now his wolf was just mad that she was in another state and always had been, they were no closer to her than they had been yesterday, in fact, they were even further away now, than they had been yesterday. It was going to take a full damn day to get to her, 17 hours without breaks, the sat nav told him and Adam. Both of them were annoyed by this.

At least they had slept most of the day and were awake to start the drive, were going to have to stop for food and fuel along the way and sleep at some point, though one of them could sleep while the other drove. He did make mention to his father that the pack was actually closer to her than he was, right this minute.

His father had snapped, "You sent her away, it's your job to bring her back boy, get your a*s down there and retrieve her." Even Adam had been surprised by his father's words. The pack was technically only a 13 hour drive if one didn't stop at all, with exception for fuelling up, he could get there, hours head of them and have her half way back to the pack as well before they even got there.

Seemed that man had a bee in his bonnet about Conner fixing things with the girl and getting her to come back. No one understood just how bloody hard that was going to be for him to do.

They drove all night and he slept from 4am to nearly 9am and then took over the driving so Adam could get sleep. The man was out like a light after driving for 5 solid hours with no distractions. He pulled the car up to the address Brittney had texted him, for her friend Cordi, told him that she was El's best friend, so was likely going to be there.

He got out of the car and stretched. It had been a long drive, Atlas was already up inside his mind smelling the air, though her scent was always so light that he doubted they would pick her up unless she'd been on the street recently.

His head whipped around at the sound of her scream. Atlas was tuned in instantly to the other voices that were going on, was off at a run the moment he heard a man saying 'you won't get away from me Eliza.' Didn't sound good and then another yelled for the other to get her. There were people trying to catch her.

Caught the distinct scent of wolf as he got closer, and both he and Adam were moving fast 'Surround and take down.' He mind-linked to Adam. There only seemed to be two, but as he rounded the corner of the back of the house, he could see three, two male, one female. He was on that man that just about had her, so fast it wasn't funny. This was what his father was worried about, other wolves, getting a hold of her and using her against the pack.

The one he had on the ground was Beta b***d. He could smell it, and the only reason his head was still attached to his body was because Eliza was human, and she did not know what they were. Atlas was only keeping himself in check because he didn't want to frighten her.

The man that shot in front of Eliza was Alpha Blooded but he was young, they were all young. Likely only 18 or 19 themselves. She was supposed to be with her friends and safe, yet here she was not safe, surrounded by wolves and being hunted by an Alpha and Beta themselves.

Saw that man snag her, as she tried to get to him. Backed away with her, Conner was trying to take it all in. He'd seen the way the Alpha and the female had put her right between them, almost like they were protecting her. He got up but kept a fierce grip on the Beta. If that man hurt Eliza, his Beta's head, was coming off, regardless of her being right there.

Both he and Atlas were ticked off that she tried to help the Beta as he shoved him away, Atlas shot his arm out to get her, didn't want her anywhere near that man, near either of them in fact. Put her right into Adams hands to keep her away from him when he stated she was his girlfriend.

Atlas was itching to rip that man's head clean off now. She was not his girlfriend now, when she belonged to them. Was more than happy to fight him, he wouldn't win. It amused both he and Atlas to think that a young Beta, would try and take him on. He was near twice the size and an Alpha at that.

Heard Adam shush her, and that man had no idea how right his words of, 'it was a turf war,' were. She belonged to him and Atlas, and this bloody Beta had better not have laid a damned finger on her.

Though he knew she'd never slept with this man. He himself had been her first. This man might have known her longer, as he claimed, but he'd never gotten her into bed, she wasn't interested in him as far as Conner was concerned.

The she-wolf seemed to have common sense, and introductions were finally made. He knew he wasn't in a pack's territory, all hell would have broken loose if they'd crossed an unknown pack border. They would have been surrounded very quickly. It was likely this was the she-wolf's house, perhaps not always been a wolf, maybe human herself once. Introduced herself as the man's fiancé, kept it to human terms, because Eliza was right there, made sure Adam went with Eliza and that she-wolf, he didn't know them.

Looked at both of them "I don't think you want trouble. I don't think your father would want my father coming to your pack either. You will be handing her over to me."

"I don't think she wants to be anywhere near you Conner." Collin commented, a smirk on his face.

"I don't particularly care what you think she wants." He grated out "Eliza will be coming home with me."

"So, you can treat her like crap some more."

His jaw was ticking now, as he stood staring at that man. "What is between her and I, is none of your business."

"She has no secrets from Cordi. Trusts her completely. I know what is going on out there, Conner."

Heard Xavier growl softly and moved his eyes to him, smiled right at him "Not yours anymore." He stated.

"Isn't part of your pack, doesn't have a pack scent." That man shot right at him.

"No, she's not, hasn't been there long enough for that, you know how it works. Takes time with humans. My father wants her to settle in first."

"Really?" Collin stated "From what I heard, stripped her of all her rights. Took everything from her and all she wants is to come back here, and she is welcome here, trust me on that."

"Don't do anything stupid, your only young and I can handle both of you, while my Beta handles your Mate." It was a deadly game that they were now playing.

Eliza, it seemed, had wolven friends, and didn't even know it. She was not yet part of his father's pack either, she was an unclaimed human, by any pack right this minute. Fair game, so to speak, even though her mother was the current Luna to his pack. It also sounded like this young Alpha, Collin was more than happy for her to be in their pack.

"You touch her..." it was the Beta, Xavier.

"You do realise you take Eliza," Conner cut him off. "Her mother is the Luna currently to my pack. It will be war. My father is a vicious man, will leave nothing alive to get that girl back to his Mate. I don't want a war, you don't want a war. No one really wants a war."

"You can't make her go with you." Xavier snarled at him.

"Then let's call our respective Alphas and let them discuss the current situation." Pulled his phone out and did just that, called his father and apprised him of the situation. Got silence from him for a long moment and then rapped out "get me the number to that Alpha. Don't touch the son for now."

Collin did just the same, though his father seemed surprised by the turn of the events, he wasn't all aggressive about it, was open to having his father call him. They both stood and waited, phones in their hand, for the return calls they would each receive.

Stepped in front of Xavier when he moved towards the house, "I wouldn't, you're only alive right now because she's human. You go anywhere near her, my wolf is likely to rip your head off."

Saw both of them staring at him. Yes, he was laying claim to her, Adam was inside and out of earshot, so it didn't really matter so much to him. "You might want to treat her a bit better then." Collin stared right at him.

"Eliza and I are none of your business." He stated flatly. "What goes on between us is just that, between us."

"You're a cheating a*****e from what I hear."

"I am not." He stated, and he wasn't, had portrayed himself that way, but wasn't. He hadn't f****d anyone since touching her, no inclination to at all. Likely Atlas wouldn't let him either.

"According to her you are."

"She is wrong." He stated he did not need to explain himself to this young Alpha, even if he was her friend.

His phone rang as did Collins, smiled when his father stated that Collin and his Beta would back off and let them bring Eliza home. Clicked the line closed and looked from one to the other "we're done here. I'll go and collect my stepsister."

"No one knows what she is to you, do they?" Collin shot right at him as he walked off.

"I have not scented her, she was here on the full moon, I believe. So, there is no need to voice anything now, is there." He left those two in the back yard, could see the Beta was furious. He didn't much care and headed inside the house, could smell her in here, followed her scent and found Adam leaning on a wall. He pointed to a room, "Girl talk."

"Hm, both our Alpha's have conversed she will be coming with us, to not start a war."

"Wise," Adam nodded.

She was so bloody stubborn, but he already knew that. Walked away from her and that she-wolf, to wait out at his car, ignored her comment about him not caring and hating to have to go back with him there. He'd pushed her to get rid of her. She'd actually gone and now he was having to bring her back.

That girl was infuriating. He was still standing out there an hour later, trying to contain his temper at having to wait. Mind-linked to Adam, to find out what was going on, he said not much. They were chatting about nothing in particular, though it did appear that Cordi kept cutting off her sentences and so he didn't really understand what was going on. It was clear to him that Cordi knew Adam was listening and didn't want El to say anything.

Then they'd just stopped talking altogether and Adam had no idea what was going on. On the bright side, she'd not let it slip that they'd been sleeping together. Adam would have a million questions for him if she did, considering Adam knew his rules. The first being no humans.

She finally walked outside, was pulling a suitcase along behind her and carrying a backpack, looked to be some sort of hiking pack. He stood and opened the door to his car for her and saw her raise an eyebrow at him and then just turn away to move down the street.

“Eliza, where are you going?” he tried to keep the annoyance out of his voice.

“I’ll drive in my own car.” She told him and unlocked the boot to place her things in it.

He was certain she hadn’t packed to leave the day she’d left, so she must have been shopping while here, “Adam can drive your car, you will be going with me.”

“I’ll be driving my car.” She told him.

Conner took a long breath in and walked over to her, stopped her from opening her driver’s side door. “You’ll be coming with me Eliza, to be honest with you, I don’t trust you not to try and get away again.”

“I’m not getting in a car with you. Adam can drive with me if I need a babysitter.”

He heard Adam actually g***n, he was trying to be nice to her, not to fight with her, knew that everything he did was going to be reported back to his father. “Eliza please, Adam can drive your car, or I could hire a trailer and we can tow it if you like. But my car is much more comfortable for a long drive. And the driving for us to come and get you has been very long.”

Saw her try to pull the door open, put his weight into it and his strength so it wouldn’t budge. Got glared at by her and sighed once more, “Please Eliza, you don’t even have to talk to me, just ride in the car is all I’m asking.” After almost a full minute of her just standing there, a hand still on the car door handle and saying nothing, he huffed there was no winning this staring competition. Just knew she wasn’t going to budge, so stubborn “Pick you up and put you in my car it is then.” He commented and reached out for her. He knew she wouldn’t want that, saw her move and turn to walk away from him.

Smiled to himself, knew the threat of touching her would get her a*s moving away from him, looked at Adam and the car he was now to drive “Sorry.” He muttered. The man was not going to be comfortable at all in that Camry. It was not meant for people of their size.

Saw him just shrug as he opened the passenger side door for Eliza, she thanked Adam and handed him the keys to her car. He smiled at her and said “You should let Marlo know you’re coming home. He’s been texting me a lot about if we’d found you yet.”

Felt Atlas snarl inside his mind, had already to contend with one Beta being interested in her, didn’t need another, not only that, they were both her age and she seemed to like them as well. Walked over and got in his car, she didn’t even look at him. It was going to be a very long drive back to the pack and they were going to have to stop overnight somewhere.

He started the car and mind-linked to Adam before he moved off. ‘We’ll stay overnight in Vegas, it’ll be nearly 8 by the time we get there.’

‘I’ll book us into the Luxor.’ Came his reply. ‘How many rooms?’

‘Book a suite that will fit all of us in it.’ he replied and severed the link.

He couldn’t be alone with the girl, not with Atlas itching to be alone with her. He also wasn’t going to put her in a room with Adam. Atlas would not be having a bar of that, got snarled at for just thinking about it, and she certainly couldn’t be in a room on her own. Likely just run off once more and he didn’t need that right this minute.

But at least with her sitting in the car next to him, Atlas was calm and not prowling around inside his mind, was settled. Knowing she was safe and alright, away from the Beta Wolf, Xavier. He didn’t know what to really think about that. She didn’t know what they were, that much was for sure, they had all talked as if they were humans, because she was human and right there.

He wondered if Brittney knew that her daughter socialised with Wolves all the time. They did seem quite protective of her, it was also likely that Beta was looking to make her his Mate, had called her his girlfriend and gotten riled up over her. Liked her, knew when he got back Marlo was going to be right there as well.

He’d wanted to be with her on the full moon, but she’d run off. Looked at her now as she sat staring out the passenger window “How long have you known Xavier?” he asked casually.

“That is none of your business.” She stated without looking at him, sounded bored to him.

He couldn’t really blame her on that one, let it go. “We’ll stay the night in Vegas.” He told her, it wasn’t likely he was going to be able to get her to strike up a conversation with him.

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Chapter 24

EI POV

It was a long quiet trip back to Logan’s company inside that gated community of his and Eliza spent the whole time staring out the window, she’d shut herself inside the

bedroom that was hers in the suite that they'd been shown to for the night. Gone to bed the minute Conner had indicated which room was hers, she'd walked over there to go to bed.

She hadn't known he was following her until she'd turned to shut the door and seen him just outside the room looking at her, a deep frown on his face. What else was new, that's how he always looked at her. She'd just closed the door on him, without so much as saying a word.

He had called to her through the door about them all going down for dinner. She'd called right back "I'm not hungry." And she hadn't been particularly hungry either, being alone in that car with him for hours was not fun for her, made her chest ache near on the whole time.

Breakfast had been much the same, she'd been woken by him knocking on her door at some ungodly hour. The sun was barely up. "Breakfast is here, Eliza." He called through the door. "We'll be leaving directly afterwards, get up please, Eliza." He'd stated calmly, hadn't opened the door or come in, thankfully.

She'd gotten herself up, knew she didn't look good, was still tired, the mirror confirmed it, looked as bad as she felt, she'd slept fitfully at best. She had washed her face and brushed her teeth and dressed in ripped jeans and a long button-up shirt, and was ready to go. Had stepped out of her bedroom and taken her suitcase to the door by the exit.

He and Adam were already dressed, and it seemed they were waiting on her. Watching her, she realised, "Please have breakfast Eliza, you didn't eat dinner." Conner had told her, she knew that.

She had looked at the food that was laid out on the table they were sitting at, and wondered why there was so much of it, there were only three of them, plucked a piece of toast from the table and walked off with a glass of juice, to stare out the window.

"Eliza, please eat something proper, you must be hungry. I ordered plenty." She'd heard Conner tell her. Almost sounded worried about her, she thought absently. It had to be her imagination.

"We didn't really know what you eat." Adam had chuckled. "Got a bit of everything for you, please come eat."

"I'm not hungry." She'd stated without looking at either of them. She didn't want to look at Conner, caused that stupid well of pain inside her chest to deepen every time she did. She didn't understand why it just wouldn't go away. She knew they were nothing, never would be, he'd used her twice now and she'd let him. For some stupid reason, just couldn't say no to him.

He'd also made it plainly clear to her, she was nothing to him and that he wanted her gone. Had told her to leave, wasn't even allowed to attend the same university as him. Not that she wanted to, had only been there to get out of the gated community for a day, had been going to return. Needed to gain some trust where Logan was concerned.

But after what had happened that night and then him telling her to leave, it had just hurt too much and so she'd done it, left, because he'd told her too. It's what he wanted and really it was for the best and she knew it. They were never going to be able to get along. She knew that, but it still hurt, couldn't for the life of her get passed it, it seems.

Gave herself to someone and he'd turned out to be an a*****e and now it just hurt.

She did not want to be in a room with him. Did not want to have to sit across from him and eat a meal, with him chatting away to his friend like nothing had happened between them. She didn't want to have to try and make any form of small talk with him. So, she was opting not to, to just ignore him, he wouldn't really care. She also knew that he didn't want her around, so why he even bothered talking to her she didn't know. Likely, been told by Logan to be nice was all and with Adam there he had to.

Got in the car when she was told to and stared out the window for the long drive back to the gated community, he only stopped to fuel up and get food. She knew that he was annoyed with her lack of interaction with him. She could actually feel it, the air in the car was strained at the best of time. Then he'd stopped trying to talk to her an hour into the trip when she'd stated "Why even bother talking to me? You don't like me. So just stop." She didn't want to have to hear his voice, it was bad enough she was stuck in this car and surrounded by the smell of him. Was trying desperately not to feel anything where he was concerned. To not let it show how much it hurts.

There had been silence for a long time in the car after that, though she was certain that she could feel his eyes on her several times, he'd not tried to strike up a conversation at all. He'd only spoken to her to ask if she needed a bathroom break or something to eat or drink. To which he got a yes or a no for an answer.

Other than that, the trip was made in silence, with her staring out the window. Saw the gates open for his car as he drove down the long driveway to it and sighed, couldn't help it. Really did just wanted to leave. Get the hell away from him. Even that thought caused her chest to ache. Needed to get away from him, out of this bloody car.

"It's not so bad here, you know, if you gave it a chance you might like it here." He commented.

"I doubt it." she'd muttered "I'm only staying till the end of summer anyway."

"Eliza." He'd sighed.

She'd said nothing to that comment. He didn't know she was going to leave, she wasn't going to tell anyone, she was back there just for her identification documents. He'd pulled up right outside the front of the apartment complex and she could see that her mother and Logan were both standing there. She got out and headed for her car to get her luggage.

Adam offered to take it for her, she just shook her head. "I can get my own things." She told him "Thanks for the offer though, Adam."

He'd smiled right at her and nodded "Any time, Eliza."

Pulled the handle up and wheeled it over to the stairs to pick it up, found Conner right there next to her. "I'll take that up for you Eliza."

"Don't bother, I have it." she snapped at him and moved it away from him and took it up by herself.

"Honey, can we talk please."

"About what exactly, my lack of freedom even though I'm an adult." She shot at her mother and saw her frown "I'm sorry, I'm just tired and grumpy, I'm going to turn in for the night."

"Eliza, it's only three in the afternoon." Logan told her. "We do need to talk. Please come to my office before you turn in."

She stared right at him and stalked off inside, stood outside his office with her suitcase and watched as both he and her mother walked in, followed by Conner and Adam, turned at the sound of her name being called.

It was Marlo, she half smiled at him, as he trotted down the stairs and hurried over to her, hugged her to him and murmured "I'm glad you're home, I missed you."

Actually, leaned on him, "I'm sorry I didn't tell you Marlo, I just..." she trailed off.

"I know." He murmured softly. Pulled away from her, "Forgiven this time," he smiled down at her "Next time I'll punish you good and proper." He winked at her playfully, and she actually smiled up at him.

"Perpetually happy aren't you!"

"Now that you're back, yes, I am. Though you missed our date."

"I did, I'm sorry."

“Marlo, Eliza is needed in with Logan.” It was Conner and she knew he was standing right behind her, could bloody feel his body heat, he was that close.

“Yes, Conner.” He nodded, looked back at her, and smiled “we’ll hang out later.”

“Okay, that would be nice.”

Saw him grin from ear to ear, “I’ll run your suitcases to your room.” Grabbed her suitcase and backpack and was gone.

Turned to find Conner’s jaw ticking, though he was looking at Marlo not her, why did he even care. Walked around him and stood at the door, felt him bump right into her and glared up at him, “What? you stopped walking.” He frowned down at her.

“I’m not allowed in without permission, unlike all of you.”

Saw him raise an eyebrow. Heard Logan call out to her to come in, and walked into the office, “please sit, Eliza, and you were told to come in.”

“No, I wasn’t, you said please come to my office, not go into my office. I do recall your instructions; never to go into your office without being asked to come inside. Even if the door is open.”

Heard that man sigh, as she sat down. He stared at her for a short moment and then stated, “It was implied that you were to come inside.”

Just stared right back at him, wasn’t going to incur his wrath. Her mother looked healthy, she noticed, wearing a simple summer dress, though the material looked very expensive, her arms were bare due to the spaghetti straps, as were her legs. The dress fell to just below her mid-thigh, it did suit her. She looked nice, not a single bruise on the woman.

“I thought we could start with why you left and didn’t come back.”

“I was told to leave, so I did.” She stated flatly.

Saw his eyes move to his son and saw them flash with anger at his own child. At least she wasn’t the only one to tick him off. “I am unhappy with him Eliza. Did he apologise to you?”

“Like you told him to? Yes, I got some comment from him about him being overly harsh.”

Saw Logan look right at her now “You didn’t believe him?”

Heard Conner sigh this time, “I did mean it, Eliza.”

“Apologise now son, right this instant to Eliza.”

“Don’t bother to make him Logan. An apology should never be forced from one. It’ll just be meaningless even if spoken with sound of sincerity.”

“He will apologise, Eliza, we are not a community that leaves things unattended or has animosity to grow. You can’t have those things when you live in close proximity to each other. So, this will be cleared up and now.” Saw those eyes of his move back to Conner. “Now son.” He grated out.

There was silence for a good 15 seconds and then Conner sighed “Eliza, I honestly didn’t mean for you to leave altogether, just to come back here. I was having...a tough day myself, some things were going on with me that you know nothing about, and I took it out on you. I’m sorry, I did that.”

He’d been having a tough day, she thought. What was her day then? He knew what he’d done, what they’d done together and still took out everything on her. Probably, though it was all her fault what had happened between them.

She couldn’t look at him, didn’t want to. Just really wanted to get the hell away from him, that apology didn’t stop the pain in her chest. “May I go now?” she asked Logan.

“No, we need to address you lying to everyone. Leaving and lying about it, and not just once either, multiple times to multiple people. I don’t approve of those things, Eliza. Honesty is the best thing around here.”

Stared right at him, and wondered just how little he knew his son, then moved her eyes right to Conner, looked right at him and actually saw something flicker there on his face before he was completely closed off.

Knew what it was she realised, he didn’t want anyone to know about what had gone on between her and him. She looked back at Logan, said nothing. She didn’t want anyone to know either, it was her stupid shame that she couldn’t say no to him. She was not going to tell anyone other than Cordi, who already knew.

“I left and didn’t want you coming after me, so I lied about where I was, to get further away from here.” It was the truth, if he wanted it, he could have it.

Saw him frowning at her now. “El, may I call you El?”

She shrugged “El, I want you to feel like this is your home. I know it’s been rough for you to come here. A complete change of lifestyle for you. I also understand I can be overbearing and come across as...” saw him think about that for a moment “Dominant and controlling.”

“That’s an understatement.” She muttered.

"Fair enough. I also know things have been difficult for you this last year. I'm not trying to replace your father. But as your stepfather, I do need you to respect me and listen to me. I do have valid reasons for the things I have done."

"I'm sure they're valid to you." she nodded, in his head everything was likely valid to him.

Saw that jaw tick and knew she was starting to push his buttons, watched him take a breath in and actually let it go. "Now your mother and I are worried about you, up and leaving once more, I'd like your word that you won't do this again. We were very worried El. Thought the worst for a bit there."

"Who on earth would want to hurt me? I'm no one, just a teenager wanting to get a degree. I don't even know anyone here in Utah."

"I understand that, but people I know will know you are now my stepdaughter."

Eliza sighed this time, "You're a paranoid control freak, you know that right. I was gone for four days. No one hurt me, no one came near me. I was not in any danger whatsoever, simply went home to my friends."

"That you did, crossed three states." He nodded "Now your mother and I, we have discussed this at length and some rules need to be applied to you, we think."

Saw her mother walk around the desk to her and sit in the chair next to her "I think you need to stay here inside the Gated community for a while, no going outside unless you have someone with you."

"You're grounding me right. Locking me in like I was when I first got here."

"El don't see it like that, this place has everything you need, you're allowed to go anywhere within the gated community. Just need someone with you to go outside is all. Anyone you like, that's up to you."

"Marlo will do it." Adam chuckled "Taken quite a shine to you, El."

She looked over at him, didn't need anyone taking a shine to her, had enough emotional issues without a boy trying to hit on her while she was trying to deal with, her and Conner's f****d up s****l relationship.

"May I go now?" she asked once again. She didn't want to be in this office with Conner staring at her and she could feel his eyes were on her. The man didn't want anything from her, but seemed ticked off when Marlo was brought up or around her. She did not understand him at all.

“Not quite just yet.” Logan told her “Your mother and I wanted to show you a few apartments and let you choose your own, and...” she watched him pick up an envelope and then walk around the desk to her. “I wanted to welcome you officially to the family, before now, but it’s been difficult between you and I.” He held out that envelope for her to take “Please accept this as a welcome gift from myself and your mother.”

She took the envelope. It was large and somewhat heavy, opened it, there were keys to a car, and a black credit card with her name on it and some other paperwork there. Frowned at him.

“That card gives you access to unlimited funds, there is no limit at all. Buy what you want at will, go shopping. Perhaps you and your mother could spend the day doing just that. I let your mother pick a car for you. I was going to let you do it yourself but...”

“I have a car. I don’t need a car.”

“I understand that. But around here it is tradition that on your 18th birthday you get a car. Now I missed your birthday.”

“So did mother.” She muttered “Was here with you.” and it was true she had been, her own mother had forgotten all about her only child’s 18th birthday. That had hurt more than a bit. Fortunately, she’d had Cordi and everyone to try and cheer her up.

“I’m sorry about that, El. Please take the car as a gift and an apology.” Her mother sighed “I couldn’t help missing it, there were some extenuating circumstances.”

“I’m sure there were.” Eliza sighed, “so extenuating, I didn’t even get a phone call.” There was always some reason and it always revolved around Logan, because her mother’s whole life now revolved around him. She looked at the Audi key chain in her hand, wondered if they were trying to buy her off with a car and a credit card.

“Shall we go look at it, El?” Her mother smiled right at her. “It’s brand new and outside so you can see it.”

Stood up, anything was better than sitting there, she thought. “Sure, why not?”

“Come on El.” Her mother smiled at her. “A brand new car, and not just any car. A convertible.” Her mother linked her arm with hers and walked her back out the front, and down the stairs and there in the parking space was a brand new Audi S5 Cabriolet Convertible in dark blue with a pearl finish.

“Do you like it?” she asked. Her mother was super excited, it seemed.

“It’s a nice car.” She admitted and it was “But I like having dads.”

"El, I want you to have your father's car, but it's old and could breakdown. This is much more reliable, more suited to your status now as well." Logan told her.

She turned and looked at him. "My status?"

"Yes El, as my stepdaughter. You're now and heiress. Although Conner will inherit the company, you'll never want for anything ever again."

Till Conner takes over and cuts me off completely, she thought to herself, as her eyes moved back to the car "Who's name is it in. Mine or yours?"

"Yours of course, El. But it is registered with the company, so any speeding tickets or fines I will know about them before you do."

"Good to know." She nodded "I'm really tired, may I go to my room now please?"

"You don't want to take it for a drive, El?" her mother asked her, seemed a bit disappointed.

"To be honest with you, it's been a really long drive to get here, and I am just tired mother. Thank you for the car, it's lovely."

"Go and rest El," it was Logan. "We'll look at new apartments for you after dinner. You will join us, yes?"

Wanted to say no to that, but needed to play nice, gain some trust. Might as well start that now, right from this moment. "Yes," she nodded "What time?"

Saw Logan smile at her. "Six, I thought you might like to have dinner with just the family instead of down in the dining room."

"Where?" she asked with a nod.

"Our suite, I'll have Conner come and collect you. Bring you."

"I know where it is. Don't send Conner, I can make it on my own." Saw him blink at that. He hadn't realised she'd been wandering around while they were all sleeping, she guessed. "See you at six." She nodded and headed inside, walked around both Conner and Adam, who were by the entrance to the complex. And headed up the stairs to her room. Her suitcase was waiting for her, by her door, took it inside.

A new car, a new credit card with unlimited funds and a new apartment of her choosing to come and all because she ran away. Shook her head as she up ended the rest of that envelope onto the coffee table in her room. A second set of keys for her new car and admission papers for Utah State in Logan, of course there were. On campus living paperwork as well, she noted.

That was something she thought, wondered if that man would actually allow her to live on campus. Perhaps this was his way of trying to get her to stay here, but not feel confined by him at the same time. It had to be pretty clear that she didn't want to be here, had called it a prison on more than one occasion.

Got a car but wasn't allowed to leave in it unless someone was with her, because they didn't trust her not to run away again. Freedom was granted, but limited freedom, not much she could do about it, to be expected after what she'd done.

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Chapter 25

Conner POV

Even Adam had sighed down the mind-link at him 'She looks terrible, Conner.'

She did he had to agree, she'd not eaten dinner and though she had turned in early she'd spent the night tossing and turning, he knew because he could hear it. Atlas was unhappy that she was unhappy, and she definitely was, barely spoke a word at all to him. Then just closed herself in the bedroom and not come out.

He'd been awake most of the night himself, Atlas was pushing him or trying to, to get him to go in there and comfort her, no amount of telling him she did not want him in there satisfied his wolfs need to be with her.

Looked almost dead when she'd come out of that room in the morning, didn't even think she'd brushed her hair just yanked it up out of the way, still wouldn't eat, even Adams chatting happily to her didn't improve her mood. She was miserable he realised, and he was the cause of it.

Didn't argue with him not once, just went where she was told, he didn't really like that either, she always fired up. Not today, couldn't get her to talk to him at all, told him to just stop. Both he and Atlas caught something in those last two words, pain and he knew it.

Atlas though calm because she was in the car with him, was unhappy that she was unhappy, and then his beast was just quiet, made Conner look at her many times, nothing changed she didn't want to be anywhere near him, and he couldn't blame her.

Had done this, made it like this to make her want to leave. She had left in fact, and he'd gotten what he wanted, she was gone, and he'd not so much as scented her out to confirm anything.

So why did he feel like crap, when he looked at her? He didn't want a human Mate, knew that about himself. He didn't quite understand why her mood was bothering him so much. This was what he wanted, for her to hate him, and go away. Right?

Tried to assist her with her luggage only to be shot down, it had been a very long strained drive and he wanted to help her, just once have her look at him and let him do something for her, he'd not been able to so much as purchase her a drink or a snack or anything on the way back. When they pulled over for gas she just got out and went and bought her own things.

Stopped for lunch and she told the waitress we'll pay separately, even Adam had raised an eyebrow at that one, 'What the hell did you do to her Conner?' had come down the mind-link at him.

He'd not replied at all, just looked at her as she'd stared out the window. It was really starting to not sit well with him. Atlas was laying inside his mind watching her, whined a few times at him, not that he could do anything with Adam right there. If he knew the truth, when they got home, he'd been made to tell them everything. Had to just let her be how she wanted to be, even though it was not a nice feeling to see it.

Heard Marlo call out to her after he'd walked into his father's office, she was still standing out there, waiting it seemed for all of them to file in. Turned on his heel the minute he heard that boys hurried footsteps, saw her lean into him and nearly ripped her from the boy's arms. Felt Atlas stand up inside his mind at snarl at the way Marlo held her.

The way she let him, then smiled up at him, he was trying not to get so close that it would appear odd, but the minute that boy brought up their date, Atlas moved his body directly behind her, it was a possessive thing to do, not that Marlo seemed to notice or care. Saw him just pick up her suitcase and backpack and head on up the stairs with it, she didn't even object to him doing so.

Wouldn't allow him to take it for her when he'd offered to do just that, but let Marlo, she didn't even so much as try to stop him. This annoyed him more than he thought it should have, glared right at his retreating back, wanted to stalk off after him and yank that suitcase from his hand. Was going to have to watch himself he realised, or Atlas was going to have at that boy at some point.

His wolf was fuming inside him about Marlo being so close to Eliza, when she wouldn't even look at them, walked around him, deliberately put space between them, yet had hugged Marlo without concern at all.

He did apologise to her, did actually mean it. Though he had to choose his words carefully saw her just not really care about it at all. Saw her eyes move right to him when his father told her honesty was how things needed to be. Prayed damn near instantly she wouldn't out them to his father, then she just turned her eyes away from him and said nothing at all.

She didn't want anyone to know either her realised, actually felt pain touch him at that thought, she wouldn't want anyone to know that they were together. Knew his wolf understood it as well, receded away from him near instantly with a whin of pain, that she didn't want to acknowledge them. Knew it was his fault and not Atlas's, had no one to blame but himself for that one.

Got a new car and access to pack funds, saw her just sit and look at them didn't look all that happy about it, understood why the moment the words were out of her mouth. Her mother had been here for her 18th birthday, not even called her own daughter. Had been to wrapped up in her love bubble with his father. No wonder this girl didn't want to be here, hated being here with a passion. Couldn't get along with his father, he'd taken her mother away from her.

Followed them all outside, Brittney was very excited to be able to give the girl a new car, his father was watching her, just like Conner himself was, he could see she wasn't happy, her mother would also see it, but was trying to get her to be happy, and excited. Didn't want to take it for a drive, wondered who on this earth didn't want to drive their brand new car.

Said it was lovely but that she was tired, she looked more than tired. Worn out is what he thought, even worse than this morning if that was possible. If he'd not been such an a****e, none of this would be happening, she'd likely be happy right this minute, would be excited to have been given a new car. It was a nice car too, top of the line, all luxury not that she cared. She had her father's Camry, that thing was at least ten years old. But she didn't care about that, it held sentimental value for her.

It was bloody lucky his father hadn't sold it off, likely would have caused a rift that would never be able to be closed. He could see that his father was really trying where she was concerned today. Had also noted that Brittney was wearing clothes that showed her daughter there wasn't a single mark on her.

They were trying to show her that his father was not the man she thought he was, one that would beat his wife. He could also see that his father was putting her first. Even told her she was now and heiress, would never want for anything and she wouldn't. Not even Conner would change that. Wanted her to have whatever she wanted. She didn't seem to care about that at all either. Money meant nothing to her, he realised, she didn't care about status, just family and she likely felt abandoned by her mother, already lost her father and her mother had not only missed her 18th birthday.

The girl had not been here for her mother's wedding, not that there had been one, just a Luna Ceremony, but Eliza didn't know that, had been abandoned, that's why this was so very difficult for her to be here and accept it. She didn't feel like she was wanted.

Then his father had separated her from everyone and just compounded on her own thoughts. Though she said yes to dinner, that was new, perhaps she was going to actually try and be a part of the family. Sighed when she stated, "Don't send Conner." Even heard Adam sigh, felt that man's eyes on him and knew why, as the Alpha or future Alpha, you were supposed to make all inside the pack feel welcome and treat them decently and he'd not done that at all.

Had a dislike of humans, though that had started with Vivian and her accusations, now he disliked all of them and that was affecting the way he was treating Eliza. Turned and watched her walk up the stairs, always took the stairs. Then realised why, she didn't have access to the elevator it was coded. Only those that lived or worked inside the pack house had the code.

Turned his eyes back to his father, who was standing with his arms around Brittney the woman looked like she was on the verge of tears herself. 'Father you still haven't given Eliza the elevator access, you might want to do that.' He mind-linked to him.

Saw his father look right at him as he tried to console his own Mate, "My office Adam." He stated, "You can go Conner." he was dismissed.

Turned and walked away, knew Adam was about to be questioned on his behaviour there was nothing he could do about it, nothing even Adam could do about it, other than answer all the man's questions, saw Jared strolling through the foyer, nodded to him. He nodded back, "Sorry Conner, was told to or it was going to be an Alpha Order."

"It will hurt less coming from you, best for Adam." He nodded.

"How is Eliza?"

"Unhappy." He stated honestly and he knew she was, it was likely that how she looked on the outside was exactly how she felt on the inside. He needed to try and fix things, though how did he do that when being alone with her was going to be a bigger issue. He didn't think being alone with her would be a good idea.

Could well see Atlas take over and try to console the girl, hell his wolf could well take her bed himself, she wasn't likely to get a wolf, if her mother didn't have the gene, she wouldn't so the only way for his wolf to mate her was in human form. Knew his beast would have no issue with that at all, though technically he shouldn't do it till scenting her officially. That was now pushed to the next full moon.

Took himself to his room and flopped down on his bed and stared out the window himself, he'd royally f****d everything up and he knew it. Closed his eyes and tried not

to think about it, still didn't want a human Mate. But was damn certain he had one as was his wolf. Family dinner was going to be horrible having to sit across from her and look at how unhappy she was.

Wondered if he could get out of it. Wasn't called down to his father's office, so that man must have been happy with Adam's report of his attitude towards Eliza on the trip home, not that he would have seen their interactions in the car. He had really tried to be nice to her, didn't actually like seeing her miserable at all. Even Adam would have picked up on that.

He had also taken on that Beta in an effort to get to her, that was on his side, protected her when he was supposed to, not that she had needed it. That Beta hadn't been going to hurt her, likely trying to play with her so he could bed her. Chasing her, playing hunt the prey openly with her in front of others who helped him play with her.

Pinched the bridge of his nose, two Beta's interested in her and if she did reject him, she could likely have either one of them. Xavier would already know if she was his Mate, she'd known him prior to her birthday he presumed, though that boy might not yet be 18 himself, they were her friends yes, but he could be a few months younger than her.

Might not know if she was or wasn't, though he had laid his claim on her for that Beta to know what she was to him, but then he'd stated stupidly he'd not scented her out yet either, she'd been there with them for that full moon.

That made him curious, had Xavier not been there on the full moon, there was no way he would have backed off if she was his Mate and he'd scented her out, no Mate would, even if she didn't know what she was to them. He'd have stood his ground and taken him on. So not his Mate but that didn't mean he wasn't interested, he clearly was had growled right at him, which meant his wolf was alright with her being their Mate as well.

Pushed himself up off the bed, he needed to go and work out, as he realised she could have more than one Mate, it might not just be him. If she did, she wasn't likely to choose him, though that's what he'd wanted, for her to reject him. It didn't sit well with him now, either.

Got up and changed and hit the gym, he needed to fix things, or she could well end up Mated to Marlo and he could already see she liked him, if that happened? a choice to be made she'd never choose him, and he'd have to see her all the time. Making out with Marlo, know that man was touching her, kissing her, Mating her.

Could feel Atlas stalking forward inside his mind, his thoughts were filtering to his own wolf, and he knew it, could actually feel Atlas's fear and anger that someone else could be Mated to her and that she might chose them over him.

Saw her and Marlo pop into his mind, her on the jet ski, smiling and happy with Marlo, then the way she'd leaned all into him, took comfort from him. Felt rage build inside his beast at the thought of another comforting his Mate, something he at this time couldn't do, but wanted to do.

Couldn't because Conner had screwed everything up, and before he knew it, Atlas was in full control of his body and ripping the Gym apart and throwing things around the room, pack members fled in all directions away from his beast, a massive roar ripped out of him all rage and aggression as he ripped the punching bag from the ceiling and hurled it across the gym and it went smashing out the window.

Then his beast was just gone, and he was left standing in the wreckage of the room, looked around the room at the destruction his beast had wrought, only to find his father and his entire unit standing in the doorway staring at him. Never before had his beast unleashed a fury like that. Didn't even know how to explain it without telling his father about Eliza and what she was going to be to them. Couldn't do that.

Wondered just how long they had all been standing there watching his wolf throw the biggest fit in history, nothing had been left untouched in this room, every single piece of equipment was turned over, tossed about or ripped apart, his eyes moved about the room, and he sighed, this was not the first time his wolf had lost it either.

Had taken on his own father up there on the Alpha floor, could feel that man staring right at him, "I'll clean up." He muttered and turned away from all of them to start righting the equipment that his beast had not ruined. Likely he was going to have to spend the entire evening ordering new equipment. Or explaining himself to his father, had no idea what he was going to say. Wolves didn't often throw tantrums or fits for nothing, and it would not have been lost on anyone inside this pack that it was Atlas and not him. Likely his father had arrived at the sound of his wolf's massive roar to begin with. The whole damned packhouse would have heard it. Likely even know it was their future Alpha as well.

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Chapter 26

EI POV

Her mother showed her around the apartment that she and Logan lived in. It was bigger than the house that they lived in with her father, and it was filled with plush and expensive furniture. It had four bedrooms, including a master bedroom, which was bigger than the apartment El was in right now. Everything was white and black marble, or plush pile carpet, and it had a massive balcony that spanned the entire length of the building.

Their apartment took up the entire eastern side of the apartment complex, her mother was going on about it and everything inside it excitedly. Telling her that Logan had let her change the colours in there and it was all freshly carpeted to her liking, the furniture they'd picked out together. Gushed about how he spoiled her and even took her into the walk-in, with all her new clothes and went on about the labels and how Logan wanted her to have anything she wanted, never told her 'no' to anything.

Eliza stood out there on the balcony and looked at the view, could see all the way to the lake from here, as well as the forest between here and the lake, strolled along the length of the balcony and looked at the view, it was just her and her mother. Logan had some sort of business to attend to. He was going to join them when he could. Apparently, something needed his attention.

No real surprise on that front, she thought, he was trying to be civil or nice to her, but she had the feeling that was solely because her mother wanted him to be. Her mother had offered her a glass of wine. Surprised her more than a little, considering she wasn't old enough to drink.

El shook her head, she did not need to go and get drunk, might just do something stupid like confront Conner, or go and hunt him down in a drunken stupor later on. She didn't need anyone to know how dumb she was, where he was concerned.

There were many photos in this apartment, of her mother and Logan; on their honeymoon, she thought, some on that boat of his she'd said was out on the lake, more of them on their wedding day, El got to see just how big and lavish it really was.

Stared at a few of those so many people were at that thing, no wonder, the people here dismissed her, she had not been invited to their most important event. Kind of sent a message to all of them about her. That she wasn't worth Logan's time or effort. He didn't want to get to know her, hadn't cared to even invite his soon-to-be stepdaughter to their wedding. She was nothing to him, to this place.

She could see just how happy her mother was in those photos. It certainly had been impromptu, she thought bitterly, it would have taken months to plan an event that lavish. She saw that her mother was watching her look at them, and didn't bother to say anything. What was the point really in doing so? It was over and done with now.

There were pictures of Conner and his father. Conner didn't look happy at their wedding either, likely didn't much like her mother. Walked around the living room and looked at

other photos, Conner growing up she could tell by his eyes, they hadn't changed, saw him smiling as a young boy. But then noted there wasn't much smiling as a teenager, mostly formal photos where he looked bored all the time.

Wondered if he didn't like growing up here himself, though Marlo had told her Logan was hard on him, maybe he always had been, who knew. Wondered what the man's mother looked like. There wasn't a single photo of her anywhere in here, not even with Conner.

"What happened to Logan's first wife?" Eliza asked her mother.

"Divorced when Conner was a child."

"Logan obviously got custody." Likely wouldn't give up his child to his ex, too possessive of a man to do that.

"Yes."

Looking back at the photos of Conner as a child, she was willing to bet that happy boy turned into a not-so happy boy with the loss of his mother. "Does she ever visit?"

"No."

She turned and looked at her mother. "Not ever?"

"Not that I heard." She shrugged, "nothing to do with you and I, best not to bring it up."

"Why'd she leave?" Eliza was curious.

"I don't know, I didn't ask."

"Probably should have, don't you think?"

"It was a very long time ago, and does not concern me or you, El. Don't bring it up."

"She left him, in other words, and it's a sore point."

"For Conner it is, not Logan."

They sat down to dinner and were served by a young girl who couldn't have been more than 16 or 17. She didn't speak, just laid out the food and went back to the kitchen. It was weird to have someone in the home serving them dinner. Though she noted her mother seemed comfortable with it.

"You don't cook anymore?"

"Not really. Logan has a chef and servers for all meals, has had for years. He wants to keep that." She shrugged "I don't mind it, didn't like coming home and having to cook after a long day."

"You weren't that good a cook anyway. Dad was better at it." she stated, just as Logan walked in.

Saw that man frown as he walked over and sat at the table, "Sorry I'm late. Conner will not be joining us, he is on clean-up duty down in the gym."

"What happened?" Her mother asked him.

"It's not important Brit, we can discuss it later." He nodded.

"What were you two discussing?"

Watched her mother just smile at him and shake her head "Nothing important."

"My father, and that he was a better cook than mother was." Eliza stated, seeing as her mother thought it wasn't important. She had been married to that man for twenty years and now talking about him was not important.

Saw her mother frown at her and Logan looked right at her, "Or am I not allowed to mention him around you? Make you mad, does it?"

"You may talk about your father anytime you like Eliza, and no, it doesn't make me mad. I to was married once before, Brit and I have simply agreed not to talk about our past marriages around each other."

"Interesting," She commented.

"You'll understand one day when you get married, that it's just a common courtesy not to talk about your ex's is all."

"I guess so." She shrugged.

"Do you see yourself getting married one day, El?" Logan asked her.

"Never really thought about it, haven't thought much past my studies. Didn't need to."

"Well, your mother and I would love to throw you a lavish wedding one day."

"We've already set money aside for it, El." Her mother smiled right at her.

Stared right at her now, "Why bother? I'll likely just elope, it'll be very impromptu." Saw them both frown at her. They could no longer state they had an impromptu wedding,

there were too many photos of their wedding for them to deny it. "or I simply won't tell you at all. Just go and get married without telling you."

Saw her mother glare right at her now, knew she was taking shots at her, didn't really care. Yes, she was going to play the good daughter and get along with others and play nice, not try to leave. She still had a few things that she needed to sort out until then she was going to stay here and not once try to leave. Before she bailed, she still needed to wait for that reason as well. Though it was only a month away now. But she found it was actually hard to play nice when it was clear they had lied to her about everything.

She was going to play that dad card when it came to it, there was no way her mother or Logan could deny her that one thing, and if they did she was swimming across the lake to get the hell away from them. Wondered just how long it would take them to find her if she swam across that lake, would they consider it or think no way in hell would she do that.

"El, I understand you're upset about not coming to the wedding. I'm sorry."

"I'm not." She cut Logan off. "I wouldn't have come anyway. I already told mother. I just think you need to be reminded, every now and then, that not everything revolves around you. Perhaps you should take others into consideration when making decisions that affect others' lives."

"I do that every single day El, with everyone that lives here, is actually a big part of my job. To make sure everyone here is happy, and their needs are met."

"Didn't take my thoughts into consideration at all, about anything from what I can tell." She was not going to make it easy on him. "But then, I didn't live here either, now did I?"

"El, please. We've apologised for things." Her mother sighed "Can we please move on from this? It's tiresome."

"Probably should have left me to live with Cordi, or shipped me off to Italy, I wouldn't be so tiresome to you. I wouldn't bother you at all, and you and Logan could just go about doing whatever, without a single thought about me. Like you did before making me come here."

"Eliza, please, this was supposed to be a nice family dinner." Logan was frowning at her once more.

"Mm, because that's what you wanted."

"You agreed to come."

"To get you off my back." She muttered and stood up "I'm no longer hungry mother. I'll take my leave."

“El.” She sounded exasperated “Please just give Logan a chance, you came here with the attitude of not wanting to be here, not even wanting to give Logan or this place a chance. Couldn’t you please just do that?”

“I will do that if I can go to Italy.” She put right on the table. “I will cause you no more trouble, be polite, the perfect daughter for the entire time I am here, smile and laugh and be happy.” And she would, it would all be an act, but she would do it.

Looked right at Logan and saw him frown “No, I thought not. It doesn’t matter to either of you what I actually want in life, does it?” shook her head, “Excuse me, I’ll retire to my room.” Then she walked out of their apartment.

Walked away down the hall, only to find a hand on her arm about halfway there, turned and looked to find Logan standing right there looking down at her, “You need to cut your mother some slack Eliza, it was my doing that you didn’t get invited to our wedding. She did want to invite you, I left you off the guest list. She feels bad about it.”

“If you didn’t want me here, Logan, then why am I here? Why not just let me go back to my old life?” she brushed his hand from her arm. He let go.

“It’s different now that she and I are married. She does want you here, and I want that for her. I want for her to be happy. You need to give this place a chance, for your mother. Every time you state things like that, it hurts her. Makes her get upset and sad.”

Just stared at him, “Let me leave Logan, I don’t need to be here. You don’t want me here anymore than anyone else does. Why must I stay here, when I don’t want to be here?”

“It’s for your safety, Eliza.”

“I’m not in any danger, Logan, I never was. I never will be, your paranoid is all.”

Saw him sigh “I’m not Eliza. You have no idea what people in my world will do to hurt others like us, to bring down big corporations. Even here, in this gated community, it’s not always safe, rivals send people to hurt me. It’s happened before. If you’re out there, you could well be a target for them, to hurt me and your mother.”

“So, I was brought here to stop someone from hurting you, your company.” Shook her head, “I don’t understand you.” turned and walked away.

“Eliza,”

“I’m not interested Logan, go back to mother. If she’s upset, console her,” turned and looked at him “As her husband isn’t that your job. I’m nothing to you, not your flesh and b***d, and don’t want to be either.”

“You make things more difficult than they need to be.”

“How would you feel being held in a place you don’t want to be? Forced to stay inside a place and not allowed out. If you get out, people are sent for you and you’re brought back against your wishes. Tell me Logan, what is the definition of being a prisoner?”

Saw him frowning, “It’s not like that Eliza, we want you to live here and be happy.”

Walked away from him. Not from what she’d just heard, he wanted her here to keep him safe, keep someone from hurting him and his company by taking her, and what? using her to extort money from him in all likelihood.

Having her here was just a way of keeping his assets safe guarded, and nothing more. Wondered just how many other poor unsuspecting people had been brought here by him and weren’t allowed to leave. There could be a lot of them. Likely why his last wife left him, couldn’t deal with his paranoia and controlling ways. Got over it and just left after she’d had enough.

Wondered if that woman had an escape plan or had she just walked out one day and not come back, or did she actually divorce him. Must have done for him to remarry. Showered and sank down onto her bed to check the status of her scholarship applications for her university. No changes as of yet. It was too soon for that, but would be checking them daily, really was going to need that if she was going to be on her own.

Though there was an email to state that they couldn’t just reinstate her application for the university, that she should reapply for the following semester. There was nothing about her circumstances mentioned. They didn’t seem to care about that. Likely already filled in her spot with someone else. Sighed and started looking at other universities over there, spent several hours filling out applications for other universities in Italy. There wasn’t much she could do other than that, either way, she was getting out of here. She just had to get accepted with on campus living.

Which shouldn’t be that hard to do, seeing as she was an international student, though she did have relatives over there in Italy on her father’s side. She would have to talk to her grandma about that, see if she could connect with any of them if she couldn’t get accommodation. Perhaps one of them would take her in for the first few months till she could get into a share house of some sort.

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Chapter 27

Conner POV

He'd been excused from the family dinner and had to spend the night cleaning up in the gym. No one was allowed to help him, which was fine with him. He wanted to be on his own anyway, needed to be on his own.

His father had cleared the room after Atlas had stopped tossing s**t around and left him with the aftermath. Had closed that door to the gym and asked him what the hell was going on with him.

Conner had said "I don't know." And tried to leave it at that. He wasn't about to go telling his father Eliza was his human Mate. Not that he had scented her out, but that his beast was completely obsessed with her.

He certainly wasn't about to go telling the man that he'd slept with the girl, nearly knotted her for that matter, and was damn certain of what she was, along with his beast. There would be major discussions and putting them in rooms together and trying to make them get along. His father would be pushing the agenda so hard with him.

He did not want that, she did not want that, it was bad enough his beasts' feelings on the girl were spilling to him, that he now had guilt and wanted to fix things. Didn't want to see her tired and worn out. Looking terrible and knowing why, her body knew what he was, craved his as much as his did hers. Being apart from one's mate was not a good thing, being at odds with each other was even worse, it seemed.

Only been with her twice, and damn near Mated her, had been Mating her without realising it and, in all likelihood, a part of her, was now attached to him. That part of her that couldn't help herself but want him when he touched her, she was drawn to him, and strongly so. Alpha, Luna bonds were supposed to be strong, and it was likely theirs would be. It was also likely why she looked so tired and worn out, it was taking a toll on her.

His father had stared right at him long and hard, with those narrowed eyes, he was not fooled by his son's answer at all. "You and I need to talk, if your beast is going to be running around, out of control, Conner. I might need to contain him for you."

"Perhaps you shouldn't have ripped him away from that Mating Ball, he's already of the opinion you're going to pass us over and you stopped all Mating Balls here and then conveniently found a way to remove us from one, where there were three unaffiliated packs as well."

"That was your own doing. Not mine."

"Hmm, it could have waited a few hours, considering she wasn't where she said she was, wasted two days waiting on where she was, could have stayed inside that pack for a few more hours. But no, you insisted we up and go right then. Leave that ball."

Saw his father's jaw tighten "and you're just throwing a tantrum about it now?"

"Well, if I bucked up, you'd remove me as the heir if I recall...Couldn't well do it with Eliza around now, could I? That would out our kind to the human girl," He'd muttered. Wondered just how long he was going to be able to keep putting his agenda as the mating balls? Likely only till Atlas loses it around Marlo and Eliza being together, he thought. Needed to stay away from those two. "We also didn't appreciate you, Beta Ordering Adam to watch us and report back to you. It shows a lack of trust in us on your part."

"What do you expect when you don't like the girl being here? Tell her to leave. What was the reason behind that? I am curious. You'd told her you'd had a bad day. But I don't recall anything bad happening at all that day."

"I don't tell you everything that goes on with me, I also have things to deal with inside this pack, responsibilities, and then I have the stress of my double degree and all the bloody extra classes you insist I take over the summer. Perhaps, father, I am tired, and you just don't care to see it." he muttered, knew that wasn't the reason, but if his father cared to really look at him, he would actually see that he did look tired.

Hadn't slept much at all since the last time he'd been with Eliza, nearly hurt that girl because his wolf had his own agenda. Didn't want Conner rejecting her, so he was pushing him to Mate her regardless of the full moon. Trying to make him bond with her, he thought. Bloody trouble was he knew it was working in some small way.

"You need to be able to run all the companies, Conner," his father stated flatly.

"No, I need to advise with the companies they have heads in the department that specialize in what they do, got degrees for those positions they are in, specific to their job titles. If I had to run them, you would run them."

"I do run them, Conner."

Conner turned and looked right at him. "No you don't, you listen to what is going on and make decisions based on what the Elders who are running them feel is best for the pack. You know as well as I do, they are assisting you to run the pack out in the human world. Are all our former Alpha's and their units, that's their job once they step down from the actual Alpha position here inside the pack. They don't just disappear, you know, become the elders and advise much like a council do, their input is invaluable to you." Saw his father frown at him, "It's what you'll do when I take over father." He added.

"That won't be for a while yet, Conner, to be honest with you. I don't think you're ready, you have too much hate in you for the humans, and a lot of our pack businesses are in the human world and I deal with humans all the time. Till you get over this issue you have, I won't be handing over the pack to you. Even if you find your Mate."

That got his undivided attention, he stared right at the man now, "And you wonder why Atlas and I feel you're going to pass us over."

"I don't want to Conner, I would quite enjoy retirement, lazing around and just mating Brittney all day long, every day. Without a care in the world. Travelling a bit and leaving the worries of the pack to you. No Alpha wants to be in charge forever. Decades of waring with other packs is not fun. After 20 or thirty years of it, son, we all want out, to hand it down and retire, let someone else worry about it."

"Then just do it."

"You're not ready, and we have pack laws for a reason. It's best if you have a Luna before you take over, it will make you stronger, will make the pack stronger as well. I will consider it when you bring your Mate home."

"I'm sure you will," Conner muttered. "After I've done all the degrees you think are necessary for me to attend."

"Correct, as the Alpha I know what is needed for you to run this pack. You're a good strong Alpha Conner, I'm not arguing that, but you're still young. How many heirs do you see out there taking over at your age?"

"Not many." He had to admit, and there weren't most were between 26 and 35 he thought.

"Correct, because it's our duty as the current Alpha to make sure you are ready and not just have the strength to defeat incoming rogues or invading packs, Conner. But business wise, you're not even out of college yet. Haven't even started working in the real world, I don't doubt your ability to physically protect this pack and those in it. I've seen you and the boys do it many times. But you have no business plan for this pack either, now do you?"

"To bloody busy studying and training to have time for that." Conner muttered.

"Hmm, maybe I am too hard on you with your studies, but you handle it, only have one year to go and then what Conner. Think about this and let me know what you'll be doing."

Stared right at him, he didn't know a single other Alpha his age that was pushed so hard by their father. He'd been to Alpha College attended a full year of it as is the requirement, then came home to find his father had laid out his education for him and

not just for him either, for his whole unit as well. None of them had gotten a say in what they wanted to do. Conner wasn't even getting a degree in what he wanted to major in. Likely have to attend to that after this degree was done, as would his unit. Years more of schooling to be attended at this point for all of them.

"As for this mess," his father indicated the state of the room with a sweep of his hand. "There will be no help for you in here Conner, I will not allow one omega to help you clean up your mess, not your unit either, no one. I expect this place to be cleaned and righted from top to bottom, I don't care if it takes you all night long. You will also attend training and your class's tomorrow. There will be no exception given to you. Learn to contain your beast Conner, before he is completely out of control." Then the man just turned and walked away from him, closed the door behind him as he left.

Yes, contain my beast, he'd thought to himself.

There was only one way to do that, and she was upstairs having dinner or would be having dinner in the Alpha Suite. She in all likelihood didn't want to be in there either, wondered how it would go, would she simply sit quietly or lose it and start yelling about what she would see up there.

He'd been in there for many dinners, that impromptu wedding they'd told her they'd had, was not so impromptu at all, and she was about to find out just that, there were many photos of that Luna Ceremony in that suite. Brittney had displayed them in the living area, just like a human would with her happy wedding photos. He didn't think it was going to go down so well, when Eliza realised, she'd not been invited on purpose. Just one more clear reason for her to see she wasn't welcome here.

Sighed to himself, at least he wasn't there to see it, didn't need Atlas pushing forward around his father, wanting to console the girl. It was likely that he would especially after seeing Marlo with her and the way she'd been with him. Atlas was likely to get up and follow her out of that room if she was annoyed or cranky.

There would be no explaining that.

Conner showered and climbed into his bed just after 1 am knowing he had to get up in just under 4 hours for training, he wasn't about to go ticking his father off anymore. Not after the conversation he'd had, he wasn't ready, too much hate for the humans, didn't have a business plan for the pack. It didn't bloody need one, the human world businesses were all running smoothly and were profitable at that, been in the black for decades.

He understood the pack laws that were instated here within the pack, also knew not all other packs had the same laws. Each pack was allowed to make their own rules around the taking over of and running of a pack. They only had to follow the standard wolven council laws, which is what Alpha college was for. To make sure as the future Alpha, you understood what exactly was expected of you as an Alpha of a pack, by wolven

laws mandated by the royal family. Alpha college was monitored by wolven council and all its rules were enforced by them as well.

He'd met many future Alpha's at Alpha college, even ones from packs they were enemies with. Alpha college was a place monitored by the Council itself, there was a truce called for all that attended, and it was there at Alpha college that you learned how to make your very first Alpha Oath and see it be enforced as well.

All attending the college had to Alpha Oath that they would be civilised and there would be no attacking or fighting with your warring packs heirs. He'd found it an interesting place to be, seen a lot of fights break out from those that just couldn't contain their grudges against each other. He'd sat back and watched the pain of them breaking their oaths, or going against it. It didn't look like fun at all.

Most abided by the rules but there were some that just couldn't put aside their differences at all. He'd managed to do so, even chatted with a few of his father's enemies' heirs. Was likely to make a few new alliances once in charge. A couple of them just didn't get it, why they were at war and neither did he.

He'd actually gotten along with most of them, had liked Alpha college. He'd thought it was actually a really good place for those warring packs heirs to come together and try and sort out their differences. Seeing as they were all sitting around in the same classes and sharing dorms and eating together for a solid year. It had made him wonder if that was the purpose of Alpha college, most already knew the laws that needed to be followed.

He'd mentioned it to one Council member that was teaching their class and the man had just smiled at him, nodded and wandered off. Giving Conner the impression that he was happy with Conner's judgement of why the school was in place. Noticed that it also put female and male Alpha's together to pair up and be Mated off together.

He'd seen that as well, didn't really go down so well with warring packs. He'd seen alliances made and Marking and Mating and rejections given to those that just couldn't get along, wouldn't be with their Goddess Gifted Mate from a warring pack. It was an interesting year, no semesters, just got new arrivals every month. Once you were 18, off you went to Alpha College.

You attended classes for a solid year with only weekends off and if there were major functions back in your home pack, leave could be requested for you to attend it. But other than that, one solid year under the council's watchful gaze and tutelage, exams every month and then one final exam after your year was up and then back to your pack you went.

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Chapter 28

EI POV

No new apartment was given. Logan had come and informed her that until she could behave herself and not upset her mother she would stay where she was. He wanted to see that she was trying to fit in, willing to stay here and make an effort. Though he had allocated her a new suite, it was larger and plusher than the one she was in currently. Not given her a choice as previously mentioned.

He had made a point of showing it to her. She was under the impression that he thought showing her the suite she would get, would change her attitude. It was not in the East Wing either, like him and his most important CEO's were, but in the middle of the building, down a long hallway to the back of the apartment complex.

It had a large balcony that had a view of the northern woods, he'd told her. He had her walk all the way through it. It was at least three times the size of the room she was in currently and actually had a separate bedroom to her living area. It was nice, she thought to herself. But was not going to be bribed into being nice to him.

It had been three days since their dinner, and she'd wandered about the gated community, hung out with Marlo and his friends when they weren't off doing summer studies, apparently prep classes for the beginning of their journey into college. Something that Logan expected most of them to do. Attend at least two classes to get used to the University and prep for it.

Though not all of them had to do this, not all of them even had to go and get a degree, some of them just worked right out of school in the kitchen or cleaning department, the laundry department around the community as gardeners and lawn keepers.

She had spent some of her time down by the lake and a day strolling in the woods, though that hadn't gone down so well, been informed that she really shouldn't go wandering about the woods. There were wolves roaming out there as well as a few other wild animals.

She knew there were, heard wolves howling during the night sometimes when her window was open, heard them during the day even, though not often. She'd not seen any since that day she'd tried to leave after getting here the first time, but knew they were out there.

She ate breakfast every day in her room and never went downstairs till after 9. This gave Conner plenty of time to go off to university and she didn't have to see him. She had only laid eyes on him once, since being brought back. She'd been headed downstairs and seen him heading out the front door of the apartment building, had come to a halt and waited till he was gone, before walking the rest of the way down to the foyer.

She was polite and well mannered, hadn't picked a fight with her mother in three days, pretty much didn't really see her either, had seen her and Logan kissing at one point and turned and walked in the other direction, did not need to see the two of them like that, it hadn't been a little k**s, were really l*p locked all leaned up against a wall like two bloody teenagers getting ready to go at it, kind of reminded her of Cordi and Collin.

She was swimming nearly every night in the indoor pool and was trying to prepare herself for that swim across the lake. It was going to be a nightmare to do. The indoor pool was fifty metres long and she was exhausted after just 10 laps, that was only 500 metres, had to really start pushing herself or something. The gym was always busy. There were always guys and girls in there doing weights and cardio.

Not that she joined them, just hit the pool every night at about 11 when it was empty, looked around and found a storage room. There were a few kickboards in there, for teaching the little ones to swim, she guessed, took one back to her room, was likely going to need some sort of floatation device on her long swim.

She'd not ventured out of the community, not even tried to, just sat around in one place or another and talked to Cordi or Xavier when they weren't busy, though she did note Xavier was more reserved with her than he'd once been. Wondered if he'd met someone, asked him that and he'd not replied for many hours, then simply sent 'no.' but that was it. Something was going on with him. She didn't know what and he wasn't about to tell her either.

He did ask her nearly daily if she was alright out there in Utah. She'd sent back a yes, she was she supposed. Sat in her room of a night before going for her swim, applying for scholarships to universities, anything and everything, it was very time-consuming, but she needed to do it. Didn't tell anyone what she was doing, not even Marlo when he asked her why she always retired to her room by 8pm.

Had told him she just liked her space was all, left it at that, he did not need to know she was working on her way out of here once and for all. Started using that black credit card she'd been given to let them think she was willing to stay here, be a part of the family. Knew Logan was tracking her purchases. He'd smiled at her just this morning and stated, "It's good to see you using the card I gave you."

She'd used it yesterday down in the town's café to buy herself lunch and coffee. It was the first time she'd used it, in fact. She had stared at him more than a little annoyed, but then when she thought about it later, could use that to her advantage, if he was tracking

her with it, could use it in Logan or wherever she was allowed to go, make it look like she was actively going to be a part of his family. Stay here, like he wanted her too.

Eliza looked at the time. It was nearly three in the afternoon, and she was down by the lake, staring at it. There were a few teens around her here at the lake, some of her newfound friends, the people Marlo had introduced her to, weren't actually so bad, and they all thought Logan was overbearing at times. Didn't mind hanging out with her, even when Marlo was off at uni.

The group around her were lazing about, a few of them were openly making out and getting all hot and bothered. She'd wandered off away from the group and heard a few chuckled at her. One guy called out "Just wait till we see you and Marlo like that."

She'd shaken her head at him, "Not going to happen, we're just friends." She'd told him and had seen half a dozen of them laugh at her for it. Rolled her eyes at them and wandered off to let them be. She was not interested in being more than friends with any of them. Marlo knew this, she'd made it perfectly clear to him. Though he was still interested in her, she knew that.

None of them seemed to care about kissing in public, or grinding up against each other for that matter. A few of them even giggled and ran off into the woods. She did not need to be told what for. It was pretty darn clear they were going off to have s*x.

She stepped into the water and waded out till she was waist deep, then dove under and headed off at a casual pace out towards the middle of the lake. This was not going to be a race. No one was really paying her any attention. She knew they wouldn't be. The group she was with were all couples and their attention was solely on themselves and their significant other.

She swam till she was tired and then rolled over and just lay out there and floated around. It was a cloudy day today, not so hot and the water was nice, but she was willing to bet it was going to be freezing cold during the night, which was when she thought was the best time to get out of here. Leave in the wee hours of the morning, or after everyone had gone to bed.

Was just lazily kicking and moving her hands to keep herself slowly inching her way across the lake, didn't look to see how far she was, knew even in an hour of swimming she'd barely be 500 metres from the water's edge, this swim was going to be a nightmare. It took her nearly an hour to swim ten laps in that pool, at the rate she was going it was going to take her a full 12 hours to swim across it.

She stopped and looked back at the water's edge after a while, and found that no one was paying attention to her. That was good. She continued on her slow journey across the lake. Switched between freestyle and breaststroke. Till she was near unable to swim.

Rolled onto her back and just floated out there. Was going to have to make her way back, turned herself around and did just that, saw the clouds get darker and realised it was going to rain, smiled to herself as the first few drops fell, and splashed on her face, always did like the rain.

Was she realised a very long way from the edge of the lake, it was going to be a long swim back, but that was why she was out here, testing her limits. If she had that kickboard with her, it would be much easier and she could just rest her head on it and kick away for as long as she liked, rest easily without worrying about having to stay afloat.

Rolled over and really struck out for the shore when the rain really started to fall, and the water began to get choppy, had no real choice to. The only problem was she was getting tired herself now, needed to rest and had nothing to do so with. Definitely needed some sort of floatation device for this swim. Felt a large wave of water hit her as the real down pour started, just as she turned her face up to breathe and floundered in the water as she started to cough, nearly choked on the mouthful of water she'd gotten.

Was under the water a moment later, having tried to put her foot down to stand up, to breathe, only to have nothing under her. Nearly panicked as she realised there was nothing there to stop her from sinking. Then she was met with something hard up against her body and then she was above the water and, being moved through the water, felt hands on her and she was being hauled up out of the water, coughed a few times and finally looked up to see who it was, though the heavy rain was hindering her vision she was pretty certain it was Adam looking down at her.

Found Conner looking right at her a minute later, both his hands were on her face, pushing her hair back. She tried to push them away, he was frowning down at her, his eyes moving over her, then she was physically moved from Adams lap. To the front of Conners' jet ski and felt him sit behind her. She was too tired to argue, then they were off heading back to the shore, was going to get in trouble and she knew it. His whole body felt tense against hers.

She was too darn tired from her swim to really care though, and just leaned back against him with her eyes closed. His body was warm despite it being cold out here. She didn't even argue with the man handling she got from him, as she was pulled from the jet ski the moment it hit the shore and marched off down the path. Found herself wrapped in a towel and put in his car. She wasn't the only one in it either. She wiped the water from her face with that towel and found Brayden looking right at her.

"You're in trouble, do you know that?" He murmured, though he sounded somewhat amused to her.

Closed her eyes and sighed "I was just swimming." And she had been, testing her limits was all, wasn't actively trying to do anything. "Just went too far out I guess." There was no point in trying to argue it.

"In the rain, a storm brewing?"

She heard the car doors open and bang shut, didn't open her eyes. "It wasn't raining when I went for a swim, it was sunny." She told Brayden.

"You could have bloody drowned out there Eliza." Conner grated out at her, "no one knew where you were,"

"Hmm, they were all making out, so I went for a swim." It was the truth, didn't care that he was angry with her. She was too damn tired, to be honest, to really care about anything, and she didn't want to argue with him either. Was also trying not to argue with anyone.

"She's tired, Conner, I don't think she was trying to get away."

Snorted with amusement, "I can't swim across the lake," she murmured, "not that good a swimmer." It was her plan if she couldn't get out in her car by herself. But it was going to take a lot out of her, might just have to steel a jet ski, swimming was likely out of the question she now realised.

She could feel several eyes on her, ignored it. Pulled that towel closer around her and wondered how they had found her, didn't even know they were back from Uni, "how far out was I?" she asked the question as the car started to move.

"To bloody far." She heard Conner snap "If Marlo hadn't been looking for you and his friends hadn't told him the last place, they'd seen you was going into the lake, you could have bloody drowned out there."

"Hmm, would have solved all your problems with me in one fowl swoop, huh." She murmured.

"That is not funny, Eliza. I don't wish you harm." He muttered.

Didn't say anything to that. He probably didn't, had never physically harmed her. He just didn't want her here was all. Well, she was working on that plan. Would go when she could. "I'm cold." She murmured and pulled that towel tighter around her.

Found a hand on her forehead. "Might want her to see the doctor, could have swallowed too much water."

"I'm fine, just cold and tired." And she was.

Was made to get out of the car and walked into what she could only guess was the private hospital Marlo had told her about. It smelled of antiseptic and was all white tiled floors. "What have we got here?" a woman looked right at her "you must be, Eliza. Nice to meet you." the woman smiled "I'm Dr Jeanie, what's the problem?"

“Nothing.” Eliza shook her head. She was a tall woman with blonde curly hair and soft blue eyes, her smile was warm and friendly.

“Near drowning in the lake, please check her over Doc.” It was Conner.

“Alright Conner, your dripping water all over the floor, go put some dry clothes on.”

“Don’t let her leave till I collect her.”

“Alright.” She nodded and waved him away “Now young lady, how do you feel?”

“Fine, I just swallowed like a mouthful of water is all. Don’t even know why I’m here.”

“Come on, let’s check you out. He’s just doing his job. Making sure you’re alright.” Dr Jeanie walked her into an examination room and checked her vitals, listened to her lungs and nodded “You’re all good, not even a temp.”

“Thank you for checking.” Eliza smiled a little at her.

“You look tired though, Eliza.”

“I am tired, it was a long swim. Went out too far.”

“Hmm, alright. You feeling well otherwise?”

“I guess so why?” she nodded.

“No reason, just something I ask everyone around here. I have got some stubborn patients that don’t like to volunteer information, and have to ask the question to get an answer. I do.”

“I’m fine.”

“Are you sleeping well?”

“Not really.” She answered honestly.

“How many hours a night?”

“I don’t know 5 or 6, I guess.

Saw Dr Jeanie frowning right at her now. “And you thought it was wise to go swimming without proper sleep.”

“I didn’t think about it.” and she’d not really thought about how little sleep she was getting.

Saw Conner walk into the room and frowned at him "This is private." She told him.

Saw him raise an eyebrow at her and heard the doctor chuckle, "Where done here anyway Eliza, I recommend going and having a nice warm shower, then getting something hot to eat and a night's proper sleep."

"Thank you." She nodded.

"Happy to help, Conner, she is fine, just tired from her swim is all. Back to the...apartment with her for rest."

"Thank you, Jeanie." He nodded and held the door open for her, then looked at Eliza. "Doctor's orders let's go."

She rolled her eyes at him and walked out, was still wrapped in that towel, didn't relinquish it, it was warm and fluffy, felt nice on her skin. He took her all the way back to the apartment and inside, Marlo was standing there waiting for her, as were her mother and Logan. G*****d internally as all eyes fell on her.

"I'm fine." She got out before anyone said anything.

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Chapter 29

Conner POV

Conner got home from university, it was raining, and he could see there was a storm brewing out there. He headed inside to find Marlo standing with his group of friends; he'd left uni a little before they had. He'd seen the boy's car drive on by, as they'd all been walking to the carpark themselves.

His eyes fell on the bag he was holding, "What do you mean you don't know where she is?" he was asking them.

"She went swimming and didn't come back. We snagged her bag and thought she'd left and forgotten it."

Conner could see Marlo digging through the bag and his gut was telling him trouble was brewing.

“Boy’s what’s going on?” he asked as he stepped over, moved his eyes right to that bag. “Marlo?”

“El’s missing, was hanging out with Hayden and the group here, but they can’t find her, just her bag.”

“Where did you last see her?” his eyes moved to the group of teens.

“She went swimming like an hour or so ago, never came back, maybe got out somewhere else and headed back, we thought.” Hayden told him.

“You didn’t keep an eye on her?”

“I was with my girlfriend, kinda well...you know.”

Nearly snarled at that kid, they were all too busy making out or f*****g in other words, to keep an eye on the one human girl in the pack who had a history of running away. They should all know better than to leave her alone out there.

“You’re all in trouble. Go and report to your Alpha. You were with the Luna’s daughter, so you bloody needed to keep an eye on her.” He turned his eyes on Adam. “We need to go and check the lake.” He just nodded “Did any of you take gear or were you just swimming?”

“Just swimming.” Hayden told him.

Found Marlo falling into step with him, looked right at that boy, “Stay here.”

“I’m coming Conner, she is my friend.”

“Stay here. If she comes back on her own, let me know. Wait for her here. She could well be walking back in the rain. Adam and I will go check out the lake.”

Saw him frown but nod and then step back, didn’t much look to happy about it but stayed put. He got in his car along with Adam and drove right to the shed and hooked up his trailer with his jet ski on it and they picked up Adams and loaded it as well. “Do you really think she is still in the lake in this weather?”

“Who the hell knows, with that girl. She’s outside the pack if she’s in the water, could bloody be anywhere.”

He got in the car and found Brayden jumping in the back seat. He looked at him curiously as he drove off.

“Alpha’s order that I be here, wants to know her state of mind.”

Sighed internally as he drove off down the track heading for the lake, he was going a little faster than he should with a trailer on the back but, if she was out there swimming in the lake there was a storm brewing, she could well be in real trouble out there.

He and Adam got out of the truck. The rain was really coming down now. Neither he nor Atlas could see that far out into the lake, it was choppy and rough out there. ‘Atlas?’ he questioned his wolf, that bloody beast of his could sense all sorts of things with her he was betting, always knew when she was touching herself, it seemed.

Bloody humped the door to her room last time and told him she needed them, and she had. He was hoping right this minute that Atlas would pick something up from her, something to say she was alright. He didn’t want her to be out there in the water, but he couldn’t tell, and neither could his wolf.

He and Adam hauled the jet skis off the trailer. They were already soaking wet. Luckily for them, they ran hot all the time. The rain was actually cold but it didn’t really bother him, he stripped his shirt and shoes off, and was gone out on to the lake, to search for her.

“There.” Adam yelled to him about 10 minutes into their search and Conner’s eyes moved to follow the man’s hand pointing off to the right of him.

He could see her swimming, looked tired to him. Her arms were barely clearing the water as she swam for the shoreline, wasn’t that far out. But must have been he realised. Annoyed him more than a little.

Turned his jet ski in her direction and headed out to where she was, went past her as he made the turn to come back around to pick her up, only to see the wave that came off his Jet ski, smash right into her as she lifted her head to breathe, cursed himself for not slowing right down, could see Adam pulling up slower and then she was just gone, saw her arms flail for a moment and under she went.

His heart near stopped in his chest, then he was just gone. Atlas shot him off the jet ski and dove him into the water where she had been.

Could feel Atlas freaking out inside of him at the sight of her disappearing so suddenly under the water. Even knew it was their fault, that it had been the wave off his jet ski that had put her swim stroke off and caused her to get a mouth full of water instead of air.

Grabbed hold of her the minute he found her, kicked for the surface and felt relief flood through him as he heard her cough and splutter, looked around for Adam, and hauled her towards him. He didn’t even have to ask the man to grab her, he just reached down and took her from Conner, hauled her up onto his jet ski. She didn’t weigh much.

Conner turned and struck out for his, climbed up on board and moved over to where Adam was still holding onto her, knowing the man would be assessing her condition. Pulled up right next to him and reached out to take her face in both his hands, he needed to see her for himself, those silver-grey eyes looking up at him, her hair was all messy and she looked exhausted to him, watched on as she tried to brush his hands from her face, a feeble attempt really 'She's alright Conner.' Adam mind-link to him. There was no point yelling over the rain when they could mind-link clearly.

He and Atlas assessed her regardless that Adam already had. She didn't appear to be injured at all, and was breathing alright. He plucked her from Adams lap and put her right in front of him, saw Adam raise an eyebrow at his actions. Ignored it. Yes, she was safe with Adam for the trip back, and he knew that, also knew they all thought he didn't want her here or anything to do with her. So, it would be odd for him to do that.

But he did not want her sitting right up against Adam wearing just her bikini. Hell, even if she'd been fully clothed, he wouldn't have wanted her sitting on that jet ski with Adam.

Eliza didn't even argue, just leaned back against him, she was cold to the touch, and he put his hand on her stomach a couple of times to hold her to him when he knew they were going to hit a big wave. Knew his body ran hotter than hers, always would, was actually pressed right up against her to try and warm her body with his, it was cold.

He could tell she was exhausted by the sheer fact that she was leaning back against him, not something he thought she would do. He was well aware that she was avoiding him. He'd heard that she didn't come downstairs at all until after 9am, which meant she was actively waiting for him to leave the pack before coming out of her room.

Beached his jet ski just a few metres from his parked car, got off and helped her to her feet. She walked without issue, took the towel from Brayden as he opened the back door for her to get in. It was his towel and he wrapped it around her and put her in the car, closed the door and took a minute to just breathe.

Looked at Adam, "Just leave them there," he commented, looking at the jet skis, and went and unhooked the trailer for his truck. They would survive the night in the weather. He picked his wet clothes and shoes up from the ground and got in to drive them back to the pack. She was wrapped up in his own beach towel, pulled it all the way around herself.

He knew Brayden was there to suss her out, tried to keep his own mind off of her, she was cold and tired, it didn't surprise him all that much and yes, she was going to go to the doctor for a check-up. Did, however, like that she was all snuggled up in his towel, pulled it around her and practically buried her face in it. She didn't know what she was doing, but he and Atlas did. She was surrounding herself with his scent.

His hearing picked up Eliza state that she wasn't sleeping well, to the doctor and sighed internally, that would be his fault in all likelihood. He took her back to the packhouse and

knew Marlo was going to be waiting for her to arrive, reminded Atlas that they were friends, and that he had not yet scented her officially, so he was not allowed to go all possessive about her.

Heard her state she was fine, when she realised herself that she was about to get the third degree, Marlo was walking this way still had her backpack in his hand. Put his hand up to stop everyone from walking towards her “Jeanie stated she is fine, tired, needs a hot shower and hot food. Then bed to rest.”

“I’ll take her up.” Marlo stated as he walked over to her.

“I’ll be escorting her Marlo, making sure she follows the doctors’ orders.” Held his hand out for the backpack. “I’ll take that.”

Saw that boy glare right at him and raised an eyebrow at him. He was the future Alpha, the boy he handed it over a little on the reluctant side. Turned to Brittney “Hot food for her, she’s cold and needs to warm up, inside and out.”

“I can do that.” She nodded.

He nudged Eliza and she walked, headed for the stairs, he noted and put a hand on her to steer her towards the elevator. “Elevator today, Eliza.”

“Son?”

“Nearly drowned out in the lake.” He looked at his father, and shook his head slightly “Brayden can fill you in on what you want to know. I’ll make sure she’s following Jeanie’s orders till Brittney comes.”

“I didn’t mean to.” He heard Eliza sigh as she stopped walking.

“Walk Eliza, or I will carry you.” his hand dropped to the small of her back and he gave her a slight nudge in the direction of the elevator. She went without further issue. Stood in there and he watched her, was still wrapped up in his towel. Smiled to himself as he stood there watching her, he liked seeing her in his towel. Walked her all the way to her room and used that card he still had to let them into her room, he saw her frown and look right at him.

He opened the door and walked her right inside, closing it behind them. Put her bag down on the couch and grabbed the front of her towel and pulled her into the bathroom by that towel, when she stopped walking, leaned her up against the vanity and reached in to turn the shower on, stood and waited till it was nice and warm and tugged at that towel she was holding onto.

“Stop.” She held it to herself.

Looked right down at her “I’ve seen you naked Eliza.” He half smiled “Come on get in the shower.”

She stood staring at him. “Not with you right there, I won’t be.”

“I could get in with you if you like. Or you can get in by yourself. But I will be watching you get in. You need to warm up, doctor’s orders.”

Saw a little anger flash in her eyes and then she just yanked the towel off of her and stepped in the shower with her swimmers on, he smiled to himself, picked up the wet towel and walked it to the walk-in and dropped it down the laundry chute. Then he turned his eyes to her wardrobe. Everything in here smelled of her, could feel Atlas breathing in her scent, let him. They both needed it right this minute, with her nearly drowning and all.

He’d wanted to be the one in the backseat with her, knew that if he had been, it was likely she would have been pulled right into his lap, had been half tempted to strip off and get in the shower with her as well. The only thing stopping him was that it was likely her mother was going to make an appearance at some point with that hot food.

Opened a few of her draws and found some pyjamas and walked over and laid them out on the bed for her. He turned and looked around her room. He’d only been in here twice and both times he’d been distracted by the scent of her arousal to really look at anything at all. It was not very big, he realised. His father had put her in one of the smallest rooms that were down here, shook his head, her whole room would fit inside his current bedroom. He could see the car keys to her new car on the coffee table. It had not moved an inch, she’d not once driven it yet. Likely wasn’t going to either, he thought absently.

Looked at the paperwork on the table, admission papers and on campus living as well, not filled in at all, she’d not even so much as put her name on it. He would have to question his father about the on-campus thing, didn’t know if that was wise. Could get up and leave anytime she liked if she was out there without supervision.

She had a laptop sitting on the bedside table and he saw a kickboard from the swimming pool downstairs, by the wall. That was a curious thing to be in here. Wondered why it was there and when she had gone and gotten it.

Heard her phone ring and plucked it from her bag, it was locked, needed her fingerprint to access it, big on her privacy, either that or she’d been told to do it by her friends now that they knew what he was, where she was. The caller ID showed on the screen, it was her friend Cordi, sighed heavily.

Her friends were wolves, and she didn’t even know it, but they now all knew what she was to him. Would likely be checking on her more frequently. From what Collin had told him she had no secrets from Cordi, and he didn’t doubt it either that one statement had

been Collin's way of letting him know that he knew that Eliza would be telling Cordi everything that happened out here with her and him.

Which could only mean that Cordi, as her best friend, knew everything about him and Eliza, what he'd done to her, and anything that might happen in the future. His head turned at the sound of the shower turning off, and he stood waiting for her to come out of the bathroom. She stopped in the doorway and stared at him obviously thinking he would have left by now. She was only wrapped in a towel.

Still looked tired to him, that wasn't likely to be resolved anytime soon, "Your phone rang." He told her when she looked at his hand questioningly and saw her phone in it. He put it down on the arm of the couch and took a step towards her.

Really wanted to just put his arms around her and hold her to his body, was going to and he knew it, only to hear the door to her room open and then see her mother was right there in the doorway. Looked from him to Eliza, poor timing, he thought to himself. Took a step back and headed for the door. "Brittney, please make sure she eats that." He commented and then frowned down at it. "Is that soup?"

"Yes, it is." She nodded. "Will be good for warming her, and easy to eat."

Wolves didn't generally like soup. He thought to himself, "I think a proper meal would be best."

"This is a suitable meal, for my daughter, Conner." She told him pointedly.

He nodded; forgot for a minute she was human. Headed out of the room and closed the door behind him, he left her there with her mother. Hopefully, they wouldn't fight. Leaned on the door once outside the room and closed his eyes with a heavy sigh, without thinking about it, only to realise he was not the only one in the corridor.

His eyes snapped open as he heard a woman ask if El was alright after her ordeal. There coming down the hallway was the omega Rachele, who likely cleaned her room and returned all her washing. She was in her mid-twenties a small woman with dark hair and dark eyes, mated to one of the packs warriors. Smiled right at him as most did, he was pretty friendly to all those within the pack, most of the time.

Pushed himself off the door hastily and nodded to her "fine, just tired." He said and walked off down the corridor.

"It must be hard for you to have seen her like that." She commented as he walked passed her.

Conner stopped walking and looked right at her now. "Why would you say that?"

"You and Eliza are together, yes?"

“Why would you think that?” he frowned right down at her, his brain was screaming at him, no one knew anything about them.

“Oh, um...” watched her close her mouth and not say anything.

“Explain yourself.” He snapped at her.

“I’m sorry Alpha, I just presumed well...with your scent on her sheets and well...”

f**k, he’d not even considered that the one cleaning Eliza’s room would register him in there, registered his scent on her sheets. “Who else knows about this?”

“Um, just a few of us in the laundry, Alpha.” She bit her l*p, she knew from his tone and line of questioning he was unhappy that they knew.

“You will say nothing about this, do you understand? None of you will.”

“Of course, Alpha.” She nodded.

This was not good. What if one of them had already said something, spoken about it and been overheard, if it got back to his father or anyone in his own unit? No, they hadn’t, he told himself. If his father knew, he’d have come and found him. If his unit knew Brayden would be on him so fast about what he’d seen between them, the pain she was in before she ran away. No, they hadn’t told anyone.

Wolves slept with wolves all the time; it was no big deal. He took a breath in and walked away from her room down the hall, though he was now concerned it would get out.

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Chapter 30

Conner POV

Conner showered and dressed in clean clothes, headed downstairs for dinner with his unit. His eyes moved about the room, no one looked at him like they knew anything. Marlo was with his usual group of friends. They were all pretty quiet, moved his eyes to Brayden. “How’d it go with father?”

“Fine.” He stated simply.

Conner wanted to ask a bunch of questions but was not about to, it would raise suspicion where he was concerned. Looked at Adam who was quiet himself today, “Did they get punished?” he indicated to the group of people that had been with Eliza.

“Not that I’m aware of, reprimanded is all.”

His father, it seemed, was being more lenient with the pack members. He wasn’t overly happy about that. They had been hanging out with Eliza, had lost track of her, and then just returned without her, thinking she’d come back on her own. How could they think that? When her stuff was still there.

He couldn’t intervene without everyone knowing what she was to him, but he really did want to go over there and yell at them, pull them into line. If it had not been for Marlo looking for Eliza when he got home, they may never have even known she was out there. She could well have drowned today, and he’d not known about it until it was too late.

Atlas was quiet inside his mind, not even he, it seemed, had sensed anything wrong at all, now she was just up there in her room, hopefully sleeping like the pack doctor told her to be. His father and Brittney were seated there at the table along with the current Alpha Unit and their families.

He was surprised that Brittney was there and chatting happily with the others at the table. She should have been up there in that room with her daughter who nearly drowned today. That made him frown, he saw his father’s eyes on him and nodded to him, but said nothing. What could he do other than tell her? He thought she should be up there with Eliza. He wasn’t about to start telling the Luna what to do, though he did want to.

At least it was Friday and there were no classes for him for the next two days, he could monitor her himself, from a safe distance. Make sure she was actually okay, though how he was going to do that he didn’t know yet. Also had a feeling she’d be hanging out with Marlo and his friends, not something he was handling seeing very well at all.

He saw Marlo get up when he was finished his meal and asked Brittney how El was, asked if he could go up and check on her himself, hang out with her.

Brittney had smiled at him and shaken her head. “She was asleep when I left Marlo. Best we let her rest, you can see her in the morning.” He was told.

“But she’s alright?”

“Yes Marlo.” Brittney nodded with a chuckle.

Watched him walk away, looked more than unhappy about not being allowed to go up and see her, but at least Conner had gotten the answer he wanted from listening to that conversation. She was asleep, likely accounting for why Brittney was down here having dinner with them.

He heard his father chuckle softly and murmur "I think young Eliza may have a Mate here." He sounded happy about that. It was not the first time Conner had heard the man say it either.

"That would be nice, she would want to stay." he heard Brittney sigh.

"She just needs a bit more time, Brit, and now she's making friends, that will help." His father commented.

"I hope so."

Looked right at Brittney, she really did want her daughter here. He realised, "I had a chat with Marlo earlier, Luna." It was Jared. "He said he'd been more than happy to stay on campus with El."

Heard several people chuckle now, and as Conner looked at them all he realised his father and his entire unit were all smiling, they would all be happy for El and Marlo to be Mated to each other if that happened on the next full moon.

They had Conner's undivided attention; she'd not filled in the paperwork, he'd seen it all sitting there still blank. But it seemed his father was actually going to allow her to stay on campus, not be here in the pack, if it would keep her here close to her mother and the pack.

He shook his head and returned his attention to his meal, to find Adam's eyes right on him, looked right back at him "What?" he asked quietly.

"Nothing." Adam shook his head slightly "Are we headed into town tonight? I thought we could go clubbing."

"I thought you slackers should finish that group assignment due on Monday." He looked at each one of them, Brayden and Cameron had not come back from the mating ball marked and mated, so there was no need for them to be distracted, but yet they still hadn't done it. His part was done.

Heard all three of them huff at him and Cameron muttered "Come on Conner, it's Friday night. We can do it on Saturday arvo, let's go out and have some fun. Those girls are still here in town. Text me for a night out."

He found three sets of eyes on him, "Go, but if you slackers drag my grade down you can explain to father why." He was not going to go, was not interested in going out and

having a bit of fun, certainly wasn't interested in those human girls he knew Cameron was talking about.

He was too damn tired himself to go out, even to his own pack club. Was going to stay here. He had plenty of study to keep him occupied as did they for that matter. Though if he was honest with himself, the reason for not going was because he knew Eliza was here and was feeling like s**t. Tired and not sleeping well.

There was a way to fix that. He just couldn't do it with everyone around him, so if his unit was headed off into town for clubbing, that was better for him anyway.

"You're not coming?" Adam asked him as he leaned back in his chair and looked right at him.

"No, I'm not interested in..." snapped his mouth shut when he realised he'd been about to say humans. His eyes moved to his father and saw the annoyed look he was getting, his father had told him to get over his human-hating fetish.

"I've got studies to attend to." He stated flatly and turned back to his group. "Go and have fun, just don't do anything silly."

Heard Brayden and Cameron laugh "Oh, we'd never do that." No, they wouldn't, he rolled his eyes at them. "Don't be out late. We have training at 5 tomorrow. Alpha Unit training at that."

Heard them all g***n now, smirked right at them when he heard all their fathers laugh, tomorrow was the current Alpha Unit training the next generation. Their fathers all took great pleasure in that one day a month training session. Saw Jared rub his hands together, as he looked right at Adam, that man did love taking on his own boy.

Their day would start with a full competition on the agility course, fathers against son, and then a full run around the packs border at full wolf speed to again compete against their fathers. It had started out as a bit of fun one day when they were 17, he'd tossed out a challenge and it had been accepted and now once a month, it was regular competition between them. Then the real training would begin, the fighting would be hard and lengthy, likely train for two or three hours, in hand to hand only. Wolf training was out at the moment with Eliza inside the pack. Unless they could guarantee she wouldn't come on down to the training grounds.

Though he'd trained every day since she was here and not once seen her, he didn't think she was an early riser at all. Which was good for their training. Though he was curious as to what she would make of it, if she came across them all training like that, a hundred of them all paired up and training in hand-to-hand combat.

The boys were going out regardless, it seemed, shook his head, and told them not to come home hung over, Cameron had laughed and said "Not gonna happen heading to

The Wild Bar, it was not a pack bar, was owned by the Valentines, he wouldn't be seen there ever, knew Milton would also be there.

"Why there?" he'd asked.

"Ah, one of the girls' uncles works there" he'd shrugged.

"Alright, watch yourselves."

"Will do." Adam had nodded at him.

He'd watched them go and sighed. They should know better to go into a bar owned by the Valentines. He would never walk into that place. He knew some of the pack members went there, to hang out with the human girls they knew from uni. It was better for them to go to the pack club, Moonlight, but sometimes they ventured away from that. Went where the humans wanted to go.

He headed upstairs himself and prowled around, strolled down the hall in the west wing, saw Eliza's door open and stopped walking, thought she was up already but it was just Brittney coming from her room.

"Conner?"

"Just going to my suite, to think about how I want it." he told her. There was nothing unusual about that, he was often down here. Wanted to be in his own suite away from the eastern end and his father's watching eyes. Also knew so did his unit.

"Won't you be letting your Mate decorate it?"

"I don't have one." He commented and felt Atlas huff at him. But technically they didn't currently, they hadn't scented her, missed that opportunity, had to wait a whole month on that now.

"But won't you let her do that? Your father told me it's tradition for the Luna to decorate the Alpha Suite."

"It's called the Alpha Suite, not the Luna Suite." He muttered and walked on down the hallway, to his room. He had not been going to his future suite at all, had actually been going to check on Eliza, wanted to make sure she was still sleeping. Lucky for him, he'd been strolling and taking his time, otherwise could well have let himself in and found Brittney staring right at him wondering why he was in there or had a key card to her room for that matter.

Walked around in his future suite and sighed, it had 6 bedrooms, a family suite. Prowled around in there, Atlas didn't usually take that much interest in this room. Today was

different, he realised. His wolf was looking at the rooms. Though he was keeping his thoughts to himself, Conner realised.

He left that suite and got himself coffee took it with him as he went to lean on the balcony railing up on the fifth floor to kill some time. It seemed Brittney was going to be checking on Eliza periodically. Looked down at the packhouse below him, had a full view of the packhouse foyer from here. Could see Marlo down there with his friends all hanging out and chatting about what they wanted to do on the weekend.

They were all planning on heading out of the pack for a day, it seemed, the whole group of them hanging out together, nothing unusual about that but he was listening to them, especially when Marlo started talking about wanting to take Eliza into Salt Lake City for a day of shopping and show her around the town of Logan properly.

Take her to the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, knew she would like that, seeing as that was going to be her major. He wanted to take her to the wind caves. She enjoyed hiking, so he thought she might like that. Then he wanted to take her to the Canyon Jams on Saturday night for an outing, and stated she might like being out of the pack for a whole day. The boy, it seems, had gotten to know Eliza over the past few days. What her degree was going to be, the things she actually liked doing and was planning a day around all those things.

The boy was pulling out all the stops, it seemed, and was aiming to spend the entire weekend with her, day and night. He could feel Atlas arcing up inside his mind at the thought of Eliza going out with Marlo, all day and all night long.

Saw the boy turn and look right up at him, could likely feel Conners eyes on him, as he stared right back from the fifth floor, they both had wolves and their hearing and sight were keen. Conner's mouth quirked in one corner, and he raised an eyebrow at the boy. He'd warned him off once already. Seems Marlo didn't heed that warning at all. Was going to try and date Eliza regardless of what Conner told him.

Watched as Marlo practically glared at him and then turned back to his friends, continued on with his thoughts on the weekend.

'Did I not warn you Marlo.' He sent via the mind-link, just to remind him once more.

'You did, Conner. However, I have permission from the Alpha and the Luna to date Eliza. In fact, they asked me to spend time with her, make her feel welcome.' Saw him turn and look right at him once more, 'Why do you even care? You're the one who told her to leave, I believe. Everyone knows how much you hate humans.'

Conner stared right at that boy, he was challenging him, and he knew it. Pushing that boundary of authority, Conner was the heir, but the actual Alpha had told Marlo to go right on ahead and date her. He'd seen them all his father and his unit. They liked the idea of her and Marlo together.

'How do you think Eliza will feel about you being asked to spend time with her? I'd be willing to bet she won't take it well.' He commented casually, tried to keep that smirk off his face, he knew she wouldn't. She would see it as just another way to coerce her into staying, and then, if and when she found out, would be quick to shut that boy down.

'I like the girl Conner, I offered to spend time with her, stay out of it. It's none of your business who she dates.'

Oh, yes it was, he stood up as he felt Atlas bristle inside him, wanted a piece of that boy down there, "Son, what are you doing?" his attention was drawn by the sound of his father's voice.

Conner turned and looked at him. He was walking with Brittney, heading for their suite he guessed, "Just looking over the packhouse, nothing more, why?"

"You don't normally stand up here and look down on everything." His father commented.

"No, I'm usually out with the boys, but they all went into Logan, to the Valentines club."

"Ah, so your solo today."

"I am," he nodded "How is Eliza doing?" he moved his eyes to Brittney, he could see it was the direction they'd come from.

"Sleeping." She sighed.

"Is there something wrong with that?" he enquired. "That was the doctor's orders."

"Is not sound sleep, she's restless."

"Not sleeping well." His father shook his head, "We need to make her more comfortable here, then she'll likely sleep better."

"It is likely." He nodded "Are you turning in for the night?" he enquired.

"We are son." His father smiled at him. "It's quiet and nothing needs my attention right now...well, except my Mate."

"Go." Conner shook his head and watched the two of them walk off down the hall. He had other plans this evening himself. He just couldn't do anything about it until his parents were in bed. Till there was no one checking on Eliza herself.

There was a way to help her sleep better, help him sleep better for that matter and one that his wolf was in full agreement on as well. He strolled back to his room and rinsed that coffee cup, changed into long dark blue pyjama pants, and then casually strolled through the packhouse, heading for Eliza's room.

He used that key card to access her room and slipped inside. The bedside lamp was on, and she was in the bed laying on her back, her head turned away from him. He walked across the room and flicked the lamp off. It wasn't necessary. Conner settled himself on the bed next to her and watched as it took less than a minute for her body to roll towards his.

Pure instinct to be closer to one's Mate, he slid an arm around her waist and settled himself with her. She would sleep better with him next to her. This also made Atlas happy. Though it was Conner who had made the decision to stroll down here and sleep next to her. He'd heard her tell the doctor she wasn't sleeping well, before he'd opened that examination room and he knew why.

She looked terrible, tired, and worn out and he understood it was because they were at odds with each other. A night in the same bed would not only be good for her, but likely for him and Atlas as well. Closed his eyes and both he and Atlas breathed in her scent, soft and delicate, slid a hand up through her hair gently and heard her sigh softly in her sleep.

He'd set an alarm already, so he could wake up before her and get back to his room and shower before going to training in the morning. But he was going to spend the night with her, he had nearly lost her today and he had not liked it at all. Hadn't liked hearing her tell him it would have solved all his problems in one foul swoop either.

He never wanted to hear her say those words again, had to start working on getting her to like him just a little bit, it would be better for both of them, though how he was going to do that he didn't really know yet. Would work it out, felt Atlas settle in his mind, seemed happy to be here with her. His wolf was also happy to hear Conner was actively going to try and get along with her from now on.

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