

# The Unclaimed Human Luna

## Chapter 31

Eliza POV

She woke well rested for the first time in weeks, actually slept all the way through the night, rolled over in her bed and looked around the room, sat herself up and looked at the time. It was just after 7. She'd slept soundly for well over 12 hours, no wonder she felt well rested. Got up and used the bathroom before checking her phone.

Had half a dozen text messages waiting for her, a couple from yesterday afternoon, Marlo trying to chat to her while she'd been out swimming. And two already this morning, she texted him back that she was just getting up now.

Listened to Cordi's voice message and text her back as well, 'Sorry Cordi, I took a swim yesterday and got caught in a rainstorm. Swimming across the lake might not be the best option. It didn't go down so well either. Conner and Adam yanked me from the lake.'

She got herself dressed as her phone dinged, it was Marlo. 'Come downstairs. I got the whole day planned. We're going out, a bunch of us.'

Sighed, he surely was trying where she was concerned. She'd told him more than once she didn't want a boyfriend. She'd meant it. But he either just didn't get it or didn't want to get it.

'I don't know Marlo, it was a long day yesterday.' She tried to put him off.

'That's why a day out of the community will do you good. Get your butt down here.'

She shook her head and pulled shoes on. 'Let me eat first.' She sent. There was no point in arguing with him. He was persistent and a little pushy about getting what he wanted, knew if she just said no, he'd likely just come knock on her door and tell her she was going. Though she took her time making and eating breakfast, nearly an hour.

Headed downstairs to meet him, he was in the foyer with his friends. She smiled and waved at them. They all greeted her. None of them seemed to be unhappy about having to wait that hour for her. She'd kind of hoped they'd left already. No such luck. Hayden even walked over and apologised to her for not realising she was swimming out there in the water when the rain hit.

She told him not to worry about it, she had just been lazing about out there, hadn't realised she'd gone so far out. Marlo stated "They'll be better behaved next time when I'm not there. Or I'll be beating them all senseless, nearly did, for you nearly drowning."

"Why do you all keep saying that? I just swallowed a little bit of water and was just tired is all. I didn't nearly drown."

"Conner said, you nearly drowned. He would know, wouldn't lie about something like that." Marlo told her. "Now let's go."

"I don't even know if I'm allowed to go out, Marlo."

"You are, dad said, as long as you got someone with you, it's fine. So, who better to hang out with, than me all day." He grinned right at her "I'm not about to lose you." It was a full dig at his friends.

She was hopping in his car when she saw Conner and his three friends walking towards them, found that man's eyes right on her, and then they moved to Marlo. He didn't look happy, but then when did he with her around. "Not out all-day Marlo." Conner comment as he walked past "You've got training this afternoon."

"What? Since when?" Marlo asked as he closed the door for her.

"Since today." Conner commented, "So be back here by 2 at the latest. Your friends will be joining you, all of them." Then he moved on.

She watched Marlo get in the car. "Training? For what?"

"I don't know." He muttered "Conner can be a pain in the a\*s sometimes."

"I know." She stated and she did. "Guess that screws up your plans for the day."

"Only the afternoon, we can still go out tonight." He smiled right at her. "We're all going out to a local concert. You'll love it. A picnic dinner, music and dancing if you like. Lots of fun, out under the stars."

"Sounds nice, who else is going?" she asked. She was hoping it was more than just a few.

"All of us." He smiled at her. "What, are you afraid to be alone with me?" his tone was light and teasing.

"No Marlo, but you know I'm not looking for anything, we're just friends."

"I know." He smiled as he drove them away from the community for his planned day out.

They spent the first 2 hours of the morning attending the walking sculptor tour of Utah State University. It was nice to be doing something that she really liked doing. It seemed Marlo had gone out of his way to organise things to do that she liked.

They got coffee and snacks along the way, but Marlo told her they'd been going to take a day trip down to Salt Lake City for shopping. But they couldn't now because of the training they all had, they wouldn't have the time. Apologised to her for that, she just shrugged. It was nice to be out of the gated community though. They all headed back after some lunch and he and all his friends excused themselves. He told her he wasn't sure how long their training would be. He'd call or text her when he was done.

"I'm sure I can entertain myself, Marlo." She smiled at him, and he'd chuckled.

"Sorry El, I just like spending time with you is all." He'd said and was gone a moment later. It was only just after 1, she had the afternoon to herself.

Headed upstairs to change into shorts and a tee-shirt and a pair of hiking boots, it was a nice day for some exploration. She was going to walk the trail down to the lake, have a real good look around down there by herself. Maybe wander and look at the area itself. She knew they didn't like it when she walked in the woods, but it was daytime so there shouldn't be a problem with that. This was the first time she'd been out alone since she'd gotten back as well. That was nice, didn't mind her own company and it gave her time to think about her escape plan as well.

El strolled out of the complex and headed off into the woods on the eastern side of the gated community, just casually strolled along she was in no rush, didn't want to look suspicious either, just in case Logan was having her watched. Her mother had said it would take an hour to walk down to the lake on the path. She was going to test that out. She might need to know how much time to allow, if she did have to use the lake, how long it would be before they knew she was missing.

She saw several paths that crossed the main path to the lake, ran right across it going in both directions, and some smaller ones that just meandered off to the right or left. She would pick one and follow it today on her way back if she came back this way. She'd seen one or two paths while down there on the lake that headed off into the woods.

Had asked Marlo where they went, he'd smiled and murmured "well one goes off to a nicely secluded cabin," winked right at her and she'd shaken her head, knew what he meant. Had told her the one closest to the lake, which looked very well used and was wider than the others that she'd seen out there.

It ran the boarder of the community, it went all the way around, was a long way, would take all day and well into the night for her to walk it, likely a good 24 hours, maybe more, advised her not to. But that had gained her full attention and she'd asked how big the place was. To which she'd gotten 'large we run up into the mountains here, that's

why it would take you so long to walk it. But it's best not to go into the woods on the north side, lots of wolves out there.'

It was not the first time she'd heard that either. Logan had told her about wolves, as had her mother, and Conner for that matter, and she'd come across that one when trying to leave that first time. Heard several over the course of being here as well.

It took her only 40 minutes to walk down to the lake, and that was at her standard pace. Her mother just didn't like walking, she guessed. El strolled along the water's edge, there were a few families down there she noticed, the kids playing in the water. She smiled and nodded to them, they nodded back, and she moved on. Was using her phone to track her walk, as she strolled along.

It rang an hour into her walk around the lake and she frowned down at it. Logan flashed on the caller ID. Was tempted not to answer it, she stared at it and muttered "What now?" but was playing at being the good stepdaughter. So took a breath in and picked it up, "Yes Logan."

"Where are you, El?"

"At the lake." She answered "Why?"

"I was concerned you might be wandering off out of the gated community, is all? Where on the lake are you?"

Eliza turned and looked around her, back the way she came, and then in front of her "I don't know, I am just walking along the lake path," she looked at the time. It was only just after 3 "I'll be home before dark."

"I think you should turn back, El."

"Why?" she asked out of pure curiosity now.

"Because I think you're likely out of the community, I'd much prefer you were inside it."

That gained her attention. "Really?" she smiled to herself, she'd managed to get out and didn't even know it.

"Eliza, please turn around and come back." He stated.

Realised as she looked around, that man had to know exactly where she was, otherwise why would he call her all of a sudden and ask her to come back? She moved her eyes to the path, then up through the trees, someone was watching her. He had to be having her watched in order to know where she was. "Are you watching me?" she asked him outright.

“No, but the edge of the gated community is monitored, so I was not watching you, but you were seen walking just near the edge of the boundary.”

Wondered just how far outside of it she was? If this was the outside, she could just walk out of the community, though even that was a long walk around the lake, could possibly go the other way, she thought to herself.

“Alright.” She hung up before he could say anything else and headed back. She didn’t want to be on his radar, so just turned and strolled back the way she had come. Somewhere along this path was the edge of the community. She clearly wasn’t allowed out by herself. They’d said she could with others, anyone she chose, but not on her own at all. Guess they were going to enforce that rule.

Saved that walk into her phone, and continued on her way back, he didn’t call her back, he must have been informed she was back inside his community. She kept a nice leisurely pace, there was no rush. Was still trying to build some trust, and was actively following orders right this minute. Saw a path about 30 minutes later that led off into the woods. Turned up it and hiked along it, to see where it went. She was wearing her small backpack and was carrying water and a few muesli bars as well.

Walked for hours uninterrupted, though she did note there was no service on her phone, the sun didn’t go down around here till almost 9 at night. There was plenty of time to get back, she’d said before dark. It was only 5ish. She’d also seen a few narrow paths that led west, which she knew was where the centre of the gated community was.

The forest itself was nice, cool under the tall trees and there was not much sunshine getting through the canopy, though it wasn’t what she would call dark and foreboding. Just a nice dense forest that was cool and comfortable to walk in, lots of shade and peace and quiet. She could hear birds chirping and see them flying about. It was nice out here.

She’d always liked being out in the woods, so had her father, the man, had loved being out in nature. He could name just about any tree he came across, was good at tracking smaller animals and hunting, not that she’d been allowed to hunt with him. Had to stay back in their camp while he hunted out their dinner when camping. She never really minded, liked the sounds of the forest, with the water running next to their camp.

They always camped by rivers or lakes, with fresh water nearby. He’d never been gone long either, an hour or so at the most. Being out here in the woods made her feel closer to him, smiled to herself at one point “I miss you dad.” She sighed out loud. Touched a tree and took a moment just for herself to remember him, the times they’d spent together out there in the woods. Just the two of them. Before walking further along the trail.

El took the next path that she saw and found herself at a full crossroads of paths that splintered off in 5 different directions. All the paths looked well used, though one more

so than the others and it was the one that was heading west still, so she strolled along it herself. Figured that it would likely take her back to the edge of the town and about an hour later she could see the apartment complex through the trees, she had not been wrong and had found her way back with ease, it seemed.

El walked right out of the tree line and onto the large, grassed area behind the apartment building, where there were many picnic tables dotted around. She heard her phone start dinging with messages, as she came back into a serviced area, shook her head. There were texts from her mother, from Logan and from Marlo as well.

El stopped walking and stood on the edge of the forest line to read them. All were of the same basic type, "where are you." Heard footfall behind, someone coming towards her had been out on the forest path as well. She turned to see Conner strolling towards her, in just a pair of shorts, no shirt, he was bare-chested, and those shorts only reached mid-thigh on him, bloody man was muscled up all over. He was not even wearing shoes, she noticed, walking around the forest barefooted.

"Eliza?"

"Conner?" She mimicked him and then turned her eyes away from him and headed off towards the apartment complex.

He fell into step with her, "Out walking in the woods, were you?"

"Am I not allowed to?" she stated without looking at him.

"I'd prefer that you didn't, this close to night-time." He stated right back.

"Why? you're out here, what's the difference?" Looked him over. "I'm at least dressed for it."

Saw him smile right at her, missed a step and stumbled a little, he never smiled at her out where anyone could see it. Shocked her more than a little. Lit his whole face up, kind of really didn't look like him, and the surly man he always showed to her, shook her head and focused on where she was going. Didn't need to see him so bloody handsome.

Heard him chuckle softly "Why El, are you looking at me?" he murmured softly. She caught the underlying tone of his voice.

"No." she shot at him. "Why would I?" she muttered and stalked off away from him or tried to. He was much taller than her, 5ft 5inches, and his strides easily matched hers with little effort.

"I like to run in the woods, this is generally what I wear when on a run." he sounded fully amused to her.

“I don’t much care at all, Conner. Wear whatever you like.”

“I’d run naked...but, I think my father wouldn’t appreciate it.”

Her jaw tightened and she wondered if he was doing this on purpose, putting images of him naked in her mind. It was bad enough she couldn’t say no to him, he just had to go and remind her of it as well.

“I’m sure your girlfriend would like to watch you,” she muttered, and found a hand on her arm near instantly. Turned and glared right at him “I won’t tell her, feel ashamed myself.” She shot right at him, and yanked her arm from his hand “Leave me alone Conner.” Turned and walked off.

Saw Marlo coming from the back of the building, his eyes moved from her to Conner and then back to her. “I’ve been looking for you. I was worried you were lost.”

“Not lost, just hiking and getting a look around. I’m hungry though.”

“I haven’t eaten yet either. I got that picnic dinner ready to go for tonight’s concert.”

“That would be nice.” She nodded and walked inside with him. “I’ll quickly run up and get changed.” She smiled at him, anything to get away from Conner and his half nakedness, or the warmth that his touch brought to her skin.

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## Chapter 32

Conner POV

Conner woke with his watch’s alarm vibrating on his wrist, Eliza’s whole body was pressed up against his, her head resting on his chest. He smiled to himself, it was a nice way to wake up. It felt nice to have her body half on him. Just like Adam had said, a warm body there to wake up to was a good thing.

Though Conner knew he had to get up and leave before she woke up, he didn’t think that she would take kindly to finding him there in her bed with her. Though she needed it, and she’d slept the whole night, that would be good for her.

He gently rolled her off of him and all the way over onto her other side, she mumbled something unintelligible in her sleep, and he stilled, thinking he'd woken her, stayed right there behind her for a minute to make sure she settled once more and was still sleeping, before getting up.

Looked down at her and sighed softly to himself, he was definitely in real trouble, and he knew it. Leaned down over her and murmured in her ear softly "I'm sorry Eliza." He did notice she no longer looked as tired or drawn as she had yesterday, already looked better, healthier to him. He brushed some of her hair from her face and then pressed his lips to her temple in a soft k\*\*s and left the room, as quietly as he had come into the room.

Showered and dressed, headed off for training himself, he felt much better than he had in days, which meant that so would she. Atlas was settled and happy inside of his mind, liked that Conner had spent the night in her room, liked that his human wanted to comfort her and make sure she got a good night's sleep. Settled his wolf inside his mind.

Took on his father with gusto at their Alpha training. Taunted his father a lot, "Come on old man," "Is that all you got." "Getting slow you know." Atlas had kept pace with him on the run around the pack's territory, then pushed his father's wolf Hale, with all he had and the old man was only just keeping up.

In the hand to hand training Conner was dodging, bobbing and weaving, laughing and egging his old man on. Was happy and actually having a good time, sparring with his father. Like they had once done back when he'd first gotten his wolf. Before, he'd been pushed with double degrees and had such a heavy workload that he was just annoyed all the time with his father.

Even his father was giving it back to him. They were taunting each other and both having a good time training. It was a nice start to his day. Found himself in a full headlock after his father called the training over, "I seem to have found my son, where you been boy all these years."

Conner laughed "Just needed a good night's sleep, it seems."

His father let him go and smiled. "Well, perhaps I should knock you out occasionally. It's good to see you happy and laughing, Conner. It's been a while."

He was happy, and so was Atlas. He'd never slept so damn well in all his life, or at least he didn't think so anyway. Knew it was because Eliza had been in the bed next to him. Hadn't fully scented that girl out yet but, she was like a drug to him. The scent of her arousal drove him completely crazy, yet just her natural scent lulled him right into sleep. If she was a she-wolf he'd likely tell his father what he suspected she was.



Couldn't do that right this minute, hadn't scented her out officially. But he would be here on the next full moon to do so and he knew it. Had nearly a month to work on her, getting her to forgive him for his behaviour and cruel words to her. Atlas was happy with that thought. 'You should just have listened to me in the first place.' Atlas told him.

Conner knew his beast was right, but she was human, and that part still bothered him. Even though he could see how happy his father was with Brittney, that didn't mean that Eliza was going to be as accepting as her mother was. But he was happy that she seemed to not be trying to escape anymore.

He needed her to want to be here, that way he could find the time to talk to her, get to know her, show her that he wasn't a terrible person, that he could be nice and caring. Walked all the way back to the packhouse with his unit. They were all laughing themselves his and his father's mood had seemed to rub off on them all, they'd all been taunting each other as well.

A good morning of training it had been for all of them, saw his father and his unit peel off in wolf form to go attend whatever it was that was needed of him and them. They could well just be off hunting for the morning. Who knew.

Saw Eliza walking out of the packhouse with Marlo and sighed internally at the two of them together, felt Atlas bristle. 'Stop that now.' His wolf snarled at him.

'No, she needs to have friends. Needs to fit in and become happy here.'

'He's going to date our Mate.' Atlas growled at him.

Told Marlo he had training in the afternoon, saw the shocked expression on his face and told him, so did his friends for that matter, that would stop them being out all day, and get her back here where he could keep an eye on her himself. Also placate his wolf a little. He didn't stop walking as he spoke to the boy, so it looked like just a passing comment, but he got looked at by his whole unit.

"If they are going to be with Eliza, then they need to up their training to protect her. Also, a little punishment for them, for nearly letting her drown yesterday." He stated.

"Your father didn't see fit to punish them, Conner, so why are you?" Adam questioned him.

"Because I think father was too lenient with them."

"Why?" Adam asked again as they all got into the elevator to head upstairs to shower.

"Think about it, Adam, if Eliza had been his flesh and b\*\*\*d. His actual daughter, what do you think would have happened to them?" Conner looked right at him, they'd all got beat half to death and they all knew it. "If your little sister had been out there and nearly

drowned and Hayden and his friends had been supposed to be watching her, what would their punishment have been?" he asked of Adam.

"Dad would have beat them senseless if Dianna had nearly drowned." He snorted, "likely ended up in the cells or lashed even. If they survived the beating, that was."

"Correct and father would have let him. My father didn't punish them, as would be expected, and they know it. That shows this pack how little he cares about her. This is likely why some of the pack members ignore her, because the current Alpha shows her no concern, so neither do they."

"So, what? You're just going to start showing her you care?"

Conner sighed, but then nodded. "He did tell me to be nice to her. I certainly don't want to lose this pack to her, as he told me, I would. So, I will be the brother he wants to see me be, and that will start with dishing out punishment for those that don't look after my stepsister."

Conner could feel all of them looking at him now, ignored it. He was the future of this pack, and he did have the right to punish as he saw fit, especially when it came to his family. He left them all in the corridor and he knew they were all watching him. Ignored that too, they could think what they liked. None of them had actually questioned him about Eliza herself, therefore he didn't have to state anything to any of them.

Though he did get called to his father's office later that day to explain why that group was suddenly having to train out of nowhere, "Because father," he stated, "If Marlo and the others are going to be hanging out with Eliza, and you're worried someone could take the human girl to hurt you or the Luna, then don't you think that the group she hangs out with should be able to protect her properly?"

His father had looked right at him. "I guess so, yes."

"They do not train like myself and my unit, only train like general warriors do. I doubt father, if someone does try to take her, to hurt you or this pack, that they'll send simple warriors. So, her friends need to train to defeat elite or ranked members, like myself and my unit. Don't you think?"

"Thought about this a lot, have you?" his father leaned back in his Alpha chair and stared right at him.

"I have, you told me to act like an Alpha, that I have no plan for this pack, that I was not ready. So, I will show you that I am capable when it comes time for me to take over. You also told me to be a perfect gentleman where she was concerned, to get over my human-hating ways. I am trying to do that, to show you I'm not useless."

“I never said you were useless, Conner, just needed to grow up a bit, be more accepting.”

“That is what I am doing.”

“Good, are you going to train them?”

“No, I thought Scarlett and her unit could do that, she was complaining about being bored the other day at training.”

“Hmm, that she was.” His father nodded “I was thinking about sending her off to train with another pack for some variety.”

“No need, give her an unruly bunch of teens to play with, should sort her out for the time being.”

“Good idea son.” He nodded. “Very Alpha of you.”

“I thought so.” Conner nodded, “I also thought you need to start treating her like family. I have noticed some of the pack members dismiss her, much like you do. If she was your daughter, what would have happened if she’d nearly drowned under the watch of others? You would have punished them, yes?”

“Yes, you are right.” He saw his father sigh.

“If that is all.”

“You may go, Conner, this is a good start to showing me your growing up.”

Conner just nodded and left the man’s office. He had managed to get Marlo away from Eliza for a few hours this afternoon, put his father right in his place for the way he treated Eliza. All he had to do now was convince her, he wasn’t the a\*\*\*\*\*e, she thought he was. That might be a bit more on the difficult side of things.

Made sure his unit were actually attending to that group assignment that was due Monday, but did not join them. Atlas was currently tracking his Mate at a stealthy distance, as she headed for the lake, kept himself to the darkened forest as he followed her, mind-link to his father to call her the moment she stepped outside of pack territory to let him know she’d left the pack.

Got ‘How do you know that?’

‘Atlas is roaming about and spotted her.’ he stated simply.

‘Don’t let her see your wolf, Conner. He’s larger than a normal wolf.’

'We're not totally stupid, you know.' He'd muttered back.

She'd not even noticed them, or felt their presence as they tracked her through the pack. His wolf was being very careful, didn't want to scare her himself. But he was happy strolling along after her, that was for sure.

Even more so, when she strolled deeper into the woods where there was no one around at all, just him and her. Conner could actually feel Atlas wanting to play with her, chase her a little, curbed that instantly, it would not be a good idea. She had only seen one wolf at this point, and though it had been a little bigger than a normal wolf, Atlas would be twice the size and him chasing her would likely freak her out completely. Reminded his beast of that, he got huffed at, but Atlas reined in his desire to play with her.

They watched her curiously as she strolled along. She seemed very at home in the woods, saw her touch a tree and state "I miss you dad." Sighed himself, she sounded a little sad to him, likely she did miss her father.

He had Atlas shift him back as they came up on the packhouse, where some clothes were stashed. There were plenty of places round the pack with small boxes filled with shirts and clothes for shifting back to their human form. Slipped on a pair of shorts and walked out of the woods after her.

Saw those eyes of hers move over him, had to contain his smile as she took him all in, she'd seen him naked before, he'd turned the lamp in her room on so she could see all of him. Liked that she looked him over. Didn't like that she brought up him having a girlfriend, reached out to grab her, wanted to clear that up, so she didn't think that, only to hear her tell him she was ashamed of what had happened between them, that she wouldn't tell his so-called girlfriend about it.

Yanked her arm from him as he was about to voice that he didn't have a girlfriend when Marlo bloody came out of the packhouse, and called out to her. Saw that boy look right at him and then to her. Nearly snarled at him for interrupting and then wanted to beat the hell out of him for telling her about a picnic dinner and a concert he had planned for her to attend with him.

Turned and stalked away when she agreed to go with him. If he didn't walk away, his beast was going to rip into that boy. He had to remind Atlas she didn't know what they were, let alone understand what she was to them.

Realised this month of her not knowing, was going to be a lot harder than he thought it was going to be, and he knew he was going to have to deal with Marlo and his attraction to Eliza. How the hell was he going to keep Atlas in check for 3 weeks? He didn't bloody know. Was going to have to find a way to spend time with her but not let everyone here know, what she was to them at the same time.

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## Read Chapter 33

### Chapter 33

EI POV

Despite that she was out of the gated community for the night, it was a long night of trying to remind Marlo she didn't want a boyfriend. She'd reminded him gently and tried to be nice about it, but then had snapped at him once. Apologised afterwards but had insulted him with her tone and she knew it.

It did not help that they were out with his friends who were all in relationships, and that left her and Marlo to sit together, and to be alone as the others all wandered off or got up and danced together. Eliza also noticed that they had spaced themselves out, away from the two of them. She had no idea if this was planned by him or just what they would normally do. Didn't know them that well to even hesitate a guess at the answer, and there was a lot of making out going on with his friends.

Marlo had tried to get her to dance with him, and on more than one occasion, tried to actually pull her up off the blanket several times "Come on EI, dance with me." He'd stated and she'd shaken her head and told him 'no'.

It was always she noted been to a slow song, he seemed to be on the annoyed side with her when they finally got home, and though she enjoyed his company normally, she was glad to be getting out of his car when they got back.

The car ride had been made in silence, and she'd stared out the window for the most part. He'd not liked that she'd wanted to come home early either. After the tenth time he'd tried to get her up to slow dance with him, she'd snapped at him, told him she wanted to go back to the gated community.

He'd stared at her for a moment and then just nodded, called out to his friend Hayden, "Eliza wants to go home." And started packing things up. It made for a very uncomfortable silence in the car. She got the distinct impression he wasn't used to girls saying no to him.

Eliza hopped on out before he could come round and open the door for her. Was even more glad when her phone rang, grabbed it quickly from her back pocket and smiled, looked at Marlo's frown "It's my grandma." She told him and walked away from him to answer it.

“Hi grandma.”

“El honey, how are you doing?”

“Alright.” She answered, “Back in the gated community.”

“I’m aware of that, your mother called to tell me Conner had collected you to bring you back.”

“Sorry I can’t come there. I have got new rules I have to follow.” She muttered and turned to see where Marlo was, strolling along behind her, looked right at him “Um, Marlo, if you don’t mind, I’d like to talk to my grandma on my own.”

Saw him frown at her “I’ll turn in then, night Eliza.” He nodded and turned and walked away. She knew that he was mad at her, always called her El. Not now though, he was using her full name. It spoke volumes. But how many times did she have to remind the boy she was not interested in a relationship? If she did want one, she’d be dating Xavier or would have been prior to coming here, that was.

Nearly sighed with relief when she watched him stalk away from her, and go inside the apartment building. Alone at last, she thought to herself.

“Who is that you’re talking to El?”

“A boy called Marlo, he’s my age and I was encouraged to make friends. He’s nice. So are his friends.” They were all nice, it was just annoying at this particular moment that Marlo seemed to want to make out with her, even when she’d brushed him off more than once.

“So, you’ve made some friends then?”

“I guess I have, yes.” She couldn’t lie to her grandma. She would pick it up instantly. Though how long Marlo was going to stay her friend she had no idea.

“How are Conner and Logan treating you?”

“I’m just staying away from them, better that way.” She sighed as she strolled around the outside of the apartment building and went to find a chair to sit on.

“Your new rules? What are they?”

“I can’t leave the gated community on my own. I am allowed to go outside if I have someone with me, someone from here. I imagine, don’t think if Cordi turned up to hang out, I’d be allowed to go outside with her. It’s so I won’t run away again I suppose.” Shook her head. “Can you even call it that? running away, I’m an adult, am 18 and should be allowed to leave if I want to right.”

“Technically, it’s still running away, and even adults do that all the time. I wouldn’t be in business if that wasn’t the case, now would I?”

El laughed softly now “I suppose not, but don’t you mostly deal with lost children?”

“Yes, runaways, mostly honey. Don’t you make me come looking for you now.”

El snorted, fully amused now, “You’d hunt me down in a flash.”

“That I would honey.” Grandma laughed right back, “Bit of a b\*\*\*d hound I am.”

They both laughed at that one.

“So, university, has that been sorted out yet? I had words with your mother about that. Was unhappy about them taking your trip to Italy away from you.”

“As am I,” Eliza muttered, and she was. “I got given paperwork to Utah State here in Logan, along with on-campus living forms.”

“So, my chat meant nothing in other words.” Her grandma sounded annoyed.

“I guess so. Logan only cares about what he wants, not what others want.” She sighed, still felt that was true. Saw a couple walking by stare right at her. One of them frowned at her words, she ignored it. It was the truth.

“Well, El. I’m happy for you to come here if you still want to, it won’t be Italy though.”

“Thanks grandma.” It was really nice to hear that, and she wasn’t about to go telling her she was still planning on going to Italy, while she was outside where anyone could hear her. Nope, that was a private conversation it was. Only Cordi and Collin knew about that at this point, though they had both asked her if she was sure she still wanted to do that. Surprised her more than a little, but she’d assured them it was going to happen.

“I hear you got a new car.”

“Yes, I haven’t even so much as driven it. I have dad’s car and don’t really care for another.”

“Hmm, perhaps playing nice will help lessen the rules.”

“I’m playing nice, Grandma. I haven’t so much as even tried to leave, just stayed inside the community and wandered about, hung out at the lake. Gone on a hike. Will likely just stay put for now. There is no point in ticking Logan off. Doesn’t get me anywhere.”

“Now Eliza, you’re not trying to get that man to kick you to the curb, are you?” heard the amusement in her grandma’s voice.

“No, grandma.” She snorted “Would I do that?”

“You, my girl, are way too much like your father. I’m surprised you’re not trying to follow in his footsteps.”

El shuddered “I really don’t much like bugs grandma.” Her dad had been an entomologist and a dendrologist, loved being in nature so much he’d gotten degrees to make a living out there in the woods.

They would hike and camp together and he would tell her all about the trees that were in the woods and point out bugs as well, sometimes pick them up and wave them at her, or chase her around with them. The man was pretty crazy at times.

Heard her grandma laugh good and proper now as well. “Alright, I’ll check in regularly El, I gotta go. I see my little runaway, I’m gonna go snag her.”

“Have fun Grandma.” The line clicked closed and she smiled, that woman had been on a stake out of her runaway teen or child, never really missed her target. She had a good track record, called herself a bloodhound because she rarely didn’t find who she was looking for.

Eliza texted Cordi. She knew it was nearly 10 here but Cordi wouldn’t care about the lateness of the hour, told her about her issues of the night with Marlo, that he’d tried more than once to hit on her, she’d had to tell him no. Now he was annoyed with her.

“Tell Conner, he’ll put that boy right in his place.” Came right back to her.

Eliza frowned at that response. “Why on earth would he care? And why would I tell him anyway? It’s none of his business.”

“The man seemed more than annoyed about Xavier stating you were his girlfriend. Maybe there’s something there.”

“There isn’t. He has a girlfriend, remember.”

“Hmm...he might help if you want Marlo to go away. I’d ask him to talk to the boy. I’d be willing to bet he will, lol.”

El sighed and shook her head, she didn’t need to interact with Conner, any more than she already had, just wanted him to leave her alone and that meant her leaving him alone as well. She could always tell her mother she supposed. If Marlo didn’t let up on it, though she had a feeling that with him being annoyed with her, he would just leave her be. Or go find someone else to try and date.

“Not going to put myself in a position where I owe him.”



“LOL you might wind up in his bed again.”

“I was never in his bed.” She typed right back, and she hadn’t been, wasn’t even allowed down that end of the apartment complex.

Got two laughing emoji’s “Well I guess he could wind up in yours once more.”

“Cordi.”

“Sorry El, I think it’s funny. He seemed jealous of Xavier to me.”

“I seriously doubt that. Night Cordi.” She’d had enough of talking about that man.

“Night El.”

She put her phone down on the table and looked out at the forest before her, it was really dark out there in the woods, even so close to the back of the apartment building, there were no lights out here, only outdoor fire torches, though she noted that none of them were lit right at this minute.

She wasn’t afraid of the dark, was quite comfortable out in the woods of a night time, sighed it had been a while now since she’d done that, only ever with her friends or with her father. Not once since her dad had died. Maybe she could do that spend a night down by the lake. There were plenty of places one could set up a swag.

Not that she had one here, that had not been packed either, as far as she knew, just one more thing that she’d not gotten a say. What to bring with her? She might have to just ask her mother what happened to all her father’s things, all their camping gear.

Eliza near stopped breathing as she saw a rather large wolf walking through the woods. It stopped and turned its head, saw her she knew, because it then just stood inside the tree line, and appeared to be watching her. She couldn’t really see what it actually looked like, only that it was quite large, and had brilliant blue eyes, that glowed in the reflection of the moonlight, mostly it was hidden by the darkness of the woods around it.

It was likely that she wouldn’t have even seen it, if it had not been moving through the woods. Her eyes moved, passed it, looking for the rest of its pack. It seemed to be on its own, though she didn’t imagine it’s pack would be all that far away. Moved her eyes back to it when she didn’t see any others.

Then it was just gone a minute later, turned and ran off into the woods away from her. She sagged a little in her seat, glad that it hadn’t been aggressive at all. That was the second wolf she’d come across now. She shook it off and headed for her apartment. At least it hadn’t attacked her, hadn’t even growled at her, appeared to be just curious about her.

Much the same as the last wolf, they were probably used to seeing lots of people inside their pack territory, unlikely they were afraid of the humans that lived here. Or not concerned about them anyway, the last one had run off when Conner had yelled at it and clapped his hands loudly. He was obviously used to seeing them. Not afraid of them, which meant that it was likely he saw them all the time, he didn't consider them a real threat.

Though it had been on its own, just like the one she'd seen just now.

Eliza sank down on her bed and checked all her emails, still waiting for something about scholarships to come through, sighed when there was nothing yet. Though it had not even been a week yet, she was just impatient, and she knew it. She needed to be able to sort out her trip before she made real plans to get out of here.

Changed into her swimmers and pulled on a summer dress over the top, then headed on downstairs to hit the indoor swimming pool, knew there would be no one in there. It was nearly 11 now, and it was normally shut up at this hour of the night. Even on a Saturday no one was in there or hadn't been the last time she'd been down here using it.

She kept herself to the stairwell instead of the main stairs, the indoor swimming pool was right next to them, no one would see her go in there, not that she thought anyone would be looking for her or care what she was up to. The only perk of living here was all the things she could do in the middle of the night when everyone was asleep.

Dropped into the pool and set off to do her laps, needed to start increasing them, had a few weeks to get herself up to as many as she could, didn't need to do them faster, it was endurance she needed not speed. Had been doing ten laps needed to increase that dramatically and needed to swim without rest after each lap.

She wasn't going to get rest out there on the lake if she had to make that swim. Still was hoping she wasn't going to have to at this point. Rolled over onto her back and just floated out there using her hands and feet to back scull along at a slow but constant pace as she thought about the other option to her.

How could she get Logan and her mother to agree to her being gone for 5 whole days, promise to come back? Didn't really think that was going to work, but she wasn't about to take anyone along with her either. They would tell Logan and her mother for sure, if she ditched them and she would be doing so.

Managed to do 16 laps before she got out, walked up the swimming pool stairs and saw Conner leaning in the doorway of the swim centre. Watching her, she grabbed her towel and pulled it around her as she picked up her dress.

"There's no lifeguard on duty at this hour of the night while you're in here swimming."

"I don't need one," She commented.

"Hmm, I beg to differ after yesterday."

"Good for you." she murmured and headed for the exit. He didn't move at all and was still leaning in the doorway, though she did note he was once again only wearing a pair of shorts. "You going to move, so I can get passed?"

"Do you often come down here and swim in the middle of the night?" he asked as he leaned off the doorway and held the door open.

"That is none of your business," She stated and headed for the stairwell.

"Eliza, where are you going?"

"To my apartment, go away Conner." She muttered.

"Why would you use those stairs? They're just for the cleaning staff."

She ignored him as she pushed the door open. She didn't need to explain herself to him.

"Eliza, there is a perfectly good elevator for you to use."

"I don't have the code." She stated and let the door close behind her, and walked up the stairs. It was a long walk, but it was good for her. She needed the endurance to help with her swimming as well. Heard the door open and close behind her and nearly swore out loud, he was coming after her.

"Eliza, the code is.."

She cut him clean off. "I don't want it. Reminds me I'm not actually welcome here, I might just need that reminder. Go away Conner, just leave me alone."

"El, I wanted to talk to you about the other day."

"Don't bother, you made yourself plainly clear. I understand perfectly, Conner."

"No, you don't, El."

She stopped walking and turned to look right at him "My name is Eliza, to you. You have no right to call me El, as far as I am concerned. Only my friends get to call me that." Saw him stop walking and stare up at her a frown on his face. But what did he expect? She was just going to smile and forgive him. It wasn't going to happen. "I asked that you leave me alone. I meant it. If you don't, I might just tell your father what you did to me."

She shot right at him and saw his eyes widen a little, turned and headed up the stairs once more, didn't hear him following her after that.

Knew he didn't want his father to know, hell she didn't want anyone here to know either. But if he was going to harass her, perhaps telling his father what an a\*\*\*\*\*e his son was, why she'd left that day, the real reason behind it, perhaps it would get her out of here. Perhaps he'd let her go back to California, to get the hell away from his son.

Or just let her live elsewhere, somewhere in Logan maybe, showered and sank down in her bed and really thought about that, what would his father do? What would her mother say if she knew that her stepson had taken her daughter's V-card and ditched her just a few hours later, let himself into her room and just had his way with her.

Only to make sure she saw him with his girlfriend a few hours later, and she knew that's what he'd done. He had looked right at her before kissing that girl in front of her, done it on purpose so she wouldn't want to talk to him, would understand it was nothing to him. Rubbed at her chest as that stupid ache started once more. Hated that ache, wished it would go the hell away.

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## Chapter 34

Conner POV

It was late in the afternoon a few days after his trial conversation with Eliza in the omega stairwell. She was still mad at him, no real surprise there, but it was not easy to get her alone to talk to her. It wasn't like he could just mind-link to the girl any time he liked. Was human and that was not an option.

He couldn't just go strolling to her room or up to her at any point in the pack, his whole unit would be on him in a second, so he'd been staying away from her. He did note Marlo was also keeping his distance from her for the past few days. Something had happened on Saturday night that made the boy ignore her.

He'd also seen Marlo with one of the she-wolves he used to hang out with, not that it seemed to bother Eliza at all, she just smiled at them and chatted with his friends as though it didn't bother her. Conner wondered if Marlo was trying to make her jealous of

the other girl. Little did he know it wasn't going to work. Likely to only tick her off if she thought that there was something between them, and had been interested in him.

Atlas was currently stalking his Mate through the woods, not that she knew it. She had ear buds in and hiking boots on, was out wandering the tracks of the pack, in the north woods, she'd seen Atlas late Saturday night, though whether she'd actually gotten a good look at him Conner was uncertain, though she had looked right at him. He'd been in the woods, and it was dark.

They'd been out prowling that night. Atlas and Conner were both unhappy about her going out on what appeared to be a date with Marlo, though there was nothing he could do about it at that point in time. Couldn't claim she was his Mate. No one inside this pack could. No one had been anywhere near her on the full moon.

They'd felt Marlo come back into pack territory that night and had not expected to see Eliza stroll around to the back of the packhouse chatting on the phone, talking with her grandmother, an interesting conversation, picked up that her grandmother tracked people and runaways for a living. Likely some sort of detective at that rate.

She'd then just sat and text someone he was willing to bet her friend Cordi. He still wasn't happy about her having wolfen friends, and didn't really know what to make of it. But he did know that if she kept running away to them, it was only going to be difficult for him to bring her back. At some point he could only imagine that Collin or Xavier would take her right inside their pack's territory.

Though she may have already been there and done that, he didn't know. Couldn't well ask her either. She wouldn't know what it was, it was difficult for him to figure that one out. Couldn't ask his father to look into it without raising suspicion either. Didn't want to ask Brittney due to her wanting to know why he cared. She'd likely take it to his father anyway. He was stuck right this minute.

Atlas stopped when Eliza stopped, she was kneeling down looking at one of the forest ferns, an odd thing to do. He thought to himself, watching her through his wolf's eyes, it was getting late and if she wanted to keep his father happy she should turn back or it was going to be dark by the time she got back to the packhouse.

She'd been told not to walk in the woods of a night time, but here she was just an hour and a half from sun down in the northern woods all alone, just hiking around from what he could tell. There would be no service out here on her phone either. Peace and quiet for her, no way for his father to track her down either. Or contact her if he wanted to know where she was.

Watched her get up and turn to go back the way she had come, found herself staring right at Atlas, who'd been creeping closer to her, saw her back up slowly a step, Atlas was not a small wolf by any means twice the size of a regular wolf that she would have seen, if she'd seen one before.

Felt his wolf tilt his head to one side and actively smell her, she was stepping slowly away from him, watching him, and Conner could feel his wolf's interest had been even more piqued by her, 'Don't do it Atlas,' he warned his wolf, as he felt a little bit of excitement run through his beast.

'Not a wolf herself, won't understand you're playing with her.' he told Atlas when he realised his wolf wanted to chase her. 'you'll just frighten her, Atlas.'

Heard his wolf snort in annoyance at the warning he got, he wanted to play with her, they'd not been near her in days, and this was the first time they'd been alone with her. He'd not been trying to get her alone at all, honestly didn't think he would be able to, he was always with his unit. Unless Atlas was out on a run, which he'd been doing this afternoon.

Atlas had scented her out on that run and come to a complete halt and then just tracked her scent until he'd sighted her, then he'd simply started following her at a distance, until now that was. He was currently only about 10 metres from where she was standing, watching her intently. As she backed away from him slowly but steadily. Seems she knew better than to run, which was good considering his wolf wanted her to.

Felt Atlas actively take a step towards her and then another, saw her look about her, there was no where to go for her. Just further into the woods, she was looking, he thought, for another way to get away from them. Yelled at Atlas when he suddenly lurched forward at Eliza. She screamed briefly and then was gone, turned and ran from them. Just what Atlas wanted of her to run from him so he could chase her.

His wolf did just that, though not at full wolf speed, cut her off in several places, making her turn and run deeper into the woods off of the path she was on. There were no patrols in this part of the woods either. They were deep in the northern woods and the border was still at least a 60 minute full wolfen run away from him, it was just her and Atlas right this minute, just what Atlas wanted Conner thought. As he heard his wolf growl just a little at her to keep her running from him. Though it did seem to Conner that his wolf had a purpose, was cutting her off and making her turn herself about in the woods, it was likely she was going to be lost out here after this.

No matter how much he yelled at Atlas or tried to take control back, his wolf was not giving him any quarter at all. All he could do was yell at his beast as he watched Eliza run from him. She was scared he could smell the fear on her, as could Atlas. That didn't seem to bother his beast at all. Saw her stumble and fall down, over a raised tree root on the forest floor and roll over and look at Atlas as he stopped and stared at her.

Stalked slowly towards her and saw her scramble backwards from him till she was backed right up against a tree and couldn't go anywhere, not that there was anywhere to go at all out here, she was lost right this minute, had run randomly for the past 10 minutes as she tried to get away from Atlas.

Atlas stopped stalking her finally as he saw tears form in her eyes, then just turned and ran away from her. Conner was not pleased at all, was bloody furious with Atlas. He needed her to like them. Not bloody hate them, or be scared of his wolf when it came time to show her to him. Atlas knew this, also knew that Conner himself had done enough damage. Now it seemed Atlas was making things worse. Shifted him back a few minutes later when they were completely out of sight of her.

Only then did Conner realise his wolf had led him to one of the boxes in the woods where spare tee-shirts and shorts were hidden around the pack. Yanked pants on and headed back to where Atlas had left Eliza terrified in the woods. She was still there only standing now instead of sitting. As he jogged towards her, she looked right at him.

Still looked scared to him, he saw tears fall from her eyes. "Eliza?" he asked as he stopped near her, found her just staring up at him and then she was right there, her arms around him, sobbing. He slid his own arms around her and held her to his body.

"There...was a wolf." She sobbed into his chest. "It chased me."

He sighed and chastised Atlas for her state and got huffed at 'She's in your arms, isn't she.' He snorted right back. Conner frowned at his wolf's comment, as he looked around the area. Realised his wolf had been cutting her off and pushing her deeper into the woods for his own reason. To be alone with her, he now thought.

"I saw him. He's one of the Alpha wolves to his pack."

She looked up at him. "You saw him?"

Conner nodded down at her "I did," He could take this moment to tell her about his wolf. He realised "we call him Atlas, big grey beast." He was rubbing his hand up and down on her back, in an effort to help calm her. She was trembling a bit, her heart was still racing inside her chest though it was now starting to calm.

He liked looking down at her, into those silver-grey eyes of hers, and finally didn't see any anger in them, she just needed to know she was safe right this minute and that was outweighing their previous interactions and her dislike and anger for him.

He also liked holding her in his arms, comforting her. She was all pressed up against him. Liked that she was actively letting him right this minute too, she had rushed to him for comfort when she was scared. Wondered if she just didn't care right this minute who was comforting her, or if it was that part of her that was drawn to him.

"He didn't chase you?"

"No." Conner shook his head. "You're safe with me Eliza." He murmured softly. "We'll just stay here for a bit, give him time to get further away into the woods."

She just nodded and leaned on him, rested her head on his bare chest. He heard Atlas chortle inside his mind 'you're welcome.'

Nearly laughed as he realised Atlas had done this all on purpose, to get her not only alone but well into the woods where no one would hear or see them. He slid his hand up into her hair. It was a bit messy now, not that he cared.

Looked down at her as she leaned a little away to look around at her surroundings, watched as she chewed on the lower lip of hers. He knew she had no idea where she was right at this minute. He, however, knew every inch of the packs territory, had grown up here, would never get lost. Didn't need a path to go anywhere.

They were just there for convenience, for getting to places quicker was all, though Atlas liked to just run in the woods without a path. Being in the woods was their favourite pastime. That's why his unit never bothered him when Atlas was out running. They did it all the time purely because they liked being in the woods was all.

He was watching her look about, didn't interrupt her, knew the moment he spoke she'd realised she was in his arms, and likely disentangle herself from him. He wasn't ready for that, saw those eyes of hers finally move back to his and on pure instinct leaned down and just kissed her. Felt her hands press against his chest as she tried to push herself away from him.

He in return pressed his hand to the small of her back, to keep her right there, curled his hand in to her hair and pulled her head back a little, wanted to k\*\*s her and not just a little, all deep and slow, she gasped, and his tongue slid right into her mouth, to deepen the k\*\*s, took maybe ten seconds for her to start kissing him back. A minute maybe, for her arms to slide around his neck and her to press her body against him once more.

He slid both his hands down her body and over the curve of her perfectly shaped a\*s, to pull her hard up against him, relished in the m\*\*n that came from her as she met with his hardening c\*\*k. He wanted her to feel himself getting hard, let her know that just one damn k\*\*s could turn him on where she was concerned, how hard she could make him. Then she was rocking against it, and he g\*\*\*\*\*d himself, could smell her arousal building around them. Grabbed her a\*s tighter and picked her clean up as his mouth devoured hers, felt her legs wrap around him and he took a few steps to the nearest tree and pressed up against him and ground his c\*\*k right up against her, rocked against her harder and faster, which increased her arousal and his own.

Humped the hell out of her, till she was gasping and then moaning, hard firm strokes right against her clit, through her shorts, his mouth left hers so he could hear her, wanted to hear that he was able to please her, she was rocking against him herself trying to get herself to that o\*\*\*\*m that was coming. He moved his mouth right to her ear and murmured softly 'c\*m for me.' And then her whole body was gripped on to his tightly, and her back was arching, ground himself even harder and faster against her till she was calling out and then cried out as she came finally, her o\*\*\*\*m spilling over her.



His mouth found hers as his hands worked the buttons on her shirt, he wanted to touch her bare skin, pulled her from that tree a little and rid her of her back pack, undid the clasp to her bra. Then her shirt and bra were gone and his hands were on her, caressing her breasts.

He sighed softly himself, at the feel of her soft bare skin in his hands, wanted all of this girl, was likely never going to have enough of her. She was already moving against him again, wanting more of him and he knew it. He was not going to deny her that either, she'd only have to ask him, and he would do whatever she wanted.

His hand was working the button and zip of her shorts a moment later and then his hand was pushing inside her panties to touch her, slid right down over her clit, so wet and ready for him, slid down through her wet folds and g\*\*\*\*\*d himself to know he could make her so ready from him, "Please." Came from her, her voice so soft and full of desire, but yet so wanton as well, and he pushed two fingers inside of her, felt her body tighten around them as she gasped, then she was riding them as he pushed them in and out of her.

Wanted to hear her c\*m for him again, wanted her to get what she wanted from him, kissed her softly below her ear, "Take what you want." He told her "I will give you all of me if that's what you want."

"More Conner. Please." She m\*\*\*\*d and he picked up the pace himself, held her hard to that tree and started pumping his fingers in and out of her harder and faster, till she was crying out once more, called out his name as she came around his fingers, then he was shucking his own shorts down and kicked them away. He needed to have her, and he knew she wanted it. He could smell how turned on she was right this minute.

Put her down finally and tugged her shorts and panties down, glared at the hiking boots in his way, he did not want to stop to take them off, couldn't get her shorts or panties past them, 'screw it' he thought to himself and sank down on the ground, pulled her down onto his lap, smiled when she nearly tumbled, pushed her feet between his spread legs and tugged her knees apart around his h\*\*s. Watched her look right at his hard c\*\*k, saw her tongue slide over her lower l\*p and near g\*\*\*\*\*d at just the sight of her, wondered if she wanted to taste him, didn't know if she'd ever done that before, wasn't going to push that. But goddess, when she did do it, he knew it was going to be the hottest freaking thing he'd ever seen.

"Take what you want from me." He murmured and guided her h\*\*s closer to his hard c\*\*k, but didn't take her as much as he wanted to, held himself back. Then she was kissing him and pushed herself down on to him, taking him in one firm push, m\*\*\*\*d right into his mouth and then she was taking him for herself, riding him so very hard and fast, so eager to have him, goddess she was perfect for him, pulled her mouth from his and threw her head back, her hands gripping his shoulders as she took him so eagerly, getting rougher and harder by the second, taking everything she wanted, her needs matched his easily at every turn.

Conner let her take all of him, as she wanted, till her face was buried into his neck and she was digging her fingernails into him, cumming, her body clamped tightly around his, "F\*\*k." He g\*\*\*\*d as he pulled her harder down onto him and came with her. Then he just lay back down on the forest floor, and held her to his body himself. So damn good, always so damn good with her. Closed his eyes and just enjoyed being out there in the forest alone with her.

It didn't matter if anyone heard them out here in the woods, there was always someone f\*\*\*\*g out in the woods, anyone close enough to hear them would just turn and go the other way. He'd kept her name out of it, but she'd cried out his many times. It would not surprise anyone to hear him f\*\*\*\*g out here in the woods either. Done that hundreds of times.

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## Chapter 35

EI POV

She couldn't believe her own stupidity, one bloody k\*\*s was all it took for her to give into that man. She should know better, after the last two times. Now here she was lying on top of him, her heart racing inside her chest. He'd told her to take what she had wanted from him, and she had, couldn't seem to get enough of him.

Understood that it was likely due to her being terrified after that bloody wolf had chased her through the woods, had been glad to see him for the first time since being here, latched on to him and didn't want to let go. Needed the comfort of another.

She had tried to pull away from his k\*\*s, but just bloody couldn't, had found herself wanting him the moment she'd felt him getting hard, he'd wanted her and she knew it, had showed her how hard he was and she'd stupidly let herself get carried away and then had even begged him for more. He'd not taken her, had told her to take what she wanted from him.

So, she had, taken all of him and f\*\*\*\*d him good and proper, till she was crying out his bloody name. A part of her knew he liked it when she did, and that part of her wanted to please him. Some part of her wanted to make sure he was enjoying it as well. It was sick and twisted is what it was, considering she knew the moment she got up and dressed everything would just go back to how it was.

She needed to get control of herself, but the man himself was like a bloody drug she just couldn't say no to. She was right this minute, lying on top of him naked and completely satisfied, and she knew it. She also knew so was he. He always g\*\*\*\*\*d when he came. She also felt heat spread inside of her when he did, could actually feel him cumming inside of her.

His hands were resting on the small of her back, he seemed completely comfortable out here in the woods with her atop of him, and she didn't exactly know what to do with herself. She knew it was wrong though. Didn't know how to get up and walk away, there was no dignified way of doing that right this minute.

To be honest, she didn't even know if she could get up, without falling down or stumbling. Her feet he'd pushed together and were between his thighs, her panties and shorts were around her ankles and her knees were on either side of him. He'd found a way to make it work between them to still get the s\*x he wanted.

Eliza knew she was going to have to get up off of him. Knew he was going to be watching her do so as well. She closed her eyes for a moment to build up the courage, was going to have to do it herself. It seemed that today he wasn't going to be the one to get up and just leave, like he had both other times.

It would be much easier if he did, just roll them over and get up himself, dress and leave, then she could just sit there in her own shame at not being able to say no to him. She felt his hand slide up her back slowly and her eyes snapped open, at the lightness of the touch on her skin.

No, she was not doing this again, his touch, it was what she needed to remind herself who this man was, reached around her and pushed his hand off of her, then pushed herself up off of him, refused to look at him, it was not easy to actually get up and she heard him chuckle softly at her plight. Wanted to glare right at him but refused to look at him.

Ended up rolling off of him, couldn't bloody stand up from her position on top of him. She sat up and yanked her panties and shorts up, wriggled into them and did them up as she looked for her bra and shirt, got up and grabbed them, pulled them on.

Heard him getting dressed, turned and looked around that area. She had no idea where she was, was no longer on any path, who knew where she was. "Eliza?"

Finally, she turned her eyes on him, had to, she didn't know where she was, though it was likely he had some idea, having grown up here, "Just point me in the right direction." She muttered.

Saw him frowning down at her. "We should probably talk. Eliza."

“No thank you.” she shook her head, he’d not wanted to talk the last two times about it. “It was just a f\*\*k.” She muttered “Which way Conner? to go back.”

She saw him point and was gone, away from him, that ache inside her chest had been gone for a while, but now it was back, and she knew why. He had a girlfriend, it was, as she stated, for him, just a f\*\*k. Her jaw tightened as she stalked away from him, knew he was following her could hear his foot fall. “Eliza, please just stop for one moment and let’s talk about this,” he said after she stepped out of the actual woods and back onto a path finally.

“Why bother? Go back to your girlfriend and leave me alone, Conner.”

Found his hand on her arm, pulling her to a stop as she tried to stalk away. “I don’t have a girlfriend.” He told her, turning her to face him.

Eliza yanked her arm from his hand, she’d seen the girl, he’d made damn sure of that, glared right up at him. If that girl had not been his girlfriend, that was just even more hurtful, it meant he’d gone out of his way to find someone else to k\*\*s, to make sure she understood she was nothing to him. Felt that ache inside her chest grow even more.

“The red head?” she stated, wanted to know. Could feel anger welling inside her as she waited for his answer.

“Not my girlfriend. I just”

She swung out at him before he could finish that sentence, tried damn hard to slap him, he was quick to move out of the way, “You really are an a\*\*\*\*\*e, Conner.” She shot at him. He’d used any girl, just some random girl, likely the first one he came across that morning, in other words, to make his point clear to her. That actually hurt more than him having an actual girlfriend. Turned and stalked away from him. She was so dumb, and hearing this only made it hurt more. Wanted to cry and run the hell away. Just up and leave and never come back. Never have to see him ever again, but even that stupid thought caused her pain.

“Eliza, stop and just hear me out.”

“No, get the hell away from me. Go find someone else to f\*\*k.” And then she did just run away from him, down the path as fast as she could, didn’t want to be anywhere near him right this minute, not ever.

Found his hands on her, stopping her and kicked out at him “Get off me.” She yelled at him.

“Calm down Eliza, you’re going to get lost out here.”

“Like you f\*\*\*\*\*g care, Conner.” She screamed right at him, managed to kick him right in the knee, heard him snarl a little at her for the injury and stomped on his foot, as she tried to pull her wrist free of him. He didn’t let go, just glared at her. Then he was pulling her along the path behind him while she struggled to make him let go.

“It’s nearly dark Eliza, let’s just go back, calm down and we’ll talk about this when you’ve calmed down.”

“I don’t want to talk to you,” she snapped. “Open the front gates and I’ll leave Conner, be gone away from here and you’ll never have to see me again.”

Watched him stop walking and saw those blue eyes turn right on her, could swear they were glowing just a little around the edges. “Never going to happen Eliza, you live here now.”

“I don’t want to live here.” She pulled at her wrist yet again, only to find herself pinned up against the nearest tree, both hands by her sides, his face right in front of hers.

“You will not be leaving.” his voice was all gravel “You need to understand this, come to terms with it. I will not only come for you, I will, bring you back every time you leave, Eliza.” Then his face pressed right into the crook of her neck, and he breathed deeply of her. His nose ran from the crook of her neck all the way up to her ear as he did so. “I know what you smell like, Eliza. I will hunt you and bring you back here where you belong.” He whispered in a soft gravelly tone, “There is no getting away from here, no leaving me.” He growled softly at her.

She stared right at him as his eyes met hers once more. They were a practically glowing, she realised, not the usual dark blue, iridescent she noticed. Her heart was hammering inside her chest as she stared at him, then his mouth was on hers, hungry and demanding, his whole body pressed up against hers, grinding against her.

Found herself spun around and her hands pressed to that tree by one of his, “You’ll never want to leave me, Eliza” he growled as his other hand yanked at her shorts “When I’m done with you.” and then he was taking her once more, “You’ll crave me,” he growled right at her as he thrust hard into her “Want me,” he thrust once more “Need me.” He told her with every thrust into her body, his voice deep and gravelly in her ear.

He was taking her furiously and she was gasping and crying out in just moments of him taking her, wanted it and knew it, turned on by the raw need in him to have her, he was hitting all the right places inside of her, tried to turn and face him, only to be moved to the ground to all fours his hands on her h\*\*s as he started to pound in and out of her relentlessly, cried out for him, heard him growl “ Do you want more?” right in her ear.

Couldn’t stop the crying out of the word “Yes.” Right back at him, couldn’t say no to him.

His arm was locked around her waist as he took her now, screamed his name minutes later as she came hard for him. Her o\*\*\*\*m so strong all she could do was scream with pleasure, so much pleasure from him, heard him snarl her name as she was pinned down underneath him. His final thrust shoved her body down to the ground.

Lay there underneath him, unable to move. Exhausted by him completely, knew deep down he would never let her go, this was what it was going to be like to be here, always wanting out and to get away. But always needing to have him at the same time. She was never going to be able to say no to him. Knew that every time he touched her, she would crave him.

It didn't even seem to matter how rough it was, how hard he took her, or for how long she loved it all. Her body ached for his and he knew it, somehow just knew it, and used it to his advantage he was going to continue to do so and she was going to be defenceless against it. Against him.

It was dark out now, as she lay there with him, her heart hammering inside her chest, her breath ragged as was his, he didn't move or get up for a long time, just lay there pinning her down to the ground.

Heard him sigh heavily at one point and murmur "Sorry Eliza." As he got up off of her slowly, "please don't ever say you're going to leave again."

Eliza bit her l\*p, she was going to leave, needed to leave by the sound of it. She just had to convince her mother and Logan to let her. But how was she going to get away from Conner? She knew right this minute he'd meant every word, he would hunt her down, bring her back. Whatever this was between them, he wasn't willing to give it up.

He actually helped her up off the ground and dressed her, then just looked down at her, "I'm sorry about what just happened, normally I have good self-control. Are you hurt?" She could see his dark blue eyes were looking over her.

She just shook her head, didn't trust herself to speak right this minute, found herself pulled right into his chest, his arms around her, held to him gently even. "I need you to do something for me." He sighed a little heavily. "It's going to sound really weird to you. But it is important."

She was too tired to argue with him right this minute, just wanted to go to sleep to be honest. "What?" was all she said.

"When we get close to the apartment building, I need you to yell and scream at me, to put you down, punch me and hit me, really struggle, wriggle and squirm against me."

"What?" she frowned up at him now, that was a weird thing to ask.

“I want you to fight with me, kind of need you to right this minute. Understand that I don’t actually want us to fight for real. But I need you too. Do you understand?”

“No.” she shook her head.

“It’s after dark, El, and you’re out in the woods, people are looking for you. I’m going to say I found you trying to run away.”

“What? I wasn’t doing that. I wasn’t running away. I don’t want your father to think that. Was chased by that bloody wolf.”

“Don’t mention that either. He’s going to put more rules on you, I know, but I really need you to do this El. Please, I won’t ask you to do it again. I will be more careful with you in the future.”

She frowned up at him, didn’t understand him at all, “Whatever, I don’t have the energy to argue with you right now. I’m sure you can say something that will tick me off when you need to.”

Found his mouth pressed right to hers briefly “Thank you.” then she was picked up and tossed right over his shoulder and he was striding away.

It actually wasn’t that hard a thing to do. He refused to put her down or let her walk at any point on the way back and she was not at all comfortable after being up there for nearly an hour, was complaining to be put down, and then it was just painful and she was yelling at him to be put down. He did adjust her on to his other shoulder, it didn’t even seem to bother him at all that he was having to carry her the whole time, but that did not help the situation for her.

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## Chapter 36

Conner POV

Conner felt himself get shoved almost violently to the back of his own mind as Atlas surged forward to tell Eliza she was never going to be able to get away from him. Knew she was looking right at Atlas and couldn’t do anything at all about it. She had just told

him she didn't want to be here, that they'd never have to see her again, and Atlas was more than annoyed.

She was his as far as he was concerned and when he surged forward to take control Conner knew it was going to be bad, he was yelling at his beast to calm down. That she was just upset, she'd not once tried to leave since they'd brought her back, that she was just lashing out verbally. But he knew Atlas didn't care. The moment his beast kissed her while he was in human form, Conner knew it was too late, Atlas was about to mate her, no amount of yelling at him not to do it, that it could hurt her was going to stop him, from claiming the girl.

It was all Atlas growling and snarling at her, taking her for himself, damned beast so vocal about making sure she understood his intent, want me, crave me, need me. Might as bloody well have just snarled Mine at the girl. Surprised Conner more than a little that not only did she handle his beasts' raw need to mate the hell out of her, which he was doing, there was nothing gentle about it.

When Atlas asked her if she wanted more, she actually said yes to his wolf, and he'd given her all of him, was bloody lucky Atlas didn't knot the girl. Perhaps his beast realised she was still human and couldn't handle that from him. Who the hell knew all he was getting from Atlas was the need to mate the hell out of her. No words anymore, just his animalistic need to mate her furiously.

He could only apologise to her when Atlas finally receded, the sky had darkened while Atlas Mated Eliza, and as he stood up to find his shorts, he heard his father's voice inside his head, 'When you're done f\*\*\*\*\*g that she-wolf, Eliza is missing.'

Knew it was likely that his father had tried to mind-link to him earlier, but not gotten past his beast in the throws of Mating the very girl his father was looking for.

'I'll look now.' He sent back. At least his father had not picked up on who his beast was doing out here in the woods. Couldn't she was human. Though he did have some concerns now that his father might actually know it was Atlas mating and not Conner himself. Only time would tell on that.

She thankfully wasn't injured at all. Seemed to be just completely exhausted, couldn't really expect anything else. But now he had a real dilemma on his hands. He knew they were just over an hour's walk from the packhouse. There was no way he was going to be able to hide his scent from being on her, or hers on him for that matter.

Stood there and held her up against his body. She didn't even argue with him about it. She was his now, whether she liked it or not, whether he liked it or not. Atlas had just mated himself to the human. Yet he couldn't lay claim to her till he officially scented her out on a full moon. Didn't think his father would take kindly to him sleeping with her either before there was a claim. Knew he didn't like humans. This was going to be a problem, one he needed to think about. Atlas was very pleased with himself, it seemed.



He was all stretched out inside his mind, happy to be mated to her finally. 'You're an a\*s, Atlas.'

'She'll never leave me now.' He shot right back. 'Is mine now.'

'And if we don't scent her on the full moon, then what?'

'Claim anyway.'

Conner really wanted to strangle his wolf right this minute. He had wanted to spend the next few weeks seeing if he could get her to come round to liking him, but no, his bloody wolf was too impatient for that. Now she was theirs, regardless of whether they actually scented her out or not.

There was only one way he could figure her scent would be all over him and vice versa, to carry her and have her seem to be struggling with him about it, wriggling all over him. She didn't really understand it, but that didn't matter. By the time he was in earshot of any wolves by the packhouse, she was already yelling at him to put her down.

He didn't even have to pick a fight with her, she'd told him to put her down. It was uncomfortable, and then told him it was hurting her to be up there on his shoulder. Likely it was, he kept her there, not that he wanted to cause her any pain, but with pain came her anger and by the time he stepped out of the tree line with her. She was yelling at him to be put down and squirming about as well. He'd shifted her from one shoulder to another, but kept himself quiet on the walk back, let her yell at him.

He'd mind linked to his father that he'd found her, out in the north woods, looked like she was trying to sneak away, saw him and bolted away from him, but he got her. Knew she didn't want his father thinking she'd tried to run away again, but how else could he explain that he just so happened to find her so quickly?

Though his father would have known where he was, that pack tether would have told him he was out in the northern woods, likely would have asked his unit and they'd have told him Atlas was out for a run. So, it would work, he hoped.

Saw his father standing by the dining room doors at the back of the packhouse, she was kicking out at him, he'd deflected quite a few in the past few minutes, took a long breath in as he walked down the slight embankment and let one get past him to land right in his groin, stumble as pain shot through his region.

He went down on one knee, heard his father chuckle as he finally let Eliza go and she fell off his shoulder onto her a\*s on the ground in front of him. She glared right at him, as he breathed through the lingering pain. Atlas thought it was hilarious, rolling around inside his mind, chortling away. Saw her kick a foot right at him, knew she was in pain and angry with him. Also knew he'd asked her to pick a fight with him and now had a reason to.

Let her put that foot right into his shoulder, and watched her get up as he rolled all the way over and then stood up himself. Though it shocked him a bit that she launched herself right at him and tried to pummel him completely, yelling at him about how would he like it to be carried like that for hours, did he even know how much it hurt? It was likely genuine, which was good because more people had arrived, including Adam and Marlo.

Blocked the kick to his lower region and grabbed her wrists, spun her around away from him but then yanked her whole body back against his and pinned her arms across her chest, holding her tightly to him “when you’re done, trying to beat the hell out of me. I’ll let go.”

He got his bare foot stomped on once more by that bloody hiking boot of hers and yelled at to let her go. She was really struggling against him. He looked at his father and shook his head, managed to get out of the way of that boot barely a second time, snapped at her “Enough Eliza.” And released her, only to have her turn and try to slap him right in the face. Dodged the hit, didn’t know if she was acting or was actually trying to hit him right now.

“You sound just like your father.” She yelled at him.

He had heard it himself to be honest. Snapped his hands out and grabbed her as he saw Marlo walking this way, heard the boy call her name, picked her clean up all over again and put her right back over his shoulder, she was now pummeling his back, yelling to be put down.

His eyes moved to Marlo. “Move.” He grated out when the boy held his hands out as if he’d take her.

He stepped right around him and looked at his father. “I’ll take her to her room, you can deal with her tomorrow.”

He stalked off inside the packhouse with her and used the elevator to take her upstairs. She didn’t stop hitting him the whole way. Conner put her down in the elevator and looked at her. She just sighed “Good enough of a fight?”

“I’d say so.” He smiled at her, “thank you, I will explain it to you later. Just can’t right this minute.”

“Whatever Conner.” She muttered and turned away from him.

He sighed softly, “I am sorry for all this, Eliza, I know you don’t understand.”

She didn’t say anything at all. He knew she was tired as well. Being Mated by his wolf was not an easy thing for her, especially being human. The doors opened and he picked her up once more. “I can walk, you know.” She muttered.

"I know." He smiled down at her, he'd not tossed her over his shoulder, just scooped her up in his arms. Carried her all the way to her room and put her down, watched her pat herself down and then dig into a pocket and pull out her room card, to open the door, stepped inside with her only to have her look right at him.

"You need to have a shower and get some rest." He told her, steered her all the way across the room to her ensuite and even turned the shower on for her.

"Out." She told him.

Conner chuckled "You know I've seen you naked, right, put my hands all over you." he tried teasing her a little,

"I'm well aware of what happened today." She muttered and he felt Atlas huff inside his mind.

"El, you and I. It's a bit difficult, but I am not seeing anyone else. I will not be either. Don't read anything into what you might see over the next few weeks."

Saw her frowning up at him but said nothing.

Looked right down at her, she was his future, and he knew it. They were mated to her right now, not that she understood that, he reached out and touched her face gently. "Thank you for helping me out, even though you didn't understand my reasonings."

"I'll never understand you." she muttered.

"You will, soon enough." He leaned down and kissed her softly, "I just need a few weeks, then we'll sit and talk about everything. I'd better go." he smiled at her just a little. She didn't smile back at him, and he wasn't really expecting her to, he guessed.

Headed for his room and took a long hot shower, she was his now, though she was still unclaimed by the pack, by him officially. He wasn't going to be able to give her up or reject her. Couldn't, not anymore, didn't want too either. The only problem was she still didn't like him much, he still had to really work on that. Also needed to work on her wanting to be here.

She'd voiced very loudly that she didn't want to be here, and would leave if he opened the front gate. Pinched the bridge of his nose and closed his eyes, she'd not attempted to go anywhere, didn't want him telling his father that she'd tried to run away, but still wanted to leave. Wondered about that. Was it all an act, her staying here? Or was she actually trying to fit in? He didn't really know himself on that one and he didn't think asking her would work either. She'd likely just tell him whatever she thought she wanted him to hear.

He got out of the shower and dressed, he was really bloody hungry and he knew why, he'd been out there in the woods all afternoon and then, sighed and shook it off. He strolled down to the dining room. He'd missed dinner, but there were plenty of toasted sandwiches he could cook downstairs. Was doing just that when Adam strolled into the dining room and leaned on the counter to look right at him.

"What?" Conner asked.

"Nothing, just none of us could get you, earlier."

"Hmm, I was busy." He commented.

"You're never so busy you just ignore a mind-link, even when you f\*\*k, you answer it. It's very annoying to all of us that you do that. Today was different. You shut us all down, no-one got through, not even your own father. So, who was she?"

"None of your business Adam." He commented and collected his toasted sandwiches, walked away with them.

"I might just hazard a guess then." He heard the amusement in the man's tone.

"Guess away, all I did was go into the woods for a run and end up hooking up. What's the big deal Adam? It's not like I haven't done it a hundred times before."

"True, but as you say, it's just a f\*\*k, it's never that good. It must have been for you to ignore all of us when Eliza was missing."

"Sometimes it is good. What do you want Adam?" He stated, annoyed with the man.

Heard his friend laugh "Oh, so very defensive too."

Turned and looked right at him "I'm sure you've got things to do, study, assignments."

"No more than you do."

"Mine are all up to date. I don't slack on my end. That would be you and the boys."

"I hope your father doesn't figure it out, Conner, might not go down so well." Adam looked right at him, and then strolled off. "I'll leave you to eat. You must have worked up a good appetite." He commented over his shoulder.

Conner glared at that man's retreating back, he'd alluded to the fact that he knew who the girl was, but whether he actually did or not was another matter. Conner didn't think Adam would let it go if he actually knew the truth about who it was.

Seeing Marlo was all hopped up about Eliza or had been, Adam would want to know, if he thought Eliza was his Mate, knew though Conner wouldn't want a human Mate. He was an Alpha wolf though and would not stand for a young male wolf hitting on her, or dating her if he suspected anything, where the girl was concerned. Adam would also want to intervene, to protect his little brother and the inevitable fight he saw coming.

Then there was him stepping up to Milton to separate him from her, and what he'd seen at the university, going on between him and Eliza. Though if he did suspect only, that was fine. But if Adam decided to sit and really think about Conner's interactions with Eliza, along with what had gone down around her friends in California. Adam had called it a turf war, then perhaps Adam had figured it out, and was just waiting to see what Conner was going to do about it.

Adam did know he didn't like humans. That would account for his behaviour around her as well, with him being all annoyed and angry that the goddess would give him a human for a mate.

It was not likely to get past his Beta, and if he didn't already know, it wouldn't take long for him to figure it out either. He'd seen Atlas throw that tantrum too, had seen Atlas take on his own father. It was all there for anyone to see, he realised. His wolf losing control over things around the girl, his whole attitude had been different since Eliza arrived, sighed to himself, and headed up stairs.

He was just going to have to let it go, and hope it wasn't what he thought it was, though that comment about his father finding out. And it not going down so well, he was likely right about that. Considering Eliza had stated, that she left after Conner had told her to. Had threatened to give her the pack instead of him if he couldn't bring her back and be nice to her.

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## Chapter 37

EI POV

Eliza hadn't really left her room for the past two days, just kind of lay there and stared up at the ceiling, didn't really know what to do with herself, about what had happened with Conner, he'd told her he was never going to let her leave. She'd been called down

to Logan's office and he and her mother, along with Jared, were all in there. They had all looked at her with disappointment.

Before Logan had told her he was disappointed in her trying to leave once again, she'd sighed and muttered "I wasn't trying to leave, that was Conners opinion. I was just out hiking."

They had all stared at her and she'd stared right back at Logan. "Do you think I would try and hike over the mountains without proper supplies at all? I'm not that stupid."

He'd looked right at her with those narrowed eyes of his, as though he didn't believe her. "Have I tried to leave? Even once, I could have ditched Marlo and his friends anytime on Saturday. If I was going to leave, I would have." She'd gotten annoyed with them all.

Hell, yes she was getting out of this place at some point. She just hadn't figured out the logistics of getting away and staying away. Seemed it was going to be more difficult than she thought it was now. Conner had told her he would hunt her down and bring her back every time, so she really did need to find a way to throw them off when she did run.

She'd left that office with no new rules, thankfully. Perhaps they believed her, or perhaps her own mother had confirmed that she knew how to hike in the woods, and take all the right equipment for overnight hikes. Maybe she should just do that, pack her bag and go for that long hike. Just needed to go when Conner was at the university. That way he wouldn't be able to find her.

Rolled over on her bed and stared at her emails, she'd been accepted into a university finally, now just had to get there. Get out of here and find her way there, had a plane ticket but had yet to change its date due to not knowing when she was going to get out of this place. Got up from her bed and dressed for the day, needed to actively engage do something to make Logan believe she was going to stay here.

Stood drinking a cup of coffee looking at the Utah State admission paperwork. Thought a lot about it, then sat down and filled it in, checked all the course codes for the degree she wanted and made sure they were correct, then filled out the on-campus living as well. Then she took it downstairs and knocked on his office door. It was open and he was in there along with the three men she always saw him with.

They all looked at her. Not only had she dressed, she was wearing light make-up and smiled at him, though only a little, couldn't overdo it. They still didn't really get along, probably never really would, she thought to herself, as he asked her to come in. "What can I do for you, Eliza?"

"I need to go into Logan. But Marlo is not here to go with me. So, I need someone to go with me. I'm not allowed out on my own."

“What do you need? Perhaps I could help you with that?”

“No, not really.” She held out the papers for him to see, knew he would want to check them, being a complete and utter control freak. “I need to hand these in is all.”

Saw him look over them and really actually read them, likely looking for discrepancies, she thought, he didn't trust her, and well he shouldn't. “You're agreeing to go to Utah State in Logan.”

“I am, as long as I'm allowed to stay on campus, I will go there.” She nodded, didn't smile about it, “I don't like it, but I want to get my degree and seeing as you won't let me go anywhere else.” She shrugged.

“Do you really mean this, Eliza?”

“What other choice do I really have, Logan?” she put out there. “I could sit around here all day and do nothing, get a real nice tan but be bored shit-less all day every day.”

He was just staring at her, “I'm following your rules, I understand I'm not going to be allowed to study abroad, so after much thought and consideration, and as much as I don't like it. I'm here and expected to stay here, correct?”

“Yes, I would like that, as would your mother.” He nodded.

“Then there is nothing I can do but try and make the best of the situation right. I'm guessing if I try and leave, you'll just have me brought back, right?”

She saw him nod and nodded herself. Thought as much, still didn't understand why though. “Then I need to get those papers in for the new year or I'll miss my opportunity to study.”

He was staring right at her, there was silence in the room for a long time. “If you don't believe me, you do it yourself, put them in, I will want a list of books that I need and I will want to look at the on-campus living as well. I don't really want a share room either, if I'm being made to stay here. I think you can compensate me with a single dorm. Yes. I've not asked for anything, have I?”

“What about a shared room with someone from here, your age?”

“Not particularly fussed about that to be honest, I like my own space, it also shows you don't trust me at all.”

“You have to earn trust, Eliza.”

“Yes, you do. Don’t you Logan.” She shot right back, and rubbed her wrist where he’d once bruised her, saw his eyes looked at her action and heard him sigh. Yes, she was never going to let him forget it.

“Alright, how about your mother goes with you today? Perhaps you two can get lunch in Logan afterwards. You don’t really spend much time with her. I think she would like that.” He held the papers out for her to take back.

“Fine, I’ll meet her out the front when she’s ready.”

“Eliza, do you think you might want to drive your new car? I know that would make your mother happy as well. She did pick it for you, went through a lot of cars to find you something you might like.”

Frowned at him, didn’t want to drive that car. “Fine. I’ll go and get the keys.” She nodded just to make the man happy.

“Excellent Eliza.” He nodded “perhaps we could look at moving you into that new apartment when you get back.”

“Don’t concern yourself with it. I’ll be on campus for the next 3 or 4 years, give it to someone else. I’ll stay in the apartment I have. I’m used to it. Suits me and my status here.” She muttered and walked out the door.

Just like not having a code for the elevator, it reminded her she wasn’t actually welcome here by him. Besides, she’d come to realise that being at the other end of the building to him and everyone else, she could come and go as she pleased of a night-time and no one was any the wiser. Could wonder about using that stairwell, and go wherever she wanted to.

Would come in handy if she had to sneak out and head for the lake. Wanted to stay in that apartment away from all of them. Didn’t need to get comfortable in some cushy apartment closer to all of them. No, it was better to stay as far away from them as possible. Headed up the stairs to collect her Audi car keys.

The car was parked exactly where it had been when they’d shown it to her. No one could move it. She had both sets of keys. Her mother was waiting for her by the front door, smiled right at her, seemed happy about the turn of events.

Linked arms with her and said “I was hoping I’d be the first one to go driving with you in your new car. You’re going to love it. It’s such a nice day, do you want to put the top down?”

“I’d rather not, it’s a bit hot, just put the air-conditioning on. It would be better.”



She drove right out of the gated community, there wasn't even a need to stop and wait. The gates were open for her to leave. She watched her mother smile and wave at the gate guard. He smiled and waved right back. They all really did seem to know her here, that was still weird. Her mother chatted to her about how happy she was that she'd made the decision to attend university here in the states. Though she also stated she would rather that El stay in the community and drive every day to her classes. But said she understood her need to have some freedom. Told her a few of the other kids her age were likely going to be staying on campus now as well. That gained her attention and when she asked when that had been done.

Her mother smiled at her, "There are always a few that stay on campus El. They like the social aspect of the university. Logan lets them. I believe Marlo will be staying on campus. That will be nice for you."

"It will, he's a nice boy."

"Just nice? I think he likes you more than a little, El."

"I'm not interested mother." She told her "Marlo also has a girlfriend, asked Willah out on Monday."

"What? I'd not heard about that."

"Yep, she's really nice, they look good together. She's always smiling up at him, absolutely smitten with him I think." Chuckled softly, "It's kind of cute, she gets all dreamy eyed when watching him." though she'd seen that with other girls around him as well. Lots of girls stared at him.

"Hmm, I thought you and Marlo had hit it off."

"I'm not interested in dating anyone. If I was, I would have dated Xavier." Sighed at that thought, he too had a girlfriend now. Cordi had sent her a pic of the two of them, when she'd asked if Cordi knew why he wasn't talking to her that much anymore. Text her "He's got a girlfriend. His father introduced them. Her name is Yara, she's quite the jealous type too."

She'd asked if he was happy. He didn't really look it in the photo. 'Not really,' had been the reply 'I don't think it'll last. His father's choice for a girlfriend.'

"Xavier was a nice boy." Her mother commented "But he lives a long way away now."

"He does." She nodded and said no more on the topic.

They found a park at the university and they got out. Her mother walked and chatted about how big the place was, how she thought El was going to love coming here and

she stood and talked to the lady in the office, who was taking her paperwork. Apparently knew her as well, worked here but lived in the gated community.

Offered to have them look at dorm rooms right away, El did ask if there were any single ones, to which she stated, of course Eliza but that there were some nice apartments that housed two and four as well. She got to see all of them, heard her mother pushing for her to have a two bedroom, one where she could have a friend live with her.

Eliza let her go on about it, as she was reading the information in the booklet she was given. Would let her mother do as she pleased. Heard her put in a call into Logan to discuss the logistics of El living in a place with a minimum age bracket of 19. She was not that yet. Heard their discussion of perhaps her staying here in the gated community until she turned 19 and then would be allowed to be on campus.

Didn't really respond to it, just stood by and waited it out. He also thought it was best that she have a two or four-bedroom apartment. That way, a bunch of them could all live together. That way she could make close friends and be happier there. Saw her mother looking at her and then sighed and relay the news.

El just shrugged, she wasn't going to argue about it, but did have the lady show her other dorms in other buildings. They were all shared rooms. She opted for one of them on the application as a show that she was willing to share. Didn't really need it, but played the game. Just a few more weeks and she was going to be out of this place.

They ate lunch and returned to the gated community where she was taken to Logan's office so they could discuss it with him, and watched her mother tell Logan about the apartments that were available. Saw him nod and look at her. "What do you want, Eliza? to stay here till your 19 and you can live on your own or a shared room in one of the other dorms at the university?"

"On campus the whole time, so I'll take a shared room." She stated, wouldn't be getting a single room anywhere she went. The university that she had been accepted into in Italy, she was going to be sharing with 4 other girls. It didn't matter, she'd simply stated a single room to be annoying to him. Nothing more, didn't actually mind sharing a dorm room. It was a good way to make friends.

She walked out of that office of his and both her mother and Logan were smiling and seemed happy, that she had made the decision to stay and attend the university of Logan's choice. She even agreed to come down and have dinner with them tonight, was really going to be showing them she was making the effort.

Made a point of using that credit card he gave her to shop online with, bought some clothes and new swimwear, sat with Marlo and his friends, and discussed sailboards. She had no limit apparently, so she was going to splash that card around and buy things to be delivered to this gated community to show she was willing to stay here.

Sat down next to her mother to have dinner with her and Logan. Conner was there. It was the first time she'd seen him since the other night in the woods. He nodded to her but kept the conversation directed at his father and his friends. She pretty much just ate and answered a few questions when spoken to. Mostly about her degree and what she would be studying, that she'd finally agreed to study at Utah State.

That seemed to surprise not only Conner, but his friends as well, found them all looking at her over dinner, saw Conner frown at his father when he stated that he was letting El stay on campus, that he was in the process of securing her accommodation in the Canyon Crest Suites. That he was going to have a few of the teens study next semester bunk in with her.

"Not very private." Marlo commented from his place at the table as he looked at her. "I'd have thought, being your stepdaughter, she would get a single apartment." His eyes moved to Logan.

"She's not old enough for an apartment on her own on campus. She needs to be 19 for that." Her mother told him. "We'd prefer she shared anyway."

"Well, Hayden and I could bunk in with her and one of the other girls. We're all happy to be on campus."

"It won't be you and Hayden," Conner commented. "It will be all girls, no mixed dorm rooms from my recollections. But I'm sure you could secure a room next door or down the hall. Somewhere close by."

Her eyes moved to Conner. He'd not spoken with her since the other night but he had told her he wasn't going to let her leave him. Obviously, he didn't like Marlo wanting to stay in a dorm room with her. "I don't really care, boys, girls. It doesn't matter to me at all." She shrugged.

"It will be all girls." Logan commented, "But yes Marlo, I will secure you and Hayden a room right next door if possible. That way, if there is any trouble at all, you'll be right there to assist."

Eliza frowned at that, but shook it off. It wasn't her problem. She wasn't going to be attending anyway, let them discuss it all they liked, till they were blue in the face even. She would simply agree and play long.

She even went for a walk with her mother after dinner, a nice evening stroll down into the town and back, watched her chat to some of the people, smiled and said hello herself. Actively engaged with everyone.

Talked to her mother about that new sailboard, she wanted. Saw her mother light right up and tell her to find the perfect one and buy it. Discussed the option of a jet ski as well, though did state she had no idea what sort to buy.

Then she spent the rest of the evening talking about things that would seem like she was going to be staying. Was starting to make herself comfortable here, left her mother to go and sit with Marlo and his friends. Her mother had told her to discuss it with them. That was not her thing at all. This Eliza knew. It had been her father that was all for the outdoors and water sports. Her mother was more of a sit and read a book type of person.

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## Chapter 38

Conner POV

It annoyed him greatly to hear Marlo state that he and Hayden would bunk down with Eliza. That was not going to happen on his watch, there was no way in hell Marlo would ever be sharing a room with Eliza.

Though he had been completely surprised that she had apparently agreed to attend his university finally, had filled out the paperwork and submitted it along with the on-campus living form as well. Not that she would be living on campus either. Come this full moon he was going to claim her, and she'd be living with him in his suite, hopefully, by the time university started for her.

Would be claiming her as his goddess gifted even if she wasn't. They were already mated to her. All he had to do was mark her, but he couldn't go doing that till he'd laid eyes on her on the full moon. It wouldn't go down well with his father if he did it before then. They had rules to follow with humans. He could have s\*x with her all he liked, just couldn't go marking her. She needed to find out what he was first. Though even that was too late, she was bound to him now.

Though he could see that she didn't seem all that happy about being made to study here, but she was answering questions when asked. He pretty much let everyone else talk and ask all the questions. It was mostly Marlo and his group of friends. They were the other Gamma and Delta children. It seemed everyone had been called to have a massive family dinner. Usually, it was just the Alpha and his unit plus he and his unit at this table. Not tonight, it seemed.

She wasn't super excited about it, but then why would she be? It hadn't been her choice, was being made to go there and she knew it. She commented only once about it

not being where she wanted to go, but then had just said nothing after that. He could feel Atlas watching her, they were trying to figure out if she meant it.

Seemed more like she was just resigned to the idea of being stuck here and unable to leave. Which is what she was. He couldn't really expect much else, no-one here could, he thought. He only made one comment about her in a mixed dorm room, made sure to add that Marlo could have a room next door if he wanted.

He could feel Adams eyes on him the moment he stated, it wouldn't be Marlo and Hayden, but even Adam knew there were no mixed dorm rooms. After that, he just left it alone. He'd been staying away from EI, though that was hard to do now. Atlas wanted to crawl into her bed every bloody night, had woken up twice to his wolf strolling him down the hall to go to her room. Had managed to rein in his beast both times. His bloody wolf was going to out him if he wasn't careful.

After dinner, he was sitting around with his unit and a bunch of girls all on the front lawn and saw her walking with her mother. They were chatting about her getting a sailboard of her own. His attention was on their conversation, instead of his friends, it seemed she was looking to pick up a few things to do around here. He'd told her he'd get her a sailboard if she just told him what colour she wanted.

He didn't like it at all when Brittney suggested she talk to Marlo about helping her choose one, as they walked into the packhouse. He could do that himself, would like to help her pick one out, would be better if he did it. He would buy her a top of the line range like his was. He would much prefer if she came to him for those things. But he'd not told her that either, she wouldn't know it.

Atlas snarled right at the she-wolf that dropped herself into his lap, and smiled up at him. They'd been together before, but it was not going to happen ever again. His wolf was all aggression. And she was quick to move her a\*s off of him.

Though that one snarl at her, it drew everyone's attention right to him. He wasn't known to snarl at girls, just brush them off if he wasn't interested in a night with them. G\*\*\*\*\*d internally as he found Adam's eyes right on him, a single raised eyebrow at his response, or Atlas's response to having a she-wolf in his lap.

He'd not really been paying any attention to any of them while they were all lazing about relaxing and having a beer. Though he himself had not touched his beer either, he thought about apologising to that she-wolf, but didn't. Atlas didn't want anyone touching them but EI now. Didn't want her feeling anything if someone did either. Not that he knew if she would or wouldn't, that was still unknown to him. But his wolf was having none of it.

He stared right back at Adam, raised his own eyebrow at him as if to say 'what?' watched that man just shake his head ever so slightly, his arms were around a she-wolf, one of his regular girls. Heard that man ask her what she thought of EI? Voiced it out

loud for all to hear. Though he was staring right at Conner the whole time. Oh, now he knew that man knew or was pretty damned certain he was sure he knew.

“I don’t know, don’t go near her. Seems a bit...bitchy to me.”

Conners jaw tightened, he knew exactly what Adam was doing, he was trying to make Conner defend the girl, or get severely ticked off, which a Mate would do, would take full offense when someone insulted their Mate. He, as the future Alpha, would not stand for anyone, insulting his Mate. She would be the future Luna of the pack. It would be completely disrespectful and punishable as well.

Needed to keep his cool, he had a feeling Adam was going to be trying to push him into it. He wanted to know what he suspected, and it appeared he was out to find out the truth.

“Never does smile.” Adam nodded “Got that resting b\*\*\*h face too.”

Conner’s eyes narrowed right on him, “You’re insulting the Luna’s daughter, you know that right.” He stated flatly.

“It’s nothing you haven’t said yourself, now is it?” Adam smirked right at him.

He had him on that one. He had said that the day she’d arrived. “I wouldn’t let Brittney hear you say it, you might find yourself on the bad side of father. He doesn’t like it when his Mate is upset.”

“No Mate likes that.” Adam smiled at him. “They get all angry and want to beat the hell out of the one that upsets their Mate, regardless of rank.” Conner knew that in that one sentence, Adam was referring to Atlas trying to take a piece of his father after he’d scared the girl and she’d run off.

“Anyone else got an opinion on the Luna’s daughter, they want to voice?” Conner asked and glanced around the group he was sitting with. Kept his tone as light as he could, though there was a slight edge to it, he just couldn’t keep it out of his voice.

Saw several of their friends look right at him, most of them just snapped their mouths shut and shook their heads. They knew better, but Adam didn’t seem to care. “I think she’s a bit of a tease to be honest. Marlo said she was all friendly but then just gave him the brush off on their last date. Then there was that Xavier guy in California. She was playing with him too. Said he was her boyfriend.”

Conner could feel Atlas getting angry inside of him, that was a full insult to his Mate, who he knew was not interested in Marlo. She’d told him she didn’t want to date him, they’d heard that with their own ears. As for Xavier, he was nothing to her. He knew that. Though he couldn’t stop himself from glaring at Adam, which just made that man smile even more, it seemed he knew he was barely containing his beast.

“I think Marlo should get over himself” Conner grated out “From what I saw, he was itching to be all over Eliza, and now just is with someone else. Got tickets on himself and lost a few. Did she hurt his ego when she turned him down? I can only presume she did.”

“Why so angry Conner?” Adam shot right at him. “Did I upset you?”

“No Adam you didn’t.” he commented. “It’s my duty as her stepbrother to take care of her. Father told me I have to be a perfect gentleman if you recall. Behave myself and get over my human-hating fetish.”

“Ah, so your using Eliza, to better yourself, are you?”

He did not like that statement at all, it wasn’t just Atlas now that was mad. He could feel Atlas up inside his mind, knew everyone here was likely to sense that Atlas was now on the surface, but they were not using Eliza, in the manner that Adam was referring to, and he wanted to beat the living hell out of him for it for putting it in such a manner “Enough Adam.” He managed to grate out “Atlas doesn’t like your insult to us.”

“It’s only an insult if it’s true, now isn’t it?”

“This is your only warning Adam, there will be no others. Enough.” He grated.

Saw that man stare right at him, and then just shake his head and turn away to talk to the others, Adam likely thought that’s exactly what Conner was doing. The whole lot of them, the entire group had gone completely quiet. They all knew there was nearly an Alpha on Beta fight about to start.

Both Brayden and Cameron were looking right at him now as well, he’d never taken to his Beta before, they rarely argued.

He got up and walked off, couldn’t stay there or he was likely to try and have a piece of his best friend. Didn’t want that, also didn’t want his Gamma and Delta finding out, what she was to them at this point. Though he was certain that they were both going to now ask Adam what the hell was going on.

It probably would appear to Adam that he was using her now, let him tell them that, it would likely make sense to Brayden with what he’d felt roll off of Eliza the day she’d run away. They’d put it together that he’d been with her and likely tossed her aside. It wasn’t going to go down so well, but that is what they would expect of him, because she was a human.

Conner stalked off into the packhouse only to see her sitting with Marlo and the friends she had made. Marlo himself was sitting with his new girlfriend right on his lap. She was all smiles even though his eyes were on El. The man was trying to make her jealous, it

seemed. That 17-year-old she-wolf was oblivious to her own boyfriend's actions, or was trying to ignore them.

He could sort that out, with one quick mind-link to her, to let Willah know what Marlo was doing would do it, but if she was on Marlo's lap then he was leaving El alone. So, he was going to leave it as it was. Didn't think it was fair to Willah, but if she couldn't see it, that was her issue.

She should know better, had been out with Marlo before, he'd left her for another only about 6 months ago and now he was back with her. It wasn't going to end well for Willah. She had to remember what he'd done, that he'd hooked up with someone else after leaving her. But with the way she was looking at him, it was likely the girl was in love with him. She was going to forgive him all his errors, wasn't likely to go down so well if he left her again for another. Girls would only stand so much of that.

Male and female wolves tended to deal with it better than humans. If one wasn't your Mate, moving on was something that was expected at some point. The girl was only 6 months away from turning 18 but whether she turned out to be Marlo's actual Mate he had no idea. Though he could tell that Willah was hoping for that outcome. Likely why she'd gone back to him, she probably thought she was going to be his Mate.

Headed for his room, would take an early night for himself, needed it, his eyes were on El though, as the elevator doors started to close, 'Don't look at her like that.' He heard Marlo tell him via a mind-link.

Conner moved his eyes to the boy. It was a very bold statement sent to the future Heir of the pack, not something one would normally do, and he found that boy staring right at him 'Why do you care, you've moved on. Though Adam thinks Els a tease and a b\*\*\*h for what she did to you.' Saw anger flare right in the boy as the elevator door closed. He stepped out of it on the fifth floor and smiled to himself as he looked over the balcony. The boy was gone and so were half his friends. Likely he was going to have a piece of his brother.

Conner couldn't do it, but Marlo would, seems that the boy was indeed using Willah to try and make El jealous, not that it appeared to be working at all. She was strolling up the stairs, didn't seem to be concerned with what was going on, probably didn't know what was going on, she was texting on her phone as she headed upstairs. Half Marlo's friends had gone after him, including Willah it seemed, none of them knew what was going on. He watched her walk up the stairs, she was smiling, had to be Cordi, he thought to himself, she was her best friend.

Conner picked up yelling out the front with his wolfen hearing, Marlo and Adam arguing about the insult Adam had laid down. It wouldn't get all wolfed out. He'd never seen those two punch it out or wolf out against each other. They were quite close normally, though he did see his father's Beta Jared heading that way out the front door, he had been in the Alpha's office and he could likely hear his sons yelling at each other.



Watched from up there as the two of them were hauled into the building, by their own father, a hand locked onto each of them. He saw Adam look up and his eyes locked onto him, Conner smirked right at him, two could play that game. 'Low Conner, that was f\*\*\*\*\*g low of you.'

'You started it.' Conner sent right back 'Think twice next time on insulting me. Or EI for that matter.' Then he turned and walked away to his suite.

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## Chapter 39

EI POV

EI had planned on spending the morning down at the lake hanging out with her new friends, but Willah seemed to be ticked off at her, and this appeared to be making everyone else annoyed with her as well, and when EI had asked her why? They'd been getting along for several days without issue. EI was actually glad that Marlo had a girlfriend, he was less attached to her, didn't hit on her. Hadn't since he'd dropped her off on Saturday night. It was actually a bit of a relief to be able to just hang out and not worry that he was going to be right there next to her all the time. Would just go off and hang out with his friends instead of ignoring them to be next to her.

Willah had muttered something about EI staying away from Marlo. EI had told her she was not interested in Marlo at all. They were just friends, that she had told this to Marlo many times, that she meant it. Told Willah she thought that Willah and Marlo looked good together, which she did. The girl was clearly smitten, and everyone could see it, surely including Marlo.

Willah had just glared at her for a long moment and then stalked off, then she had been standoffish all morning, so had most of the girls in the group and they were all glaring at her now. She'd not done anything wrong, certainly hadn't gone near Marlo at all in that way. Had meant what she said, by 10 am she'd been over all the glaring and had packed up her things and just walked off into the woods.

She didn't even know why they were all suddenly hating on her but, if they didn't want her around, she wouldn't be around, no one had stopped her from leaving, not even asked where she was going off to. Not even Marlo himself, though Willah didn't look to

be happy with him either. She could only put it down to something Marlo must have said.

That maybe he still liked her, and Willah had found out, but it was now clear to her that they weren't actually her friends, were only hanging out with her because Marlo had been nice to her, he'd told her it wasn't because Logan had told him to. But now she wondered if that wasn't actually the case. She'd actually been herself around them, liked most of them, but it seems none of them actually liked her at all. Still didn't belong even when she did try. What was the point of it all? She knew she was trying to make it look like she was making friends, had actually thought she had made some friends, liked most of them. But now it seemed not.

Marlo, it seemed, was only interested in her if he could get something from her, and he was now fully aware he wasn't going to get that, though she'd still been able to hang out with them for the past few days, he'd started staying away from her. Now all his friends were as well. Had to remind herself they were his friends. Willah's friends.

She was the outsider, not one of them. Put her stuff down in her room and sank down on the couch, looked at the calendar she had on the wall and closed her eyes, reminded herself not long now. She was going to get out of this place. Don't take it to heart, what did it matter in the grand scheme of things if no one here really liked her? If they were all just told to be friends with her and so had done that, pretended to be her friend.

The problem was she did actually like them, they were a nice group of people her own age to hang out with, or at least she'd thought so. It seemed she was better off by herself, her eyes moved back to that calendar and pian touched her. She had to get them to let her out for that weekend, she couldn't stay here for it.

Got up and went off to find her mother. In her office the text came back. She'd gone there and the door had been closed, she'd knocked on it and her mother had opened the door and asked her to please wait. She was in a meeting.

EI sat, there were no chairs here, slid down the wall and just stared aimless at the wall opposite her, took nearly 30 minutes for her mother to come out of that office, saw two others come out before her. She stood up as they left and looked at her mother.

"What's the matter, EI?" she asked, frowning at her.

"It's father's birthday in just over a week."

Saw her mother sigh "I know when it is."

"I want to go and visit him." EI stated, knew this wasn't going to go over so well.

"EI, I don't know if that's such a good idea."

“He’s my father and it’s his birthday,” she could feel the pain welling up, “Why can’t I go to see him. I miss him.”

“Honey, you can talk to him anywhere, you don’t need to go to his grave to do that.”

“I want to, I should be allowed to.” She shot at her mother.

“El, I know your upset, honey. But you might run off again.”

“And go where? I have nothing left. You gave it all to Logan, remember.”

She saw her mother sigh “Look El, I don’t think you should. Honestly, I don’t think you need to go there. You and your father were always hiking, and camping. Wouldn’t a better place to feel connected to him be here in the woods.”

“Yes, it would, but I’m not allowed in there either.”

“Of course you are, just not at night.”

“Which is exactly when I would feel the most connected to him, we would go camping together, spend the nights talking under the stars. With him telling me about the insects he could hear and what they were.”

“Perhaps I can talk to Logan about that, have him or Conner perhaps take you into the woods on the day.”

“Yay.” She dripped with sarcasm. “Go out there to feel closer to my own father, only to have the new family stare at me the whole time.”

“El, California is a long way away.”

“I know that, I’d only drive there, stay at Cordi’s for the weekend and then drive back.”

“On your own.”

“Yes, I don’t want people I don’t know around me when I want to be alone with my thoughts, to be able to grieve openly. I wouldn’t be able to do that with them around.”

Her mother was just staring at her, didn’t really say anything much for a long time. “I’ll discuss it with Logan.”

“Of course, you will, can’t make a decision on your own anymore.” El snapped and walked off.

How could she say no, it was the first birthday since his death, and all she wanted to do was go to his grave and sit there, be with him. Feel close to the man that had loved her, respected her choices and wanted her to have the world.

But no, nothing mattered to her mother anymore, just Logan and this prison she was now made to live in. She was making the effort to fit in, done everything they expected of her, maybe she'd come around too fast, and they just didn't believe it. But this was the only card she had to play to get out before university started.

She was getting out whether they liked it or not, flopped down on her bed and stared out the window, was not likely going to be allowed to drive herself to California and she knew it. Logan was going to say no. "Fine," she muttered and sat herself up, yanked her laptop over to her and used that bank card he'd given her, bought a sailboard and a kayak and a jet ski. Had them all expressed delivered, racked up quite the debt for that man to pay.

Was still online browsing sporting equipment when she saw a sale on Kite surfing equipment as well. That had been something her father was going to do with her this summer before she went to Italy, bought one of them as well. Had only tried it once, but if Logan asked her mother about the purchases, she would say yes to all those things, that they were things she'd done with her father.

She had access to unlimited funds he'd told her, so let's just see if that was true, she was going to use it, she was going to find a way out of here. If going across the lake, was it, so be it. She wasn't going to be able to swim, it was just too far. She could use that jet ski or sailboard, kayak even, just needed to get one of them down to the lake, without anyone knowing was all, or perhaps get it down there and leave it down there on the shoreline. To be used the next day.

Was getting herself organised to leave, changed the dates on her aeroplane ticket and paid the fee for it with her normal card, not something Logan could track her with, no one even knew she had purchased that ticket, other than Cordi and Collin. She knew they would help her and if they opted not to, well she would have to go on her own. She didn't really want them getting into trouble anyway. They'd not appeared to get along with Conner, though their interactions had been more than weird, and now Cordi was always bringing the man, up.

Though the plan had been devised that she was to tell her mother and Logan that she was staying at Cordi's for the two days in California, then a day and half to get there, and a day and half to get back. That would give her a 5 day head start on anyone looking for her, if she could gain their trust that was. Didn't much look like that was going to happen right this minute. So, leaving her phone here, and only taking her own debit card, plus her identification was all that she really needed. They could all go into her backpack.

Thankfully, she'd spent some spring vacations with her grandma and had seen the way she tracked people down, had gone with her on stake outs once or twice. Her grandma was amazing, just like her dad.

Though she didn't think that her grandma would worry about hunting her or tracking her down, for her mother or Logan, if she actually knew she was not missing. Was going to have to call her and tell her but was going to leave it as late as possible. Didn't want them going to her and harassing her about where she was.

Sat and looked at the map of Utah, of Bear Lake itself, the roads that lead in and out and around it, especially on the other side of the lake. There was a road that went all the way around it, which was good. Though if she could get that sail board or kayak here by then and down to the lake, she could use it to get all the way to the most southern end of the lake. That in itself posed a problem. There was only one road out from there and it ran right past the gates of the gated community.

Needed to find transport and didn't know anyone in either of the towns to the south. Hadn't even been there at this point. Wasn't likely to any time before she was getting out of here either.

She closed it all down and lay there on her bed, stared up at the ceiling. The other question that bugged her was Conner. How was she going to escape that man? She didn't usually go downstairs for breakfast, and he would go off to the university before she went downstairs most of the time. So, if she left on a day when he was not here was busy himself. That was likely going to help her. She shook her head at his words as they popped into her head. 'I know what you smell like'. Then he had actually smelled her, that was one of the weirdest things she'd ever heard anyone say.

Though the way he'd taken her after that, so possessive and aggressive, it almost felt like to her that he was trying to tell her she belonged to him. That he was not going to stand for her leaving, he'd been like a bloody animal, only problem was, she'd like it. More than liked it, wanted more of it, had told him so when he'd asked her. It wasn't even like they'd not had s\*x in weeks, not even half an hour before that she had had s\*x with him, and she'd been in control. He'd told her to take what she wanted, and hadn't she. How could he be so bloody needy in such a short amount of time?

She closed her eyes and sighed heavily. Not even knew what was going on with that man anymore. He didn't like her, but he couldn't, it seemed, keep his hands to him bloody self, and she knew she had no control anymore where he was concerned. So was in real trouble there. El knew if he walked into this room, she wouldn't say no to him. Hell, she knew she'd let him do whatever the hell he wanted to her.

'Want me, need me, crave me.' Popped into her head and she pulled a pillow over her face and g\*\*\*\*\*d into it.

Wondered what would happen if she texted him, she wanted to have s\*x? Would he come to her and have s\*x with her? Would he ignore it altogether? Would he just shut her down? Thought about that and then shook it off 'Eliza don't be so stupid.' She chastised herself, that was just asking for trouble. Was only thinking about texting him because she was thinking about s\*x itself. Had to shake it off and not think about it. Thinking about it was making her want it, that was all.

Got herself up out of the bed and headed down the stairs. It was only mid-afternoon; she would go for a walk in the woods. At least, out there she was all on her own, with no one bothering her, and didn't mind the solitude. El strolled along at her own pace, into the woods on the western side of the gated community. The only thing she did like about this place was that it was completely surrounded by the woods, that she could just walk 5 or 10 minutes and be in the woods.

Found a nice place to sit down, deep in the woods well away from anyone. Her mother had told her to be closer to her father, to just go into the woods. So, she would, would go there all the time and just be alone with her thoughts.

She leaned herself up against a fallen tree and just sat with her eyes closed, and listened to the forest around her, it was something she had done with her dad often. They would just sit with their eyes closed and listen to the sounds of nature. Her father would tell her what those sounds they were hearing were. Knew everything about the forest and what he didn't know or couldn't answer would delve into research and find the answer for her to impart the news.

She listened and wondered what the insects were, though she'd listened to him, she'd never really absorbed the information, just liked hearing him talk. His voice had been rich and deep, would have made for a really good voice over person. Or someone you just wanted to listen to. She had loved growing up hearing him read her tales in children's books.

Though his favourite things to read to her were the mythical legends of Foxes. Mostly of the nine tailed foxes, some were said to be evil and others benevolent, some were neutral. That though depended on the culture of where the tale originated, but he told her they were just misunderstood creatures. Most likely. Loved to show her pictures of them, he had even drawn her a few sketches himself of what he thought they looked like.

He had told her once, that they were hidden from the world for fear of humans. Had nudged her and said "I'm going to find one someday. You can help me." She'd laughed at him, and he'd made her promise she would. Always told her when they were out in the woods to keep her eyes and ears open for any signs of foxes.

They were his favourite animals. Told her that out of all the fox species out there, his favourite one was the silver fox, showed her lots of pictures of them, with their black fur

and all that white colouration through them, so many different variations. He thought they were beautiful, so did she for that matter.

He'd had many books on foxes. His own mother had instilled that love of foxes into him. She had a whole study filled with pictures of foxes, of all colours and species. There was nothing prettier in her grandma or fathers' eyes than a fox and when she saw one for the first time and had heard it Gekkering, she'd squeezed her father's hand so tightly, and looked right up at him filled with excitement. She'd been like 5 at the time but still recalled that one memory easily.

Actually, recalled him smiling right down at her, at the excitement she'd felt at seeing her first silver fox and hearing all the noises and sounds it made. They'd sat quietly and he'd told her what each noise meant, why the foxes were doing that. Displaying their dominance with vocal noises because they didn't want to fight each other.

Her father had installed that excitement and joy of seeing them into her, just like his mother had done to him. They'd always been on the lookout for foxes when out camping. Her father knew where they lived and was good at tracking them. Said he got his tracking skills from his mother and, her grandma would just proudly state, "of course you did, son."

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## Chapter 40

Conner POV

Atlas watched as El strolled off into the woods, she was just walking, a pair of shorts and a tee-shirt on over her swimmers, and a simple pair of flat sandals. She didn't look too happy, no smile and was not with Marlo and his friends either. They were all just getting back from the lake, pulling up in their trucks, and getting out.

He'd just pulled up himself, been out at meetings all morning in Salt Lake City, he'd left that morning at 5am, to spend a few hours with his grandfather and the previous unit, watching them hold meetings with affiliated packs and with the humans they dealt with. It had been a very quiet drive. Adam still wasn't talking to him.

He'd gotten reprimanded by not only his father but by the current Alpha for calling the man's stepdaughter a tease and a b\*\*\*h. Things Marlo had relayed in that office, as a way of explaining their sudden fighting out the front of the packhouse last night.

Adam had no comeback for it apparently, but had stalked into Conners' suite and glared right at him. He didn't even knock on the door. Conner had been expecting it, knew it was coming. Was sitting on his couch with the TV on just waiting for the fall out.

Adam had glared right at him and snapped. "What the f\*\*k, Conner?"

He'd stated right back and, for the first time in their lives, had pulled rank on his best friend, "You might want to remember I am the Alpha, the Heir to the pack, and you Adam, are my Beta. Disrespect will not be tolerated at times." Had let his Alpha Aura roll right out of him as well.

Adam had stared right at him completely shocked by this turn of events, but he needed to put that man in his place. "If I lose the position Adam, El gets it, which meant you just disrespected your possible future Heir as well. Might want to check your attitude around the girl."

"Is she your Mate?" Adam had asked outright. There was no one else in this room and it was sound proof. He wouldn't be game to voice that out in the pack for any and all to hear.

"I've not scented her, been nowhere near her on a full moon." He stated simply.

"That doesn't mean you, an Alpha Wolf, wouldn't pick it up, Conner. You've been different since she got here?"

"I have." He agreed, was not going to deny that, couldn't deny it. "I have not scented the girl out Adam."

"Are you expecting to?"

"I don't know." He shrugged.

"You don't like Marlo around her," Adam muttered.

"I do not and for good reason, your brother will just f\*\*k her and move on when the next full moon comes and she's not his Mate. Humans are different to us, she won't take it kindly. Father wants her to stay. Do you think she will if that happens? Or will she just run away again."

"You don't know she's not his Mate? He could well be. He likes the girl Conner, really likes her. Case and point, that bloody fight we just had because you told him I called her a b\*\*\*h and a tease. Came outside to beat the hell out of me. A very Mate thing to do."



“Hmm, and Willah, if he thinks EI is his Mate, why is Willah suddenly on his lap in front of EI? Don’t you think that’s wrong?”

“I don’t know what happened between the two of them, Conner. Or why he’s suddenly with Willah again?” The man shook his head “He’s looking for trouble.”

“He’ll get it from me. If he touches EI, Adam. I heard him myself, he wants to have s\*x with her. I think Marlo thinks it will be easy because she’s human and, well, most humans fall at our feet. Your little brother is not interested in her being his Mate, just a f\*\*k is all he wants.”

Adam was staring hard at him now. They both knew Marlo was the type to get about, he could be the perfect gentleman but had bagged nearly half the she-wolves his age, he was a good-looking boy and the she-wolves liked him. “He touches EI. I’ll put him in the cells myself, personally tell father and his Luna why. I’m betting after the beating he gets he’ll be in there for at least a month.”

Adam glared right at him, he knew Conner not only could do, had the authority to do it. He would do it. He was not messing around. He watched that man stalk out of his suite, stated before he could close the door. “You might want to warn your little brother Adam, to steer clear of trouble. He can be her friend, I don’t care about that, but he does anything to make her run away. I’ll be putting him in the hands of my father.” The door had banged shut after that.

Now they had spent the day in Salt Lake City, the drive was quiet in both directions, his Beta was still ticked off. But he had to know he was right, just didn’t like the fact that Conner had pulled rank on him was all. They’d attended their meetings as expected, sat and had lunch with their grandfathers and returned to the pack.

Conner had driven the whole time, not once asked Adam to drive, which he would normally do, it was something they would normally share. Watched his Beta stalk inside the packhouse and away from him, ticked off still. He was going to have to get over it at some point. Likely when he found out the truth that EI was his Mate and then could understand completely Conners actions.

His eyes moved to Marlo’s and the boy only made eye contact for a few seconds before moving off in the direction of the packhouse himself. He and all his male friends followed him, as Conner pulled out the boxes of files his grandfather had asked him to bring back to the packhouse to be archived.

Though it was not Marlo that had his attention it was Willah and her friends, who he noticed were all casually strolling off in the same direction as EI, he now realised, they were all headed for the western woods, instead of following Marlo and their boyfriends. Trouble was brewing and he knew it, she wasn’t with them like normal.

EI had been dressed though as if she had been with them, he'd seen the swimmers under her clothes or the halter neck, tie that was dangling out the top of the back of her tee-shirt, it was likely she had been with them at some point. But now wasn't and she'd looked unhappy.

His eyes were on Willah, who had been there when Marlo and Adam had been yelling about EI last night, could well be that Willah was jealous, or hadn't liked what she'd heard. 'I don't like it' Atlas muttered at him.

Conner didn't like it either, tracked them right to the edge of the woods and felt Atlas snarl inside his mind. Four she-wolves verse one human, that had no idea what was even going on. 'Father Willah is about to take her friends and take to Eliza in wolf form.'

'What?' his father's voice practically roared back at him.

'Get your a\*s out here now. Western pack woods you got like maybe 5 minutes. There is more than one.'

Atlas was snarling at him to go and deal with it. But Conner knew Atlas was likely to kill them all. His father, on the other hand, was not likely to. Saw him and his entire unit come out the front of the packhouse, at full wolfen speed. He'd taken Conner's words seriously, pointed right to where he could see the four girls shifting.

His father and his entire unit were gone, Conner sighed 'We'll check on her in a minute, Atlas, trust father won't allow her to be hurt.'

Atlas was prowling inside his mind as he walked towards the packhouse himself, carrying those boxes he'd be putting in the Alpha's office. Saw his whole unit come outside to see what was going on. They all looked right at him, but it was Adam who spoke first "Conner, what happened?"

"Willah and her friends are going to have a piece of Eliza, I think."

He saw all three of them looking at him now, eyes wide. "What, why?" Cameron asked.

"I wasn't here?" he shrugged.

He saw Adam's eyes glaze over and watched him then just turn and walk away, go off on his own mission. Likely to find Marlo to find out what the hell happened this morning while they were off pack territory, a very Beta thing to do. He might be mad at Conner but, he still did his job. Stayed put in the packhouse foyer for his father to return, all four girls were marched in with him. All looked unhappy. Likely already been yelled at.

Conner strolled right into his father's office to find out just what had happened and felt Atlas's anger notch up quite a bit. At Willah's teary story, that she was just jealous that

Marlo always paid El more attention, that she just wanted to have words with her. None in the room believed that.

His father had stated “Really, going off in wolf form to have words with a human who knows nothing. How do you think that would work?”

She’d said nothing at all, and he’d watched his father grate out “The truth or I’ll order it out of each of you.”

All those girls’ heads had whipped up, and every one of them had turned and looked at Willah. They knew his father would do it, also knew it would hurt for him to do it. That if they resisted even the smallest part, it would hurt even more. Also, they knew that if he had to order it out of them, they would be punished for disrespect and trying to lie to him.

“Fine, I wanted to scare her, was going to scare her with my wolf.” Willah muttered.

“Just scare?” his father snarled at her. They all knew the rules, no shifting around Eliza, she had no idea what they all were. He wasn’t yet ready to tell her, wouldn’t be telling her till she was settled and comfortable here. Happy to be here, only then would he tell her, he couldn’t do it while there was no trust, or the girl would just run away once more. She was already considered a flight risk.

Conner watched as Willah’s head bowed as his father’s aura rolled over her. There was no warning for the girl, she was about to be Alpha Ordered for the truth and her sudden bowing down showed it. “Just scare her, was it?” his father was up on his feet towering over the girl. Infuriated that one of his own pack members would go against his express orders not to shift around Eliza.

“N..no, I was..going to hunt her.”

“All of your friends were going to help you, were they?” everyone in the room could feel the anger rolling off of him now.

“Yes.” She answered as she fell all the way to the floor, both her and her wolf whined in pain.

Atlas was ready to kill all of them inside his mind. “Father, I will go check on El.” He muttered before his wolf was ripped out of him and attacking those that would dare to even think about doing harm to his Mate. An unclaimed human, the future Luna to their very own pack. If his father knew that, their heads would be coming off.

“Go.” His father stated, “I’ll deal with them.”

Conner was gone, Atlas ripped out of him the moment he was outside the packhouse, gone off into the woods to hunt his own Mate. It didn't take long to track her scent, didn't take long for his beast to stealthily stalk her either.

'Father, she is fine walking about, unaware I think of what went on around her.' her let his father know.

'Thank you, Conner.' The link was cut.

Atlas stayed well clear of her, but watched her and followed her as she wandered, seemed to be just strolling along exploring the paths that went through the woods. They sat when she sat, watched her just sit down in the middle of the woods and close her eyes, felt Atlas tilt his head to the side as he watched her. His wolf was curious as to what she was doing. So was Conner for that matter, though to him it just appeared she'd found a place that was quiet and was just taking time for herself out in the woods.

Kind of made him happy that she would do that, he always went to the woods when he wanted to be alone. Enjoyed being in the woods as did Atlas, it seemed that they had something in common after all. Atlas lay down on the ground and just watched her, was happy to just watch her.

For about an hour then his beast was on the move. A slow belly crawl towards her, made Conner nearly laugh at his beasts attempt to get closer to her, without her knowing, he was trying to be quiet and be as small as possible. Could even feel the excitement of his wolf at getting that bit closer to her as well.

Saw her open her eyes at the sound of movement, his own hearing picked up the sound of footfall coming this way and Atlas stood to his full height. Eliza's eyes moved right to his wolf, who was now looking for the incoming, knew it was wolf could detect the paws hitting the ground, reached out for his pack tethers to find out who it was, just a teen he realised.

Opened a link right to him and told him to 'Stop, Eliza is nearby.'

'Sorry Alpha. Thought I was deep enough into the woods.'

'It's alright, just go back.' Kept hold of that tether and felt them go the other way.

Atlas's attention was on El once more. She was standing now, his head tilted as he looked right at her, she was staring right at him, she'd been terrified by him the last time she'd seen him. Atlas sat and stared at her, as she stood and stared at him.

Then when she moved to take a step, he stood 'No chasing today, Atlas.' Conner told him.

Watched as she froze at his wolf's movement when she moved, stared wide-eyed when Atlas decided to pad on over towards her, not stalking her just walking along. She was just off the path a few meters. He stopped on the path and looked right at her, she was backed right up against that fallen tree, both her hands on it behind her.

Atlas's head tilt up a little and he smelled her, smelled the air around her, tilt his head to the left and then just trot on by passed her as though she was of no concern to him at all. Once he was passed her, ran off into the woods at full wolfen speed to a stash of clothes and shifted them back.

'You are going to get us both in trouble, do you know that?'

Heard his wolf chortle, he liked playing with her, it seemed. At least he wasn't out to chase her today. She'd not looked terrified either, scared and tense, ready to run as well, but she hadn't. Conner pulled shorts on and ducked back through the woods in the direction that she was. She was still standing there up against that tree. Hadn't really moved at all.

"Ei?" he asked as he casually jogged towards her, like he was just out on his regular run.

She turned and looked at him, sighed, even he smiled, couldn't help it. She was relieved to see him, and he knew it. "What's wrong?" He asked, though he knew what was wrong, he couldn't let her know that. He stopped just a few meters from her.

"That big grey wolf, was here. Came right up to me."

"I saw him, down the track a ways, running off in the other direction. You're alright?"

She nodded "It smelled me."

"Hmm, you are in his territory again, perhaps he recognises you from the last time you saw him."

"I don't know about that." She bit her lip, and looked about her once more.

"Maybe he's just trying to learn your scent." He smiled. "You do smell nice."

Saw those eyes of hers move right to his they were a little wide, and he knew he'd just reminded her of Atlas smelling her in human form, then mating the hell out of her the last time they had been out in the woods. "Do you want me to walk you back?" He asked as he strolled towards her.

"No." she shook her head "I can find my own way."

Walked right over to her and saw her back up a little, put a hand on either side of her on that tree she was now leaning back on, looked right down at her “It’s getting late, perhaps I should EI.”

“No, you shouldn’t.” She shook her head.

Conner smiled right down at her, he knew she was no longer talking about him walking her back, was telling him he shouldn’t touch her. “What if I want to?” He murmured softly, lowered his mouth to her ear “and I do want to.” His lips brushed her ear and he heard her suck in a breath. Smiled to himself, smiled even more when she ducked under his arm and ran away from him. Closed his eyes for just a minute and listened to her retreating footsteps, he heard Atlas growl all playful inside of him. Then turned and looked right at her, running away from him, “Don’t run EI, I like chasing my prey.” He called out after her.

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