

The Unclaimed Human Luna

Chapter 41

EI POV

EI couldn't be this close to him, knew what would happen, she would end up bloody naked, is what. She felt her heart race as he told her "I do want to." His tone implied he was not talking about walking her back to the apartment complex. No, he was definitely talking about having his way with her. She couldn't stay there with him even one more minute or she might find herself naked up against this very fallen tree he had her caged into.

She ducked under his arm and ran away from him, it was all she could think of to do. She turned and looked back at him when he told her not to run, that he liked to chase his prey. She was his prey, and she knew it the minute she saw him smile right at her and her heart hammered inside her chest as she saw him roll his shoulders and stretch out, just knew he was readying to run after her.

Crap, he was actually going to chase her, and she knew it. 'I'm so screwed,' she thought, and ran down the path heading back to the apartment building, was not wearing the right shoes for running from him, only had her beach sandals on. Though even she knew she was never going to make it there, even if she was wearing running shoes, she was not a runner. He, on the other hand, ran all the time, from what she could tell. He was always out here in the woods running in just those shorts and nothing else.

It had also taken her an hour or so to just walk out there, to where she was now, and she was not going to be able to outrun him. He was taller and had longer legs, and enjoyed running from what she'd seen. She might, if she was lucky, make ten minutes of running on and off, if that, before she was going to be stumbling around exhausted and needing to just lay down and rest.

She saw him appear on the path in front of her, just a few meters ahead of her, she skidded to a stop at his smirk, and stood standing there staring at him. He was all tense and ready to go again, she realised after about 30 seconds of neither of them moving while she tried to catch her breath.

"Run Eliza, it's fun for me to chase you." he told her, and she could hear the amusement in his voice, he actually wanted her to run, she realised.

She shook her head 'no' at him, didn't think it was a good idea, she was going to wind up naked at some point, and she knew it. Saw him lunge at her and shrieked and ran into the woods, right off the path altogether and heard him laugh. He was actually having a good time, chasing her.

She was cut off by him many times over the next 30 minutes or so. He never once touched her, just shot out of nowhere and smiled right at her. Even when she was exhausted, and reached out to lean on a tree, he didn't stop to let her catch her breath, launched himself right at her both his hands out as if to grab her. He was still smiling at her every time, he would just appear in front of her, she never saw him run past her. Had no idea where he was until he was suddenly just there before her.

When she looked behind her, he wasn't there, looked all around her and couldn't see him, heard him laugh at times, and then he was just gone, only to be right in front of her a few seconds later. She couldn't keep track of him out there in the woods, even when he was laughing and she turned to look, didn't see him. He was too bloody fast.

He had to know every inch of this place to be able to do that, she thought to herself, was never going to be able to get away from him. "Conner stop." She gasped at him finally, was doubled over and really struggling to breath, had a massive stitch in her side, her lungs were burning, and her chest was heaving, even her throat was burning as she tried to suck desperately needed air into her lungs.

"Awe you can't run anymore." He chuckled "We'll work on that."

El let herself sag down to the ground, wasn't even on a path anymore, just somewhere out in the middle of the woods, who the hell knew where. "You're crazy." She gasped "why would you want to chase me?"

She saw him sink down on the ground next to her, he was still smiling, he wasn't even breathing hard, not even puffed at all, she realised. "I like to run, El, and chasing you. Well, that's just fun for me." He smiled right at her, those blue eyes of his right on hers, he looked really happy right this minute, she realized, as he smiled at her, truly happy.

"For you." She muttered and let herself finally just flop all the way down to the ground, to really catch her breath. "Do you even know where we are?" she muttered a minute later.

"Of course, I do." He chuckled as he looked around the area "I know every inch of these woods, I grew up here. We're not lost, just..." saw him turn and look right at her "Well away from everyone else." He drawled softly, practically purred those words at her as his blue eyes turned right on her.

"No." she shot at him, understood his meaning, but it was too late, found herself pinned underneath him, stared right up at him as he knelt above her "It's been a while El, don't you want to? I want to." His voice was all deep and husky.

Shook her head up at him, didn't trust herself to speak at all. Saw him smile and felt his fingers trail softly down her neck, in a gentle caress, as his eyes moved to her mouth, "Are you sure El?" he murmured, "I could spend hours with you." found his mouth right on her ear "pleasure you all evening, do everything you want, you'd only have to ask, I would do it."

Shook her head 'no.' once more. Hear him chuckle softly in her ear, "I don't believe you, your heart is racing." Those blue eyes of his looked right down at her and then his mouth touched hers softly and a low growl came from him as his body leaned down to hers. Then he was just up off the ground, a heavy sigh came from him "you're right." He said after a minute of silence "Come on up, before I get carried away."

He helped her up and turned her around and walked her through the woods until they came to a path. "Follow that path, it will take you home. I need a minute to calm down." He told her.

Her eyes moved to him, she bit her l*p as she tried not to think about looking down to see if she was right about what he meant. Then just found his mouth on hers a second later and her whole body yanked up against his as his arms slid around her and held her to his body, gasped as his hard c**k met with her stomach, and he was kissing her slowly, put her away from him a moment later, "Go El before I change my mind and seduce you." then he was gone himself walking the other way, away from her.

She turned and headed off down the path. The man was completely crazy, it seemed, chased her all over the place and she knew he had been going to seduce her, would have been able to, easily so at that. She had no energy to fight him off, wasn't likely to either, likely to just let him have all of her for as long as he wanted. It did seem that was how it always went.

El got back to the apartment complex and headed for her room to shower. She didn't know what to make of anything anymore, was so bloody confused about Conner nowadays it wasn't funny. He was a bit different, smiled a lot at her now, but mostly he was still the same. She'd seen that he'd beat her back and was already in the foyer of the apartment building, hadn't even so much as acknowledged her presence, didn't even look at her. Was back to ignoring her once more. She didn't understand him.

She showered and changed, ate dinner in her room, even though her mother requested that she come downstairs for a meal, just answered, "I'm tired, I'll get an early night." Her mother had then really tried to get her to come downstairs. Went so far as to come up and knock on her door and speak to her in person, she wasn't alone either, Logan was with her.

She'd told them she was just tired, had been out hiking all afternoon and was just going to make something light to eat, watch a little TV and then crash out. They were both frowning at her like they were unhappy with her. She sighed "Why do we have to all eat together all the time? I have my own apartment for a reason, remember. If you want me

to be around for family dinners, now that I have my own place, why don't we just schedule a particular day of the week, like Sundays or something. Isn't that what normal families would do once the children move out of the home?"

"You're still here with us, El." Her mother sighed.

"But I have got my own place, so not living with you. So, once a week dinners are fine with me."

"Eliza, your mother and I would like you to spend time with us. Meals are a good way to catch up at the end of every day. Conner and the boys do their own thing, but we all eat dinner together every night."

"That's nice for you. I'm glad that you're all so close. We're not so close, Logan. I honestly don't want to have dinner with you and your CEO's every night. That is not my thing. I usually eat dinner while chatting to my friends back in California."

"Please come down for dinner, El."

"I've got plans for dinner. With Cordi and Collin. We're all going to watch the same show and chat online about it. So no thank you." she'd closed the door and prayed that they would just stay away.

It was weird the way they all ate dinner together, and every night? Didn't these people want to just go home and get away from the boss? They already had to live here with him. Why did they have to eat with him every night as well?

Shook it off. Was not her problem, it was not something she was about to go and start doing, likely wasn't actually welcome either. She was also actually a little on the tired side from Conner chasing her around in the woods.

She definitely knew that he didn't want her around for dinner, just wanted to get into her bed was all, didn't want anything else from her at all, just s*x and that was it. He was not interested in getting to know her in way, shape or form. Sighed heavily, she really did have to get out of this place and soon. Get away from him.

Go back to her normal life, where she could forget about that man and this place, what he'd said to her, the fake people here inside this place. She would get away move to the other side of the world and immerse herself in her Italian side, steep herself in the culture over there and likely live there for a long time.

Didn't think that coming back here would be an option, not even for a visit, didn't think if she managed to actually get out of this place and get away, coming back would go down so well at all. Likely to be locked up for real, nope she could live in Italy, had lots of family over there on her father's side, knew her father had many cousins, though they were all back in Italy.

She'd met a few of them growing up, had gone over there for holidays with him and her grandma, they'd all been happy to meet her, it would be nice to catch up with them in person while she was over there, instead of chatting to them online all the time. Was going to do that, she would get their numbers and addresses from her grandma so she could surprise them when she got there. That would be nice. El knew her grandma wouldn't hesitate to give them to her, would want to know she was safe over there.

Keep track of her, via the family, which she didn't mind, because she would be allowed to do as she pleased, go where she wanted all the time, just have to check in with grandma weekly. She would have her freedom over there and she knew it. She couldn't wait to get out of here and go and see her cousins, she had always loved being in Italy on holidays.

Not something her mother would do all the time, she often just went with her dad and grandma. Though her father's family, they'd all liked her mother as well from what she could tell. But her mother was American born and bred, loved it here more than over there. Whereas El had really liked it over there, she felt connected to all of them for some reason. Her father had just smiled at her and told her it was just because she was their kin.

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Chapter 42

Conner POV

Conner opened the door to Eliza's room and his eyes landed right on her on the bed. She was completely naked, and the smell of arousal filled his sense of smell. He breathed it in and smiled to himself as he closed the door. She smelled so damn good, enjoyed opening her door to not only seeing this, but smelling her as well.

He could see that her body was arched up and she had one hand between her thighs, that vibrator of hers was on and rocking against her clit, she was moaning softly to herself in the room. He walked across the room, pulling his clothes off and knelt down on the bed and saw those silver-grey eyes of hers turn right to him, as his hand slid up her thigh slowly to take control of that toy.

He smiled right at her and murmured "Can I help you, Eliza?" his voice was all deep and husky as he leaned down to k**s her, softly. She didn't try to pull away from him at all and pressed her h**s up to meet his use of that toy on her. M****d right into his mouth.

He felt her arms wind their way around his neck and her hands slid into his hair as she pulled him down for a deeper k**s. She wanted him and he knew it. He also knew he could do a better job than that toy of hers. His body would create more pleasure than that thing ever could for her. He tossed that toy across the bed and positioned himself directly above her, slid his hard c**k through her already wet folds, and heard her sigh softly into his mouth.

Her whole body moved against his, as his mouth slid down her neck in soft k****s, trailed k****s all the way down her body to taste her, teased her clit with the tip of his tongue, as his hands slid over her body all the way down to her h**s. To grip onto them to hold her down, so he could enjoy the taste of her, for as long as he liked, his tongue slid over her clit, through her folds and dipped inside of her, the scent of her arousal increased dramatically with his tongue dipping inside of her, it enveloped him and he g*****d 'f**k El.' then devoured her completely till she was crying out in pleasure, her hands twisted in the sheets as her o****m crashed over her.

Then he moved up her body, kissing her with slow but deep k****s, all the way up nipped softly at her breasts and teased her harden n*****s with both his hands and mouth, caressed them and took them one at time into his mouth to suck and nip at them, before sliding up her neck, bit the crook of her neck right where he was going to mark her, all teasingly and playful and felt her hands gripping to his arms, relished in the scent of her arousal increasing around him. He trailed hungry k****s up her neck to finally look down at her and smiled as he slid his hard c**k against her once more, "I want you El." He told her simply, as he teased her clit with the tip of his c**k, rubbed it against her, in light strokes. Then leaned down and kissed her long and slow, slowed his movement down till he was sliding all the way through her wetness, long full strokes, letting her feel all of him how big he was and how hard he was for her, just how much he wanted her.

Enjoyed hearing her moaning and sighing right into his mouth, the way her hands were now sliding over his chest and then down to his waist, slid lower and he lifted himself up so she could touch him, slide her own hand along his hard c**k. G*****d himself when she curled her hand right around it, and then just guided it right to her core. "Please Conner." She begged him as she pressed herself up to meet the tip of his c**k.

He would never say no to her, couldn't. Pushed himself deep inside of her and heard her cry out as he did so. Looked right down at her, her eyes were mostly closed, and her mouth was open, as her body arched up to meet his. He was never going to tire of seeing her like this, enjoying the feel of him taking her, that first deep thrust into her body.

His hand moved down to her h*p and he gripped it as he started to move, long firm strokes as he watched her take all of him, slid that hand down her thigh and hooked her knee with it, brought that leg up to wrap around his waist and pushed harder and deeper in and out of her. Her arousal was building and his need was increasing with the scent of it. He slid an arm under her waist and g*****d “El I really want you.” All his need and desire could be heard, he held nothing back from her.

Looked right down in those eyes of hers and saw her smile up at him softly, she knew what he wanted. “Yes.” She told him and her own h**s thrust up hard to meet his. He crashed his mouth down on to hers and took her eagerly, wantonly, thrusting hard and fast, taking what he wanted all of her with all he had.

Her body was perfect for him, accepted him and his furious need to pound the hell out of her, was crying out and clinging on to him the whole time, could feel her cumming, hear her cumming and it only made him want her even more. Gasped himself as her body fluttered all around him and then clamped so tight around him, he could barely move at all.

Both her legs were wrapped tightly around him, holding him to her as she cried out his name at the height of her o*****m. His face was buried in her neck as he came inside of her, “Goddess El.” He g*****d, he never wanted to stop, smiled to himself against her neck as Atlas growled all needy inside him, his wolf had brought him here to her room.

That beast inside him just seemed to know when she was touching herself, every time he’d brought Conner to her room she’d been touching herself. He didn’t know how Atlas knew, but he did know, he didn’t really care at all.

Wanted to be in here with her, slipped from her body before his wolf decided to take over and mate her himself. It was now something he was going to have to watch and be careful of. Moved himself to the bed next to her and pulled her body against his gently, her back to his chest, his breathing was still as ragged as hers.

Lay there with his arm around her, and just listened to her breathing, enjoyed the smell of her arousal around him still as it lingered in the air, could happily drown in it, was going to at some point and he knew it. He watched her fall asleep in his arms and smiled to himself.

He wanted more of her, but she likely needed rest, he had to learn to tone it down with her until she knew what he was, closed his eyes. The full moon couldn’t come fast enough for him or his beast, it was only just over a week away. Allowed his eyes to close and relax against her, he would spend the night with her.

Woke up to find his c**k hard and he was grinding himself against her, he had a leg through hers and she was half pressed down into the mattress, sighed when he realised she was moving against him and was already wet and ready for him. didn’t know who’d

started it didn't really care either. the scent of her arousal was all around him once more, it was delicious to wake up to.

Grabbed that knee and pulled it further up the bed as he really started to slide himself against her, kept going till she was cumming, thrusting back at him, heard her beg for him, knew she wanted more, needed more from him.

He could feel Atlas pushing at him. He wanted to have her, 'be gentle,' he told his beast, and let him take over. She was his mate too, had his own needs where she was concerned. They would be sharing her after the full moon, all the time. Every night in his room, their room. He was going to move into that suite that was to be his and they would never have to sleep apart ever again.

Atlas took her in one firm thrust and a deep growl came from him as he started to Mate her. They would be sharing her tonight and she was going to see the stars. They would satisfy all her wanton needs. She would only have to ask and they would do it. Neither he nor his wolf would deny her anything in this bedroom.

Atlas pulled her up on all fours to take her eagerly, one hand on her h*p and the other on her shoulder and he thrust in and out of her. Her cries of pleasure increased his wolf's needs till he was taking her much like he had in the woods, hard and fast, gripping on to her, slamming himself in and out of her till she was shoved down on the bed as Atlas came for her as she cried out.

Conner smiled to himself as Atlas receded "Goddess El, you're perfect do you know that." He told her, he wasn't done even though she was underneath him trying to catch his breath, slid his hands to her arms and pushed them up the bed "Grip onto the bed El," he murmured right into her ear "I'm going to make you scream my name, I want to hear you reach heights of pleasure you've never know before."

"Conner." She m****d and was suddenly shoving back at him, thrusting herself to have him, he leaned over her and sighed right into her ear "f**k me with all you have El, I want that, I want all of you."

Her whole body was pushing against his in a second and she was moving underneath him, doing just that, taking him for herself, gave her more room and g*****d as she took him eagerly. His fingers were laced with hers over the edge of the bed, and then suddenly she was slamming herself back against him crying out, heard her calling out his name and knew, heard the desperation in that one word, she needed more. He didn't want to hurt her, but goddess she was aching to have him she'd never smelled so strong to him, her arousal was so thick around him.

She screamed at him "Harder Conner." And he took full control, gave her all of him as hard as he could, till she was screaming underneath him, her whole body wreathing and bucking as wave after wave of pleasure ripped right through her body.

Had to bite down on the need to Mark her, force his wolf away as they Mate her. She was Mating him right this minute and both he and Atlas knew it, couldn't stop herself, craved her Mate as much as he did her. Held her right down in that bed as he c*m hard inside of her. Kept her held down, had to, she was still trying to Mate him, her body trying to move furiously under his, but he was barely in control, he needed a moment to gain control of himself, to not knot her and mark her, claim her. He heard her scream at him in frustration.

"Calm down El, I need a minute."

"f**k me." She screamed at him "Conner." The raw need in her was going to be his undoing, yanked himself from her body before he was undone completely by her need, and saw her shove up and come right at him. Atlas was already pushing everything he had at him, as she shoved him over, slammed herself back down on to him, took him as she held him down and really rode the hell out of him.

He couldn't stop her if he wanted to now, the pleasure he was deriving from her Mating him was immense. He'd never felt anything like it in his life, lay there and just watched her bounce up and down on him, lean forward to change the position and gasped and cry out as she came again. Her face was buried into his neck as she mated the hell out of him, she was whining and gasping and her body was fluttering and clamping all around him as her o****m rolled from one to another.

Closed his eyes and tried to focus on anything other than the fact that he knew she needed him to knot her, to claim her completely. Something he couldn't do this close to the full moon. Then she was up and her head was thrown back a scream ripped right out of her as she slammed herself down on top of him.

Then she was just flopped down on top of him, exhausted by her own needs, his arms slid around her, and he held her to his body, heard her whimper a little as she lay there, knew why, he'd denied her being Knotted when she needed it.

He couldn't do it, she wasn't ready for that, but the minute he claimed her he was going to knot the hell out of her and give her exactly what she wanted. Shifted her from him just a little, to slip from her body, he had no idea how long she'd been Mating him, it felt like hours and she was already sleeping, had exhausted herself in her need to have him.

Corner rolled her off him onto the side of the bed, brushed the hair from her face and lay there just watching her sleep. There was nothing he could do about what had happened. She had needed him and he was unable to deny her need. 'Ours.' Atlas told him.

'Yes.' Conner agreed.

'Mark her.'

'No, not till after the full moon, she needs time to adjust to what we are, Atlas,'

'She mated us willingly.'

'I know, but it's too close to the full moon. We have laws for a reason.'

He heard Atlas huff 'After the full moon.'

'Agreed.'

'The day after.' Atlas told him.

Conner lay there and looked at her, it was likely going to happen that quick and he knew it, he wouldn't be able to stop it at some point. He Leaned over and kissed her forehead and settled himself to sleep next to her once more.

His watch alarm woke him fifteen minutes prior to the normal time he and his unit would get up for training. El was curled right into him as she had been when she'd gone to sleep. He rolled her slowly and gently onto her back and heard her murmur something in her sleep, sounded like a foreign language to him. He slipped from the bed and walked around it, his eyes moved to her as he watched her body react to his walking through the room.

Smiled to himself her natural instinct kicking in where his scent was for her, even in her sleeping state she was tracking his movement and rolling towards where she knew he was to be, 'A good strong bond we'll have.' Atlas told him. His wolf sounded happy and proud.

Conner stood watching her as he pulled his clothes on, smiled to himself. He had not wanted a human mate, but there was no letting her go. Not only was she beautiful, had curves in all the right places, she was soft and tender to touch, he really liked that about her, the softness of her body, was a hell of a turn on for him. Never thought he would like that, but now knew he'd never get enough of it.

She was also fierce when she needed to be, not always, he could see the vulnerability in her, but she'd had no qualms giving his father a piece of her mind on more than one occasion. Not many humans would have the balls to do that.

Slipped out the door and turned back to look at her one last time, only to have Atlas stare right at her, he'd thought he'd seen those eyes of her open for just a split second, was staring hard at her now. Conner didn't think his wolf was wrong either, he'd also thought he'd seen a flash of amber in that flicker of her normally silver-grey eyes. It had been deep and dark but flashed ever so brilliantly at them and then for just a single second, then she was just sleeping once more.

He felt Atlas take a deep breath in and try to smell her, for any changes to her, but nothing she smelled as she always did, soft and delicate. He shook it off and closed the door, headed for his room to shower and ready himself for training.

Stood in that shower and smiled to himself. Perhaps she would get a wolf. Not that he particularly cared about that anymore, all he knew was that come the full moon he was going to be standing right in front of her, was going to look right down at her and claim her for himself. K**s her in front of everyone uncaring of the fact that she was human. She was his human, and in less than two weeks she was going to be known as the future of this pack.

His Mate and Luna, she might technically still be his unclaimed human Luna, for a little while yet, another month or so, while they tried to get her used to the wolves and introduce her properly to the pack and what goes on around here, but they would be in a full relationship as far as she was concerned, he was going to make sure everyone understood what she was to him.

Hopefully she would be just like her mother on the accepting side of things. She'd already met Atlas twice in wolf form, would have to let his beast out more often to see her, let them bond to each other so she wasn't afraid of him. That would go a long way to helping her accepting what they were. Smiled to himself, he could feel Atlas was happy with him, happy with the thought of being around her in wolf form, he was all for that, it seemed. He'd already taken it upon himself to do it twice, had wanted her to see him.

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Chapter 43

EI POV

She slept till nearly midday and woke up to her entire body aching all over. The s*x with Conner was getting out of control, she still felt exhausted and yet oddly satisfied and relaxed at the same time, though she'd woken up alone. No real surprise there. But she did recall falling asleep with his arms around her and more than once.

He never stuck around, didn't want anyone knowing about the two of them. She didn't understand how he always just walked into her room when she was all hot and bothered. Was it a mere coincidence or was it that he knew she was in here touching

herself. That made her wonder as she walked across the room to have a shower if there were cameras in her room and he was watching her. Looked around the room as she walked, didn't see anything obvious that might be a camera.

Shudder at that thought, it was creepy to think that he watched her sleep, but then this entire place was weird as well. She'd been thinking about him when she'd gone to bed and gotten all hot and bothered in her bed and had decided to do something about it. She hadn't wanted to text him in case he just strolled into her room to have his way with her.

Didn't bloody need to, he had turned up anyway, the moment she'd laid eyes on him a part of her had sighed at the thought of just knowing he was here with her, another part of her felt nervous but deep down inside her she had been craving his touch, had been thinking about him as she'd been touching herself imagining it was him and then he was just there.

She'd just accepted that he was there, smiled even. Knew he would satisfy her, and likely more than once, a part of her wanted it even. His words out in the woods echoed inside her mind, don't you want to El, she could easily bring to her mind's eye those dark blue eyes of his, as he looked down at her, the deep husky drawl of his voice as he told her he wanted to.

Just thinking about it had turned her on, and so she'd gotten her toys out to sort herself out with those images and his voice inside her mind to help her, then he was just there and he'd been amazing. Was always bloody amazing to feel him touch her, taste her, shook that thought off, before she was wanting him again.

There was no saying no to him. She had been as crazy needy with him last night as he had been with her in the woods that other night. Screamed at him even when she wanted more of him and felt he was denying her needs. And they had been so damned high, her body had been hot and there had been this aching inside of her. That just screamed to be satisfied by him.

She'd never felt anything in her life like it. Never heard anyone mention anything like it before, not even read about anything, with s*x being like that. Wondered if it was just too much for people to understand or if it was just her and the way Conner made her feel when he touched her. There was something different about him, something that was dark and primal, and it was starting to affect her as well.

She really did need to get away from him, but at the same time she didn't want to. Knew deep down she had to for her own sanity, or she was going to end up broken by him. She knew he didn't want her in any other way. It was just hard-core unadulterated s*x, but that was all it was for him. He'd made himself plainly clear.

Eliza knew if she stayed, he would continue to come to her room and she would continue to let him, but he would never acknowledge her. Never tell anyone about her.

She was not his girlfriend, was just a really good f**k. She closed her eyes for a moment and then got out of the shower. She was drawn to him for who knew what reason? But had to get away from him.

Was warring with herself and she knew it. Wanted to get away from this place, from him, but at the same time wanted to stay and be with him, knew it would never be anything more than what it was right now. It was not healthy for her to be like this. Could well be the way her aunt Sara had felt. Why she couldn't leave that abusive husband of hers. Though she was not particularly worried that Conner would hit her. She wasn't afraid of him, just didn't want to become something she was not.

Something she knew she was doing, being around him, not being able to say no to him, that was not like her, she didn't even really know anything about him either. He was just some rich boy who thought he could have whatever he wanted, was getting whatever he wanted from her, whenever he wanted it as well.

There was only one way to end it, to stop this thing between them, and that was to leave. She was getting out of here the first chance she got. She was going to live alone on the other side of the world away from him. At least she liked her own company, was not likely to let anyone else near her for a very long time.

Had a need to be on her own, to run away and try to find the normality of her life that she'd once had just a month ago. Leave this place and the weird effects it was having on her. It had to be this place, her mother had been sucked in so very quickly and she had this nagging feeling, she too was going to get sucked in and never be able to leave. If she didn't do it soon.

Thought about that, how long it had taken her mother to become sucked into Logan, and now, that was all that mattered to her. Three months was all. Bit her l*p, could have been less than that really, had lived here with Logan for only a month before they'd gotten married. She wasn't going to be sucked into this place.

No, she wasn't going to let herself be all consumed by Conner the way her own mother was with Logan. She was going to get out, was going to get the hell away from him and that very dark primal side of him that she was somehow stupidly attracted to. He'd told her she would want him, crave him and need him. It was true and she knew it, which also meant that he was never going to let her go either.

He'd told her to never say she was leaving ever again, so she would not ever say it around him. But she was going to leave, knew she had to. Stood there in her room and prayed that she was able to and that she was able to get far enough away from him that he would never ever find her again. He'd told her he would hunt her down and bring her back, and deep down she knew he was going to do it. She had to get the hell out of his line of sight. Get on that flight and go to the other side of the world.

Even if he was so possessive that he went after her in Italy, and it was likely he would know which university she wanted to attend or could find out from his father. She wasn't actually going to that one anymore, hadn't been reaccepted to it. So, he could look there all he liked she wasn't going to be there.

She had been granted a scholarship to the university of Bergamo up in the north, already elected her three year Bachelor Degree within the department of foreign languages, literature and cultures. Had on campus living, with that scholarship of hers, and she did speak a little Italian, enough to get by and perhaps pick up job, was hoping there was something on campus that she could get. Would be looking at that the moment she got there. A part time job to supplement the money she had already and pay for that part of the degree that wasn't covered by the scholarship she'd gotten.

Called her grandma and asked her about calling her mother to let her go to her father's grave in California, for his birthday. Got a very surprise, "Why are you not allowed?"

"Because mum thinks I'll run away again."

She'd heard her grandma sigh, "I told her I wouldn't, that I would come back."

There was silence from her grandma, she would pick the lie in that statement. "El?"

"I got accepted to a university in Italy again, grandma. I haven't told anyone. I'm not going to."

"So, you are going to run away."

"No, I'm simply going to go and get my degree as planned. I need your help, grandma. Please, if they will let me out for just a few days, I can leave and go to Italy. You'll know where I am. I won't lie to you. I'll be safe and keep you up to date."

Heard her grandma sigh, she'd not lied at all. Would be keeping in contact with her grandma. "What exactly do you want of me, El?"

"I don't know, maybe you could say you're going to be there as well, it's dad's birthday and mum said no to me going to his grave. Don't I have the right to do that?"

"Of course, you do. But that is not what you're going to do, is it?"

"No, I know dad would want me to get my degree, go to Italy and do those things I always planned on doing. I'm going to...I just need help to get out of here."

"Is it so bad there, El?"

She thought about that for a long moment. "I don't know to be honest. It's weird here grandma, I don't know if the friends I made, are actually my friends or not. I think Logan just told them to be nice to me. Some days are good here, others I'm so confused."

"Eliza, are you really alright?"

"I don't know." She whispered "I kind of feel like I'm not me anymore, that I'm becoming someone else, not all the time, just some of the time. I'm confused about a lot of things."

There was silence for a long time, and she knew her grandma was weighing up the options. "If you really don't want to be there Eliza, I will help you. But you must be sure."

"I'm sure grandma." She sighed "I have to get away from here."

"I'll call your mother, tell her you've called me about attending Taro's grave for his birthday. That I believe you should be allowed to attend this. If she is hesitant, then I guess I could tell her that I will meet you there and spend the weekend with you."

"Thank you, grandma."

"I'll call my sister in Italy, and she will pick you up, I'll need your travel details, I'll get those from you when you, leave. Best not to discuss it with anyone, that Logan or your mother might try to get information out of."

"What about you?"

Heard her grandma laugh now, "Don't you worry about me. I can handle that man and his boy. Met him before. Not so honest is he."

She thanked her grandma once more and hung up. Sank down on her bed and closed her eyes, and had to trust that her grandma would get her out. She would be allowed to pack a suitcase, though she'd have to make it her smallest one. A large suitcase might draw unwanted attention to her, and she didn't want that.

Started making a list of the things she needed to pack, on her laptop, essentials only. Made sure that her passport was neatly tucked into the suitcase she was going to pack and take with her. She was called by her mother, to come downstairs later that afternoon. She sounded annoyed, Eliza thought to herself.

Obviously, her mother and grandma had gotten into it. Her mother was not going to like the fact that she had gone around her or tried to. But it was all she could do right this minute. Walked downstairs to find her mother standing by Logan's office door. She didn't look all that happy right this minute.

"I can't believe you went to your grandmother about this. I told you I'd discuss it with Logan." She muttered right at her.

"Who else would I go to?" Eliza stated. "She is dad's mother. Understands my need to go there."

"I understand your need, El. I just don't know if it's the right thing for you right now is all."

She could see Logan watching the two of them, "Come inside El, let's really discuss this," he commented.

She walked in and her mother closed the door to his office behind her, she took a seat when indicated to do so. Watched her mother walk around his desk and stand next to him. They were presenting a united front, she guessed.

"El, to be honest, I don't think you should be going." Logan told her. "But, I do understand that you miss your father, this is the first time his birthday has come and he's not here with you. That you miss him, want to feel close to him." heard him sigh "But you ran away last time."

"I was told to leave, so I did." She commented "I wouldn't call that running away, more like...following an order."

Saw him frown right at her "I don't want you going on your own."

"I am 18 years old, perfectly capable of making my own decisions. Have I not agreed to stay here and go to university here?"

"It appears that way, yes." He nodded.

Stared right at him as he stared right at her "What do you want from me in order for me to be able to go?"

That got his attention. He leaned back in the chair and looked right at her, "I don't know El, but an assurance would be good, I guess. I would ask that someone go with you. That would be best."

"I don't want someone you told to hang out with me, tagging along to my father's grave. That would be uncomfortable and weird to be honest."

"I have not told anyone to hang out with you."

"Really? I think you told Marlo and his friends to do just that."

Heard him sigh heavily "I didn't, as for Willah, she is jealous of you and how much Marlo likes you. That is all. I have had words with her and her friends."

"I don't want you to do that. If they don't like me, so be it, you can't be friends with everyone in life. People just don't always get along."

"Here in this community, I expect everyone to get along. Behave and treat each other with respect."

"That's interesting. You don't treat me with respect at all."

"Of course, I do, El."

"No, you don't. If you did, I wouldn't be made to stay here, would I? locked inside the gates and only let out if someone is with me. That is not respect at all."

"You broke my trust, El."

She laughed, "Really, well, I don't trust you anymore than you trust me. That's why I went to Grandma. Not only does she respect my choices, she trusts me to be able to make my own decisions."

"If I let you go, El, I'll want to know where you are at all times. That means picking up your phone every time, I or your mother calls you. Letting me know what hotel you'll be staying in on the way there and the way back. I'm also going to have to talk to that friend of yours, Cordi, is it? That you want to stay with."

"If grandma is going to be there, we'll likely stay in a hotel, together, instead of me staying at Cordi's, so there will be no need of that." El told him, that is what would likely happen if that was actually what was going to happen.

"Are you going to see Cordi and your friends while there?"

"Yes, of course I will."

"Then I will need to talk with her, lay down some rules. Rules you will agree to abide by."

"Like what exactly?" she frowned at him.

"I will sort that out later during the week. I'll get back to you on that one."

"So, I can go then?"

"I get the feeling if I don't let you. Your grandmother is going to come in here guns blazing to collect you."

"She does own more than one gun." El nodded. "and has a license to carry, I believe."

"Yes, I am aware, she made that perfectly clear to me. Has friends in high places as well." He was frowning at her. It didn't sound like he was happy about that at all. Maybe he knew some of the people her grandmother knew.

El nodded, gotta love her grandma's in charge attitude, she was a bit of a law unto herself, didn't really care about what most thought. Was hired by some of the most wealthy people out there to find their runaway or missing children. If Conner had bolted away as a young boy, it was likely her own grandma would have been recommended to Logan to hunt him down.

Wondered if Logan had tried to lie to her grandma and got busted, nothing got passed that woman, every lie was detected. She was a human lie detector, El didn't know how she did it, only ever been told once, it's all in the inflexion in one's voice, or the slight hesitation before they spoke, pupil dilation and people sweat and fidget when they lie. All things she could read, apparently.

"So, I can go then?" she asked once more.

"Yes, I am still reluctant. But yes El, your grandma, I will want to come and get you."

"That is just a waste of time. If she and I both left at the same time, we could both arrive within hours of each other in California."

"I will discuss this further with your grandma and get back to you a few days prior to you leaving."

"Alright." She nodded "May I go now."

He waved her out of the office, and she nearly sagged with relief when she got back to her room. Thank God for grandma.

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Chapter 44

Conner POV

Conner did not see much of Eliza around the packhouse, did occasionally smell her, down in the indoor pool area, late at night. His father had him out on patrol for the last three nights, rogues had been seen out there prowling around in larger numbers than normal. His father wanted a stronger presence out there, to deter any of those rogues thinking it was a good idea, to wander in or attack their pack.

He wasn't the only one out there either, his whole unit was out there on patrol, it was their duty as the next in line to show strength and deal with any and all attacks on the boarders. He also knew that if he was out here, El was safe because Atlas was not letting anything get past him.

He was sleeping during the day and his studies had to be attended between sleep and patrol on the northern most boarders, so he'd not seen her much at all. More than a little annoying to him. But as he came off duty and showered in the mudroom, then strolled through the packhouse to get food before sleeping this morning, he could smell her.

She was still using the omega stairs, it seemed. He'd seen his entire unit stop and look at the omega stairs this morning, seems they'd all scented her and tracked it as well. He was walking behind them, as he had stopped to talk with a patrol man who was pulled up with an injury. One of the rogues had gouged him pretty badly and, though he was healing up, the wound was pretty deep. Conner sent him off to the packs hospital before going home, and looked like he was in need of a few staples.

"What are you all looking at?" he'd asked his unit as he'd come from the packhouse's mudroom.

"Eliza is using the omega stairs." Brayden had commented.

"And that's an issue because?" He'd shrugged, he knew she did it, had seen her do it himself.

"There for Omega's." Brayden frowned at him.

"She doesn't know what Omega's are, Brayden. Is human remember." He waved them on, and they all moved on. Though her scent today was stronger than normal, must have swam early this morning, not long gone back to her room.

"When is your father going to talk to her about all of us?"

"When he thinks, she isn't going to run away, I guess." Conner sighed "Could be a long while."

"She signed up for Uni here." Cameron commented as he got himself a plate full of scrambled eggs and sausages for breakfast.

"That doesn't mean father trusts her. It just means he's working on getting her to want to stay here." Conner got himself juice and three bacon and egg bagels.

"You don't think she will?" it was Adam.

"I think she's coming around, just needs to be given the freedom of choice, father has her on a very short leash and she is not at all used to that."

"Might be easier if he just told her what we all are and she could actually understand why she now needs to be here all the time, or close to the pack anyway." Brayden nodded as he dropped into chair. "I haven't seen her much lately either. Holed up in her room once again I think." Saw him shake his head. "It can't be good for her to be shut up like that all the time."

"Probably not." Conner agreed with him. Then turned to Adam, "What's going on with Marlo and his friends? Are they not hanging out with her?" he asked his Beta. Who was finally over, Conner pulling rank on him, had returned to his normal demeanour.

Adam had let it go after going and speaking with Marlo about how his own actions with Willah had put El in danger. That Willah was so jealous she'd convinced three of her friends to go and attack El to put her in her place, so to speak, to make sure that El understood she wasn't allowed near Marlo. That if Conner had not realised what was going on and alerted the Alpha, it was likely that El could have ended up in the hospital or worse even.

The boy had been unhappy with the news, had no idea of Willah's actions and Adam had reminded him that she-wolves were aggressive of things they thought belonged to them. That it was Marlo's fault for asking Willah out, once again. Only so he could use her to try and make El jealous. Had told him that if anything happened to El, and it was any of his friends doing. He would be holding Marlo personally responsible for any injury suffered to her.

"No, I passed on that message. He's backed off and from what I can tell, the girls are all still being punished, house arrest until further notice. So, all their boyfriends are pissed off as well."

"That is not El's fault." Cameron commented, "That was Willah's doing, we all got that mind-link to remind the entire pack that El was the Luna's human daughter and any and all threats against her would be dealt with harshly and severely. By the Alpha himself."

That they all had, and those girls had not been allowed out of their houses since then, were all also sporting silver cuffs as punishment for their wolves who should have known better than to disobey their Alpha's orders around El.

"It is not." Adam agreed, "though I do think he's tried to talk to her, and she's shut him out. Something else happened before Willah, but I don't know what." His eyes moved to Conner. "Perhaps you could speak with her about it."

"She's not likely to talk to me, Adam."

"Because you're a jerk to her." Brayden muttered.

"I've been better behaved of late." Conner muttered, and he had, most of the time. Was Mated to the girl, couldn't treat her badly or even insult the girl anymore, didn't want to.

Mostly just wanted to crawl into her bed and be naked with her. Once that full moon came in 6 days, he was going to do just that.

Pull her right into his bed and keep her there, sleep next to all night every night, once that full moon came, he would be able to make her happy. Out their relationship and she'd be more comfortable here and likely that would bring about her wanting to stay here as well. Just six more days and the whole pack would know what she was to them.

No-one was going to dare to even look at her sideways, or think about hurting her. Willah was going to be in hell for a very long time to come, especially when she realised just what she had tried to do, to her future Luna, convinced all her friends to join her as well.

That silver cuff she and her friends were all stuck wearing right this minute, to keep their wolves at bay was staying on her as punishment. She was going to find herself face to face with him and Atlas after the full moon and his claim on Eliza was made. Those girls were going to be terrified of what he and his wolf were going to do.

Hell, they would likely be terrified of what their current Alpha would do to them, for threatening the future of the pack. Might never be allowed to take those cuffs off. Or might find themselves sent off to another pack to live. He was undecided on what he actually wanted as a punishment. Other than putting them in the cells and giving them one hell of a lashing of course.

Though Willah was still only 17, some of those girls were already 18 and they should all have known better. He was surprised that all they got was cuffed with silver and house arrest. But he was not able to do anything about it yet. Had to wait to lay his full claim on her before Willah and her friends saw the real error of their ways and it was fully realised to them just how deep a hole, they had dug themselves.

He ate his breakfast and headed upstairs with the boys to rest up they still had two more nights of patrol duty on the northern border. Steadfastly kept his eyes from moving down to the western end of the building. Though he wanted to walk down there and be with her, he could not. Though he did wonder how she was doing being apart from him.

Stretched out on his bed and picked his phone up and texted her "Hi El, sorry I've been working nights, sleeping during the day, how are you?"

He'd never texted her before, other than when she had disappeared off to California, and he didn't know if she'd reply to him. But she had mated herself to him, so she should want contact with him. Even if it was just a text message, it should make her happy. He was making an effort to make her feel like he wanted to be with her, was going to be working on that over the next few days.

He waited for her to reply to his message. It never came, and he sighed heavily into his room. She didn't understand him, wouldn't until she knew what he was. It made for a

very restless Atlas, which meant he couldn't sleep either. Picked his phone up like a dozen times in the past hour and a half to look at it, and willed her to respond to him, did not like that he couldn't just mind-link to her.

Wondered if his father could mind-link to Brittney? He'd not asked the question, had not cared to know anything at all about his human stepmother. Now, he was suddenly curious, what if he could never do that with El? What if he had to rely on his phone and texting her or calling her, all the time? How was he supposed to let her know when he was all hot and horny for her. Wanting to send that playful growl down the mind-link to her to let her know he wanted her, how was Atlas supposed to communicate with her? It wasn't going to be the same if he had to call her or text her with it.

Tossed his phone to the other side of the bed an hour later when she'd still not answered him and he was still laying there awake. Flung the sheets off of him and got out of bed, he was never getting any sleep and he knew it, not until he'd laid eyes on her, gotten to speak to her. He left his room and was headed for her room at the other end of the packhouse, come right across Marlo standing outside Eliza's door. Frowned right at him. "What are you doing here Marlo?"

"I just wanted to check on El, she's not been talking to me."

"Can you blame her?" Conner asked him.

"Why are you here Conner?" Marlo glared at him.

"I was just walking about, can't sleep. Saw you up here on the Alpha floor. You're not supposed to be up here without permission anymore unless you're going to your mum and dad's suite. Did you get that permission from father or the Luna, permission to talk to El after what your girlfriend tried to do to her?" threw that reminder right at him, the very reason he would not be allowed up here without permission right this minute.

"She's not my girlfriend anymore. I ended it with Willah after what she did, or tried to do, to El."

"How'd that go down? Do you think that will make the situation worse or better?" Conner was willing to bet worse.

"What does it matter? Willah is in lock down in her family home."

"It matters Marlo, because if anything happens to El and it leads back to your stupid behaviour with Willah. How do you think the Luna will respond? Do you think Willah will survive it a second time, and if not, who's fault will that be?"

"I made it clear she wasn't to touch El, go near her even."

"Hmm, I'm betting that just ticked the she-wolf off even more. She was jealous before of El, how do you think she feels now?"

"I don't care Conner, I only want to make sure El is okay, she's not come out of her room and is not talking to me. It's not like her."

"You should care, Marlo. Hate breeds bitterness and leads to violence. Who do you think Willah will aim that at? You or El?"

The boy's jaw was tight as he stared at Conner. "I'll protect El."

"No, actually you won't. It is now my job to do that, father's orders." It was his job because she was his Mate, not because his father ordered him to do it. But Conner also knew that Marlo was not going to go and ask his own Alpha why he put his son, the future Heir in charge of El's safety.

That would be outright disrespectful of a pack member, to question their own Alpha's decisions and orders. Get himself lashed and tossed in the cells for it and he knew it.

"Leave Marlo, if you want, I will check on her and let you know if she is alright."

"Don't bother." Marlo muttered and walked off away towards the stairs, "She'll talk to me eventually, actually likes me as a person, doesn't like you at all."

"Watch your words, Marlo, or I might just unleash my wolf on you. You seem to forget your place, are a Beta and only a second at that. I am the Alpha's Heir. One more time and I will put you in the cells myself for that blatant disrespect you constantly show to me since El's arrival."

Heard him bang right into his suite, down on the fourth floor a few minutes later, had gotten himself a suite of his own when he turned 18 as did most ranked members kids, regardless of if they were a second or third heir, and would only be able to take up their older siblings' position if something bad happened, to their heir of their own bloodline.

Adam wasn't likely to let that happen, he was a good strong Beta with not just strength, but he had good people skills and was well liked by most, even those in other packs, was charismatic like his father was.

Swiped his card to let himself into El's room and opened the door. She was not in there, one glance was all it took to see that. Frowned at the empty room, if she was not in here, then where was she? Marlo had been up here looking for her as well. So, he could only presume that Marlo thought she was in her room too. But yet she wasn't.

He closed the door and walked away, as he thought about it. Where could she go in this pack that allowed her to be alone, smiled to himself. The woods was the only logical place for her to be. She liked the woods. 'We go find our Mate.' Atlas told him.

'Agreed.' Conner told his wolf with a smile. If she was alone out there in the woods, that meant he could spend time with her himself.

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Chapter 45

EI POV

EI looked at the message she'd gotten from Conner, she'd already been up and gone for a morning swim, had hit that pool at 5am, she'd been unable to sleep. So she had gotten up. She'd not seen hide nor hair of him in three days. Then he just texted her out of the blue and it was weird to say the least, he'd apologised and told her what he'd been up to. Asked how she was.

EI had sat and stared at that message for a long time and then just ignored it. Didn't need that man talking to her, trying to be all friendly like with her, likely just wanted to come to her room and have his way with her.

That got her a*s up and off the couch, "Nope, not going to happen again." Yanked her hiking boots on in a hurry and was gone out of the room, before he just bloody showed up and got what he wanted from her. Ducked down the stairwell, knew he'd be coming from the other end of the building, if he was coming.

Headed right out into the woods, it was only early morning and though the day was supposed to get warm she was in the shade of the dense forest, and the morning breeze was cool. She kept her pace quite quick for the first 15 minutes. Looked over her shoulder many times, there was no one following her. No Conner, it seemed, relaxed and allowed herself to just slow down to a casual walk along the path.

She was only mildly concerned about that one wolf he'd called Atlas roaming about out here, that very large beast of a wolf had not chased her, or harmed her, in anyway, on the last encounter, just smelled her and then ran off. Hopefully, being that it was early morning, she could avoid coming across it. It had been afternoon both times she'd seen him.

There was no one out here, she took a trail where the path was divided into five and realised she'd been here before, smiled to herself, already learning the tracks. Looked

at the path she had taken last time, decided against that it was where she'd come across that wolf, knew the path directly ahead of her would lead down to the lake.

Took the one next to that it was headed north east, hadn't been on that one yet, strolled along it, didn't take long for that path to start to climb upwards, a long hill to the top of a small ridge. There was a really nice view of the lake up there. She was surprised to see a bench seat up there. It must be a local hike.

She sat herself down and just looked out over bear lake. The sun was well up now, it was mid-morning and there was no actual shade here. Within just five minutes she was getting hot out here in the sun. got up and looked at the path she'd come along and then the one that wound down the ridge, it was well maintained, wound down into the valley below.

Strolled on down it, it wound back and forth along the ridge, some of it was path and some of it was stairs, it was a long walk down to the valley floor below, but it sported some nice views of the lake along the way, and two more benches for people to sit on.

Down in the valley it was cool and she found herself at a small stream with a wooden bridge to cross it, strolled across it. The other side of the bridge was really dense forest, hardly any sunshine reached through down here, smiled up at the tall trees and could see their were birds flying about up there, had a decision to make, go north or south, the path she was on led to a T-junction, south she knew was going to take her to the Lake for sure.

North however, was unexplored territory for her, smiled to herself "north it is." Wondered if this was the path that lead all the way around the gated community. It could well be, she thought, checked her phone, no service. Well, if they were looking for her, or Logan thought she was going outside the gated community, he had no way of telling her to get back there.

She strolled along, till she found herself on a path that was going to wind its way up a ridge. The trail looked to be for a serious hiker, but she wasn't prepared for that at all. Looked at her watch. It was nearly lunch time and she'd not grabbed food, just her water bottle in her rush to leave and it was nearly empty.

She hadn't really planned on being out here for so long, but the trails had just called to her and off she'd gone. Smiled to herself, that part of her was all her father. Strolled back at a casual pace, there was no point in rushing, not when she knew she was a few hours away from her apartment, wouldn't get back until mid to late afternoon, depending on which way she went.

Didn't particularly think climbing up that winding ridge trail was going to be the way back, not without more water. So she would take that south path and likely end up, down at the lake but she could fill up her water bottle down there at least, then would

have to make her way from there back to the apartment complex. A long walk but at least it was shady and cool under the canopy.

Stopped at the sight of that wolf, padding along the path towards her 'how on earth did she always manage to find herself face to face with this thing' she wondered to herself as she came to a standstill. It hadn't attacked her the last time, she'd not moved or run away from it. Perhaps if she just stood still it would go the other way or off into the woods.

It stopped and stared at her, tilted its head to the right and she saw it smell the air, smelling her in all likelihood, didn't take her eyes off of him. He was a massive beast of a creature, and curious it seemed. Though Conner had told her this was his territory, was the Alpha wolf, not that she'd seen any of its pack, just him.

Saw that wolf sit and stare at her, bit her l*p. She didn't know how to interact with it, how wild it was, though it never seemed to phase Conner or be bothered that Conner was out running on the trails, it was likely that he was so regular out here, that he came across this wolf a lot.

Wondered how long it would sit there and watch her before it got bored and left. She stepped slowly to the edge of the path as if to give it room to go passed her, and it watched her the entire time, then stood up and shook itself out. Stretched himself backwards, lowering its head to its feet, almost as if it was bowing to her.

She'd seen her friends' dogs do that, usually when they were playing, not an aggressive thing, then that wolf lay all the way down and put its head on its paws and watched her. She sighed softly to herself, now what was she supposed to do. The beast took up the whole entire path, was actually blocking her way past it.

It was a stand-off it seemed, who was going to move first. Well she knew it wasn't going to be her. If he was the Alpha wolf, he would be dominant, and anything could be seen as a sign of aggression from her. She wasn't willing to get bit by it, reached for her phone slowly and checked the service, still no bars. Couldn't call for help.

Saw that wolf creep towards her, two steps on its belly and then just stop. It was still watching her. She'd never seen a wolf belly crawl before. Saw its tail wag a little at her as it looked at her, then it was on the move again, two more belly crawling steps in her direction. This definitely was not an aggressive thing for it to do.

It almost looked as if the wolf wanted to play with her, was actively trying to communicate with her, who the hell knew. It had been aggressive the first time she'd come across it, neutral the last time and now playful. She didn't understand it's motives, couldn't it was a wild animal, though she could see the brilliant blue of its eyes from here, and realised it was likely to be the wolf she'd seen out near the apartment complex, staring at her from behind the tree line last week.

Heard that wolf yip at her and blinked as it popped up to its full height and then just flopped down on the ground and started to roll around on its back, wriggling everywhere. Before just laying on its side and looking right at her, pawed at the air in front of it.

If this was one of her friends' dogs she'd go over and rub its belly, didn't think it was a wise thing to be doing that to a wild animal regardless the display it was putting on for her. Though she was tempted to take a photo of it, no one was going to believe her. She watched as it inched a little closer to her, then just rolled all the way over and popped back up onto its feet and stood staring at her, its head tilted to one side.

Wagged its tail at her a little and padded right over to her, she stared right at it, the damn thing came right up to her chest, and when it lifted its head up looked her right in the eye, her heart was hammering inside her chest as it stood right in front of her. If it wanted to attack her she was going to be seriously injured. Watched as its head tilted from one side to the other and then this rumbling noise came from its chest almost sounded as if it was purring at her.

"Shoo" she murmured softly.

Saw its ears prick right up and its nose drop a little, then it smelled her once more, took its time in smelling her, bit her l*p as its nose touched her skin, it was cold and wet, and she could hear it sniffing her. Felt its tongue lick the back of her hand and her eyes widened, 'stay still' she told herself and did just that.

It nudged her hand with its big head a few times and whined at her, then its head snapped around and its whole body was tense as it looked off into the woods, watched as its hackles raised as it turned away from her and a low and threatening growl issued from it. Her eyes moved from it to where it was staring, she couldn't see anything in particular.

But she heard another growl issue off in the distance and then it was just gone, a massive snarl ripping out of it, as it dashed off down the hill into the woods, she didn't wait to see what the hell was going on, moved very quickly off down the path away from the fight she could now hear going on down in the valley behind her.

Likely it had scented something in its territory that it didn't like. Was off to protect its territory. Saw another wolf come from nowhere and skidded to a halt. It was almost as large as that big dark grey one, only this one was pale grey, almost silver with black fur from its head down its back to its tail, its brilliant green eyes locked right on to her and then after a second it was just gone, off the trail into the woods in the direction of that fight she was hearing.

She moved on, picked up her pace, there were likely to be more of them out here, kept herself to the trail and ran along for as long as she could, then walked as fast as she

could, holding her side, had a stitch, she was not fit for running about the woods for long periods of time.

She found herself 30 minutes later seeing several people coming towards her, one of them Logan, “El are you alright?”

She nodded “Yes.”

“Take her back to the complex.” He rapped out, and she found herself escorted by two men she didn’t know. While Logan headed off into the woods with half a dozen men hot on his heels, right in the direction she had come from. Turned and looked back as he and a bunch of men went that way, right towards where she’d left the wolves fighting it out.

“Don’t concern yourself with it, Eliza.” She was told “Wolves fight all the time, he’s just headed out there to make sure it doesn’t spill over and get closer to the complex.”

“What’s he gonna do about wolves fighting?”

There was silence on that, and after about a minute he stated, “He’ll handle it, don’t worry about it.”

She was walked all the way back, and made to go inside, her mother was standing staring at her, walked right over to her and hugged her. “Are you alright?”

“Yes, why is everyone asking me that?”

“There were wolves, Eliza, you could have gotten hurt, attacked. It’s why we don’t like you wandering out in the woods by yourself.”

“Alright, I get it.” though that big grey one and that silver coloured one hadn’t hurt her, perhaps they were of the same pack. She didn’t know “No more going into the woods alone.”

“Good, that will make me and Logan happy.” Her mother smiled at her, seemed relieved to hear it. “How long have you been out there?”

“All morning, I was just exploring,” she shrugged “I’m thirsty and hungry though.” She admitted.

“Come, let’s get you some lunch then.”

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Chapter 46

Conner POV

Atlas was tracking Eliza all through the pack's woods, she was definitely out in the woods. She had gone up to the lookout and then down into the valley below, then was following the pack's border tracks. There was no patrol here, on this particular section. The border patrol was right down near the edge of the woods a few kilometres away.

Finally, they picked up her footsteps and then they could see her. She was strolling along coming back down the trail, and probably hadn't liked what the hike up the ridge looked like. Then he realised she was only carrying a water bottle, no backpack or anything. Would have been out here for hours to get this far from the packhouse.

Huffed, she'd not been prepared to come on a long hike, was going to have to talk to her about hiking out here, especially alone right now, so many rogues about on the northern side, though today they'd not seen any on the eastern side, too close to humans, he guessed.

Conner nearly laughed at Atlas's behaviour towards her, he was acting like a puppy would, trying to befriend her. She clearly had no idea what to do about it, was just staring at him the whole time, more than wide-eyed.

Then she was just shocked, as he pawed at the air and whined at her, he was trying to make himself look small and friendly, trying to get her not to be afraid of him. Atlas, it seemed, had decided it was time to play with her, in as a friendly and non-threatening manner as was possible. Rolling around and belly crawling towards her.

Conner wasn't a hundred percent sure, Atlas padding over to her and purring to her was a good idea, did chuckle at his wolf smelling her, when she tried to shoo him away, laughed at his wolf whining at her when she wouldn't pat him, and his head was suddenly nudging her hand. It was his way of trying to get her to actually pat him.

Though the breeze that hit him as Atlas was doing his best, 'I'm a good wolf impression', had the distinct smell of rogues on it. It snapped his and Atlas's attention away from her. She was in danger from that rogue. Not only could they smell it, they could see it now. As they looked down the valley, it was standing watching them, its head tilted to the side.

Which meant it knew what Eliza was to him. It would not mistake his wolf's behaviour towards the girl. Not even a rogue would miss that. She would smell human to it, though

hopefully it was unable to scent her at this point, the wind was blowing in the wrong direction.

Though the fact that she was standoffish and backed up against a tree, not interacting with him, could also allow that rogue to know not only was she human, but that she had no idea what was going on either. Likely didn't know about werewolves at all.

Atlas shot off down into the valley after it, to deal with it, to get rid of the threat to his Mate, that beast had somehow managed to get past the border patrol and was in pack territory and not just inside it, several kilometres inside the border at that. That was a rare thing to happen.

He was going to have to find out why that was, how that had happened? Conner and the boys had tested the pack borders only a few weeks ago and this area was secured. Nothing got through.

It turned and ran from him back towards the border, but it was no match for Atlas's speed, and they ran it down in short order, only to find it wasn't the only one inside pack territory, this beast was likely the scout wolf of the group. There were several down here, sent out an all alert via a pack wide mind-link that there were rogues in the territory eastern border section 4. As Atlas was ripping into that beast while the others were all now coming for him. It was going to be four on one in less than a minute.

Then Adam's Wolf Kade was suddenly right there next to him, and both their wolves set off to take down the others, using all that training they had all their lives, to work together and dispatch those rogues quickly, two to one.

Where Kade had come from Conner didn't know, didn't bloody care right this minute. A four to one fight was not good, even for an Alpha Wolf, he'd have power and strength, but they had numbers, could all attack at once and he'd only be able to defend so many at a time. Atlas and Kade knew how to team up and take down, trained all their lives for this kind of fighting. Did what they were trained to do. Protect the pack, protect his Mate, he could only hope that El was smart enough to run away from the sound of the fighting that was going on. He and Kade took on all the rogues in the territory. He knew others from their pack were coming this way. He had heard his father's response.

Atlas shifted back to him when the last rogue was dead, as did Adam. His eyes moved back to the valley behind him and up to the track he was looking for El, searching the path up there for any signs of her. He needed to know she was alright.

"El is fine, ran away down the path." Adam told him.

Conner looked right at him, he could feel his father and many others coming this way, were still away off but likely would be here in less than 10 minutes or so. They were coming at full wolfen speed.

"That's some unusual behaviour your wolf was displaying today." Adam looked right at him, his Beta, it seemed, was out tracking him, still trying to get that answer to his question. Now he had it.

Conner sighed, that was not going to be explainable in any other manner at all. Wolves did not act like that around just anyone, their Mate's yes. Though, to be honest, he'd never seen a wolf belly crawl around anyone before, it was odd to say the least.

Conner stood staring at the man for a long minute, who just smiled at him and shook his head. It was not lost on his Beta at all.

He muttered "We have to check the border, there was no alert."

"Your father didn't get anything either, I don't think. He would have had all of us out here to find out what happened, if a pack member was severed from him." Adam agreed and fell into step with him. They were headed off at a run to find the border patrolman "No wonder you don't like Marlo around her. Or that Xavier guy."

"Shut it, Adam. I'm not discussing it out here."

"But we will be right?"

"I guess so." Conner muttered. The man was not going to let it go, not when he now knew El was his human Mate, and wondered what Adam's thoughts on it were. He knew Conner didn't like humans. Likely he was thinking a lot right at this minute.

They found their border patroller pinned to a tree, a silver arrow right through him. He was alive but disconnected from his wolf, and weakened to the point that he couldn't pull the arrow out, therefore unable to connect to his Alpha to warn him. "I'm sorry Alpha."

"Not your fault." Conner told him as he turned and followed the line of sight of the arrow, out onto the lake itself.

Heard him grunt as Adam pulled it from the man, he also heard Adam hiss at the pain himself of grabbing onto it. "Missed all your vital organs," Adam told him.

"Not looking to kill him, just disconnect him from his Alpha, so we'd be none the wiser on incoming." Conner frowned, and looked at Al, "You'll need the pack doctor to look at that, it's gonna scar as well in all likelihood."

"Wouldn't be the first time," Al muttered, "It came from a couple on a boat out there, once I was out of action. Rogues came from the lake path." He pointed up the trail. "They didn't even care about me."

Mostly, down here, this place was visited by humans. Al was dressed in board shorts and a single top, a pair of sand shoes and sunglasses so that he could blend in with the humans. Be seen as just a tourist walking about down here.

"It's a risk doing this during the daytime," Conner muttered. This place was very popular with humans. They loved being on the lake, especially in the summertime. They didn't deter the humans around the lake's edge. It would seem odd behaviour and might bring curiosity to humans. They only deterred them from getting close to the pack, reminding them it was private property. Some of the hikes the humans did wound in and out of the territory from the lake. Their pack allowed it mostly. Just kept track of the humans was all.

"The raspberry festival started today; most are down in Garden City." Adam reminded him.

"Lots of boats out on the water then." He nodded. "Which way did the boat go, Al?"

"Circled back towards the festival, I don't think they were wolves. They could have been hunters."

"Don't get those much around here though."

He could hear wolves coming now, turned and saw his father's wolf Hale approaching, shifted when he arrived and looked at Al, and frowned "I've got a few bikes coming, we'll get you off to see the doc."

Al nodded "Yes Alpha."

"Conner, Adam. What are you both doing out here?"

"Couldn't sleep." Conner told him. It was the truth, he'd not been able to sleep originally.

"El was out here, I saw her." his father was handed clothes by his Beta, and he dressed.

"She got an eye full of Kade, Alpha. My apologies, I was heading to assist Conner and Kade shot right in front of her."

Conner watched his father frown, but that was about it. "Did she freak out?"

"No kind of just skidded to a stop and stared at him, then we moved on passed her, only like two seconds of being face to face. We were of no threat to her."

"Wouldn't want to be," he muttered.

Conner could hear the bikes coming, they had a discussion about where the rogues came from, and that they would send a bunch of warriors up along the path to source

out just what was going on. They'd been seeing more and more of them this week. Which was unusual considering the sudden explosion of humans in the area, for the three-day raspberry festival.

His father headed out with the warriors, as did Jared, and sent them back to the packhouse, saying they'd be too tired and not so alert, seeing that neither of them had slept yet. Sent them back to sleep for the rest of the afternoon before their patrol tonight. Neither of them argued, they didn't have clothes anyway.

Conner also wanted to make sure El was alright, shifted back to Atlas and headed back to the packhouse. Showered and changed into a tee-shirt and shorts. Adam was watching him. He knew that man wanted to ask a million questions of him. Though he'd not so far as done that, perhaps he was still trying to decide on what he wanted to ask.

"Kade is hungry, we should eat before sleeping."

Conner nodded, they'd both gotten bitten and scratched in wolf form, both were healed up now but their wolves were in need of food, now after healing them. He was more than relieved to see El sitting with her mother having something to eat. Both he and Adam grabbed food and sank down right at the same table as them. Brittney looked right at him, he nodded "Everything is fine, dad's gone out for a bit. Won't be back till late though." He knew she would be worried.

"Alright."

"Clayton and Parker are still here." He told her, Clayton was the current Gamma and Parker was the Delta. They were both casually leaning on the island bench right behind Brittney, doing their job. Waiting on having to lock it down or not.

That could be interesting, having this place suddenly influxed with all their wolves and children and then it be locked down with El inside it. She'd not understand any of it. But it would be an eye opener for her, and she'd probably get a full crash course into their world. Not something he particularly wanted.

She wasn't settled enough yet to deal with that. Likely take one look at him and freak the hell out, considering he was all over her, might very well make her think about all their interactions out in the woods. She might actually realise it wasn't just him mating her. That could be bad, needed to talk to her first about that.

Though Atlas had been doing his best to show her he was of no threat to her, she'd been weary of him but not afraid to the point he could actually smell fear on her. Looked right at her "I hear you were out in the woods. Are you okay, Eliza?"

She nodded at him but that was it. He narrowed his eyes on her and wondered what she was thinking. She'd not only had Atlas play with her, but had come across Kade as

well. Heard wolves fighting. Wanted to ask her questions. But he couldn't do that without her asking how he knew those things, had to let it go. She looked fine to him.

Knew his father would have had her escorted back, would not have allowed her to walk back on her own with Rogues on the territory. She'd have had a full escort being Brittney's daughter. He could also see just how close attention Brittney was paying to her, talking to her a lot. Though El just appeared a little annoyed with all the attention.

Heard a couple of teens talking about going to the Raspberry festival this evening. It was likely there were some there now, he realised. That could be bad, stood up, "Adam, I need a meeting."

"On it." he nodded and got up himself.

He excused himself and looked right at Parker. The man fell in step with him, he knew Clayton wasn't likely to move from Brittney, had orders from his Alpha to stick to the Luna like glue. They walked all the way into his father's office and Adam shut the door.

"Let's presume, on that boat were rogues, and those rogues, Al said they were headed back to the festival. We've likely got pack members down there as well."

Parker frowned at him, "I'll get some warriors down there and have them all brought in."

"I want anything out of the ordinary reported. Any parent with a child they can't find needs to take priority. Anyone that suddenly can't be found is to be considered taken by the rogues. We need to prep a retrieval team just in case the worst happens."

"On it, Conner." Parker nodded and then he was gone from the office.

"I don't like it, Conner." Adam muttered "Mum and Kitty were taking the girls to that festival today."

"Parker will know that. They'll be mind-linking to everyone the minute they get close enough."

"Pack wide text will be quicker." Adam stated and Conner could hear the stress in the man's voice.

"Your right." Conner nodded, "My phone is upstairs," He turned and hunted for his father's phone, found it in the top draw and did just that, called everyone back and stated they had rogues in the area of the festival and anyone missing or not seen in a while needed to be reported immediately."

Then they sat and waited. The phone was lighting up with incoming texts to report "on our way back Alpha." He was looking at the names as they came through, both Kitty and Lorna responded, and he saw Adam sag with relief.

His little sister was only 13, no wolf yet and Kitty had two girls, 16 and 14. They were all vulnerable to being stolen by rogue wolves. Perhaps this was the reason they were dealing with rogues of late. They were out there waiting for the festival. The only real problem was that he had no idea how many had gone to the festival in the first place.

Pack members could come and go as they pleased, and that three-day festival was one that all the little children and young teens liked to go and attend. Even some of the newly Mated couples enjoyed spending quality time with each other down there. Things could well be about to get out of hand, and they could see themselves with kidnapped she-wolves or teens without wolves, the pups. They could well see full-grown she-wolves get taken down there at the festival.

This was not good.

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Chapter 47

Conner POV

Everyone was recalled and a full pack head count was attended, every home was visited, and all children were accounted for. It was a long afternoon and he had two dozen warriors moving through the pack. He and his unit were also out there checking the pack for missing wolves. He had Parker doing a head count inside the packhouse. And all border patrols had to confirm who they were and what zone of the border they were working. It was checked against the roster.

Nothing was going to be missed. They all knew the protocol, give your name and not the zone if you were under duress. If there was a zone that was unattended, then it was likely there were going to be more rogues in the territory. Or hunters, they were never good. Always scent masked themselves to hide the fact that they were there.

He put in a new patrol ring, just inside the forest line around the pack house and around the centre of their town. Nothing was going to be allowed to get close to the pack house. Conner had not sent out an alert to bring all the women and children in, but they were all prepped and ready to do so. He was hoping not to have to do it.

Didn't really want El asking a million questions about what was going on. Didn't think that the little ones would be able to keep their mouths closed around her either. So extra

patrols were all he could do at this minute. His father and Jared plus half a dozen elite warriors were still off pack territory hunting for any clues as to what was going on.

They were currently far enough away that they were all out of range of being mind-linked to. Brittney had informed him El had returned to her room, and wanted an update. He'd given her the run down, she was the Luna and as he stood looking at her, a woman he'd not really gone out of his way to get to know.

He suddenly realised he was going to have to make an effort, he was mated to the woman's daughter, not that she knew that. So, he answered all her questions, surprised his unit and her Gamma, that he did so. Though he didn't react to their looks, this was actually the first time they were under attack with her being the Luna.

She'd left the office and found all eyes on him, only Adam's had been amused in the way he'd responded to Brittney's questions. That man was not so stupid, he knew what El was to him now, and his responses to Brittney were simply because she was his Mate's mother as well as the current Luna.

"She's the Luna." He'd stated to those questioning eyes that were on him "I am not the Alpha, the heir. I am actually expected to report to her." It was the actual truth, but none of them had expected it, seeing as how much he disliked humans. "Father will rip me a new one." He muttered "If I don't answer her questions."

That had seemed to solve those questions. They all knew the protocols around here, he'd seen Adam bite back a laugh and refrained from glaring at him. They'd not had time to discuss what he expected of his Beta and the knowledge he now had. Which was for him to keep his mouth shut is what.

Adam likely knew this, but that man he knew, wanted to know just how long Conner had known, considering he'd asked him that very question, 'Is El your Mate.' He likely wanted to know if Conner had lied to him about it. That was going to cause a bit of tension, he thought, but the man would just have to get over it.

He and his whole unit were standing by the pack map in the war room, every border was covered, no-one was missing at that point. He'd heard from the most north-eastern border patroller that he'd seen their Alpha and Beta head off down a track towards the Idaho border itself. Their pack did back right on to that.

They'd all been in human form but looked to be on a mission, likely scenting something and were tracking it. He'd asked to be informed the moment they were seen coming back. They were all waiting on that.

He doubled up the night perimeter border, two per section as was standard protocol, had rubbed his hand over his face a few times, was tired himself now. Adam was crashed out on the couch catching a few zee's as well he should be, but without knowing when

and where an attack was due to come from he had no choice but to be awake and in-charge.

He could sleep when his father got back, though there was still no word from him yet and it was nearly 10pm. Parker had told him to sleep he'd wake him, but that would be him being lax in his duties. And that was something he was not where the pack was concerned.

He got himself coffee and prowled around being on the move helped to keep sleep at bay. It was nearly midnight when he felt that connection re-established with his father. He could also feel him and the warriors he was with coming quite quickly. It was late and they were, in all likelihood, all in wolf form. They could move much faster in wolf form.

'Conner is everyone safe.' Came right down the mind-link within less than thirty seconds of feeling his father.

'Yes, all pack members accounted for, doubled up the patrol, and put in a second line of defence.'

'Good work Conner. Brittney?'

'Asleep in your suite, I believe.'

'I'll be there soon.'

'Father?'

'It's not us, we're being distracted to prevent helping another.'

Conner frowned, that was one hell of a game plan, it wasn't just an attack then, it was all out war and, by the sounds of it, with one of their allies, which meant that the Alpha about to start said war, knew who his target was allied with.

Random attacks over the past three days, he thought about that, what they had seen. So close to their border, it was to prevent them from seeing others in mass going by, wondered if it had happened yet or was yet to have started. Them being distracted, someone was thinking ahead about who was not only allied but who was closest and could get there quickly as well.

There were several smaller packs around here just a few hours by road. They could run it in a straight line at full wolfen speed, and get there in half the time to most of the smaller packs they were allied to. It is actually what they would do.

He woke Adam a few minutes prior to his father arriving, and met him at his office. They all looked tired to him, frowned at the welts he could see on several of the elite warriors,

they'd been in a fight out there, his father and Jared were both healed up, but the Elite were still recovering.

"What happened?"

"Two dozen rogues." His father muttered as he strode over to his desk, flicked through his rolodex and then punched in a number.

"Is it that bad?"

"Likely so." His father nodded.

"We managed to beat information out of one, he didn't look much like a rogue, well fed. Had clothes and all." Jared commented as he sat down.

Conner frowned, "How far out?"

"About halfway from here to their intended destination. Though they were there to deter us from what we gathered."

He turned his eyes to his father as he announced himself to Alpha Thomas, of The New Moon Pack. Blinked in complete surprise about that, being the pack about to be attacked, the man was a big bloody hippy, everyone liked him. Conner couldn't for the life of him see a reason why anyone would want to start a war with Alpha Thomas.

He was listening to his father, telling him of what had gone on down here, the attacks they had been having, the rogues on their territory today, and then they'd hunted and found a band of them camped out about halfway between the two packs. He'd dispatched them all, after getting information out of one of them.

The information being that they were just a scout group to keep an eye on them here, to report back to their Alpha if they saw movement that would lead them to believe he'd sent any warriors to help with the on-coming attack on the New Moon Pack.

They couldn't get the exact date of the impending attack, they knew was coming, it didn't appear that was informed knowledge to the rogue, they were just there to report movement.

Stated he would send Conner and his Unit first thing in the morning with a hundred warriors and told that man to pull his allied to him, that it was Alpha Victor of the Bloodless Moon pack that was coming.

Conner's head whipped around, everyone knew about that man's ruthlessness, no-one wanted to go up against him. He was a full-on savage, and it was known he used rogues to do his bidding, always travelling with a band of them. Didn't initiate them into his pack, but had their loyalty. Likely attracted to the viciousness of the man himself.

Accounted for why they were seeing so many as well, but no one knew the real extent of Victor's rogue army. Not even the wolfen council.

Though Conner noted it never seemed to get any smaller, he also never heard that man claim to have one. Just a loyal few is how he'd heard him put it once at an Alpha's conference a few years ago when he'd been questioned about it.

Victor had gone on about "when I can trust them, then they can be initiated into my pack. Got women and children to protect, but all deserve a second chance." Had spoken with a calmness that came from years of dealing with other Alpha's. He'd been in a room full of Alpha's his allied as well as not allied.

Likely he'd prepared that statement. He had sat there all relaxed in his chair, without a care in the world. That man didn't care who liked him and who didn't. He had his own allies that relied on him and he was vicious in protecting those he was allied to as much as his own home pack.

Conner had asked his father later that night how Victor came to be an Alpha, how a man like him had so many allies. His father had shaken his head, "Who knows Conner, Alpha's have dealings for all manner of reasons. It could well be fear, could well be that he's a nice person. Though I don't get that from him. There is just something that I don't like about him."

Conner had agreed with him on that. The man though was very relaxed in his position as an Alpha, sometimes when he looked around the room, or you caught his eye, there was that shiver of pure fear that shot through you. The man knew it too, liked knowing everyone feared him. His pack wasn't all that large, from reports. But it was the unknown quantity of rogues he held that bothered most. No one really believed he only had a few, as he stated.

He would use those instead of his own warriors, therefore his pack never lost any of its strength, he was very strategic. Certainly not dumb, likely attended those Alpha Meetings just to see who was out there, size up the Alpha's and their heirs, maybe align himself to those that were not allied or enemies to each other, pick a side if he wanted to take over one pack, use that pack as cannon fodder, and then pull the females wolves and children into his own pack after a war.

Conner didn't have a problem going to aid with Alpha Thomas and a full show of strength when Victor turned up, might just make him realise he was out numbered and decide against the war. If his plan had been outed, and he was not going to win, get what he wanted, whatever it was. It might just deter him.

That was the plan he could hear his father discussing with Alpha Thomas, who was now on full alert, thanked him for the heads up and told him there would be plenty of space to accommodate them, he'd be ready for the assistance they were sending. That he would indeed pull in his allied to assist with numbers.

Conner looked at his father, it was never good to send anyone into the middle of a war. "Go and get sleep, all of you. I want you all gone by sunup. Did you sleep at all, Conner?"

"No," he answered honestly. "Adam got a few, and both Brayden and Cameron are out on patrol."

"Bring them in, son, you lot are going as full, allied assistance." Saw his father look right at him. "I trust you can handle this Conner."

"Of course you can, father. It is what we train for."

"Good, I'll stay here and protect the pack with my unit. We'll keep an eye out for Victor's forces, though I don't think he'll cross over land, he'll travel by car, and only cross land when needed, to keep his forces hidden. I'll call and let Thomas know of any movement we see, if we see any, a heads up, only a few hours likely, but that is better than none at all."

"How long do you expect we will be gone?" Conner asked.

"Till it's over son, pack properly. Don't get yourself killed. Steer clear of Victor himself, he's much older, let Thomas and the more experienced Alpha's handle him. I want my Heir to come home in one piece."

"Yes father." He nodded.

Till it was over, better bloody be quick. The full moon was approaching them quickly now, and he wanted to be here in front of EI when it set. Otherwise they were going to have to wait four more bloody weeks. Didn't think that was likely to happen, they were barely containing themselves now, and with her having unwittingly mated herself to them, they needed to sort that out quickly.

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Chapter 48

EI POV

El had been called down to Logan's office. She'd actually heard her mother state "I don't like it, Logan. She should be here right now."

"She's better off with her grandmother right now." She'd heard Logans reply, right before he looked up at her as she'd been about to knock on his office door. "Come in El." He waved her right into his office.

She'd walked in, it wasn't just her mother in there, but all his CEO's as well, all sitting around. They'd all looked at her as she'd walked across the room. Her mother, she noticed didn't look so happy. She looked at Logan.

"I have decided that you can go to California and meet your grandmother there. I hear your father's birthday is in three days' time. So, if you leave first thing in the morning, you can get to California a day ahead of schedule. Two nights there and then I'll call, and we'll discuss you staying a few more days to be with your friends, if your grandmother is willing to be with you. If you do exactly as I tell you, no deviations, El."

She nodded, "Thank you Logan." She bit down on the smile that was trying to burst out of her, she was getting the hell out of here finally.

"I mean it, El. I will be booking your accommodation, between here and there, and you will check in on your social media, and log it so I can see you're actually there. I will call you and you will pick up, speak to me. Do you understand?"

"Yes Logan." She nodded.

"I will be arranging all your accommodations on the way there and the way back, as well as where you will be staying in California."

She nodded, she was fine with that, could do all of that, she was planning on flying out of LAX anyway, so up until she was on that flight everything would go smoothly. He would see her doing just that. Being the good little girl he expected her to be.

"I will call your grandmother and she and I will talk, go and pack El."

She turned to leave and found her mother standing right there in front of her, just hugged her tightly. "I'm glad you're getting to go El. It'll be nice for you to see your grandma too." Pulled away from her and brushed El's hair from her face, looked right at her "I'm sure Sloan will be happy to see you too. Got your father's eyes, your grandmas too. She loved looking at you as a baby, was so proud you got her family genes in that department."

"I know." She nodded. "I'll tell dad, you're happy."

Saw her mother smile and nod, "I'd like that. I am happy, El."

She just nodded, stepped around her mother and headed back up to her room, had to refrain from running all excitedly all the way up them stairs, from laughing excitedly. Shut that door and near jumped up and down with happiness. She was getting out of here, away from this weird a*s place, and the man she couldn't bloody resist, a man that was clearly not good for her.

He'd woken her up at some point during the middle of the night, crawled right into her bed and just kissed the hell out of her, pretty much just yanked her pyjama bottoms off and buried his face between her thighs and devoured her, kissing and tasting every part of her so hungrily she'd been crying out for him in just minutes, gasped for breath as he'd looked down at her, trying to calm her racing heart only to have his mouth crash down on to hers, she'd felt her top literally get ripped in half and then just tossed aside, his mouth had been all over her breasts as his hand had slipped between her thigh and pushed his fingers inside of her, goddess he just knew how to touch her, pushed his fingers in and out of her till she was cumming all over again.

Looked right up at him and watched him taste his own fingers, bit her l*p as he g*****d himself, *"you taste so fg good El."* He'd told her, and as if to prove his point had moved back down her body and slid his tongue all over her as if tasting her once more. *"f*k El."* He'd g*****d and then his mouth was on her as he took her in one hard thrust, took her as eagerly as he'd devoured her, till she was cumming, heard him g***n as he thrust one last time, cumming himself and she knew it. His body had laid heavily on top of hers for awhile, and then he'd looked right down at her.

Smiled down at her, as her eyes rolled back inside her head, and a long m**n had escaped her, she could feel him growing hard inside of her, filling her completely, it had been the most amazing thing she'd ever felt. "See what you do to me El." He'd murmured softly against her ear.

She'd been unable to contain the sigh of his name that escaped her as he started to move, much slower this time, his k**s had been slow as well, and she'd wound her arms and legs around him, m*****d his name and enjoyed the feel of him inside of her, it was so much better than the last time. "Please." She whispered and moved her h**s faster.

He'd chuckled softly right in her ear "Tell me El, and I will do it to you. Anything you want." His voice had been deep and dark, and she knew he would.

She'd looked right at him and pushed him a little away, he'd smiled, grabbed her a*s and picked her clean up so she could sit on him, take him for herself, but it was not what she wanted, not really, bit her l*p as she looked at him.

"Not this?" he'd smiled,

She'd shaken her head a little, did she dare to ask? "Like...in the woods Conner."

Saw him smile now, "Turn over El." He told her and picked her up off him, she knelt before him, looked back over her shoulder and he was smiling at her, slid a hand around the curve of her h*p and one up her back to her shoulder as he nudged her knees apart. "You ready El?"

She nodded and he took her hard, and gripping tightly to her, thrusting hard and out of her, just closed her eyes and let him have her, loved it, wanted it this way rough and hard, heard him in her ear as he leaned right over her "More?" His voice all deep and gravelly filled with desire.

"Yes." She cried out and then his arm was around her waist and he was pounding the hell out of her, till a scream of pleasure was ripped right out of her, pushed herself hard back against him. "Don't stop." She gasped, didn't want it to ever stop.

Heard him growl all deep and animalistic and then he was taking her all over again, she took all of him, cried out his name, screamed in pleasure as she found herself falling from one o****m right into another.

Till she was shoved down on the bed, his body hard into hers, heavy on top of hers, his breathing as ragged as hers was. Whined a little when he slipped from her body, heard him chuckle softly, "One day soon El, I'll f**k you nonstop, all night long, you'll scream yourself hoarse, I promise."

She had looked at him as he'd gotten out of the bed and started pulling his clothes on. "I have to go away for a few days." He told her "I'm going to come right to your bed when I get back." He smiled down at her.

Leaned over her on the bed and tugged her over, to look down at her naked body, growled a little at her and she bit her l*p "This body." He smiled, slid a hand down her neck making her shiver with the lightness of his touch, his eyes followed his hand, over her breast teased her n****e briefly and caressed her belly, slid his fingers right through her folds and stoked her core gently, she sucked in a breath. His eyes met hers. "Belongs to me now." Then he just stood and left the room.

She'd done nothing to stop him, couldn't stop him, craved his touch like he said she would. Lay there naked and stared at the closed door to her room. Her body belonged to him now, did not exactly know how to feel about that. A part of her already knew that she did, she would never be able to say no to him. Didn't bloody want to anymore.

But this stupid crazy thing between them was not healthy, he only ever came to her for *sx*, *then was just gone. He didn't want anything from her but sx*. She knew that, and felt that ache well up inside her chest once more. s*x was not enough for her, she'd hate herself for it at some point. Didn't want to be his mistress either. Would rather be alone than feel like this.

Didn't want to be just the one he could come along and **fk at will till he decided on another girl in his bed. She knew it was going to happen. Not once had he expressed that he liked her, no. It was always just you taste good, and you're so f***g good**, El. Closed her eyes and pulled the sheets around her. She had to get away from him and she knew it. Craved the man when he touched her, but hurt like hell when he was not around. Hated what this was with him when he was not around and she was left alone with her thoughts.

She felt tears slip down her cheeks even as she thought it, had to remind herself she was nothing to him, just a good f**k was all. He was going away, she thought to herself as she lay there feeling cold and alone, for a few days, he'd said, and she wondered if she could get the hell out of here before he came back.

He'd just told her he was going to come back and get right into her bed, was going to have her when he got back was all that meant. She had to get out of here while he wasn't here. It was likely going to be her only chance to get away from him. To be free and clear of him forever. She could never come back. Was going to strike out on her own, alone on the other side of the world.

Brought herself from the memories of last night, and pushed herself off the door to her room, she was getting out. Logan had just approved it himself. El yanked her suitcase out and started packing everything she could into it, double checked her passport and birth certificate was in there where she had stashed it. Text to Cordi, "Logan is letting me come home to visit dad's grave. I leave tomorrow, will see you soon."

"That's great El...what about Conner?"

"What about him? He's gone away." She sent back, with a shake of her head, she was always asking about him now. There was nothing there, just s*x. Perhaps Cordi thought it might evolve into something else with that man. It wasn't going to.

He'd come, they'd had *sx*, *granted amazing sx*, but then he'd just up and left like every other time. It was just s*x to him, nothing more. He'd get over it, or have to. She was never coming back. Looked at the family photo she had of her and her mum and dad. Grabbed it and packed it, wondered what happened to all the family photos they'd had in their old house. She only had the ones from her room.

Packed them all. She was never coming back. That meant not even seeing her mother again either. She couldn't even tell her where she was going, or that she was going. Logan would stop her instantly. She could never ever tell her mother, not even once she was gone. A shudder ran through her entire body, Conner would be coming to bring her back. He'd told her he would, and she did actually believe that right this minute. She would be his for as long as he liked.

He'd stop only when he wanted to, found someone else to satisfy him and his needs. Though a part of her wondered how many girls out there could handle a man like him,

she'd not even known it could be like that, so aggressive and hard core. Didn't think many girls would like that, though she obviously did like it. It didn't even hurt, she wanted it like that, a part of her on the inside was screaming for it to be all rough and raw. Could be just as animalistic as he could. Probably what he liked about her, what kept him coming back, was all.

Shook that thought off, had to stop thinking about it, thinking about him. She was packing and getting out. Had approval to leave, and even had 5 days of freedom before anyone came looking for her. Five days till she had to worry or concern herself that anyone would come looking for her. Text her Grandma "Logan's letting me out."

Her phone rang a second later. It was her grandma. "I know honey, I'll meet you in Salt Lake City, Utah. I spoke to Logan already, told him I would fly out there. And we'd drive together."

"Oh, are you going to do that?"

"Yes, I am going to fly out there, pick me up at the airport. I'm still organising a last minute flight. If I can't get one, it's only a 12 hour drive, I'll leave tonight after a long nap in the sunroom."

"Okay, that would be nice."

"I've made my own arrangements for you, El. We'll discuss it when I get there."

"Okay, but I have a plane ticket."

"Don't concern yourself with it. My sister and I have been working on your escape plan for you." she chuckled "Were a little devious ourselves. She can't wait to pick you up. Is going to put you up at her place until your degree starts."

"Thank you, grandma."

"Anything for my Taro's little kit."

El laughed now, she'd not heard that term in a very long time, not since she was little in fact. "This Kit is not so little anymore."

"No, your big and strong now. Sneaky and cunning, an escape artist just like your dad and I. I'll see you at the airport tomorrow, I'll flick you the travel details when I know them." Then the line clicked closed.

She was actually excited now, and was going to be driving with her grandma for days. She really had missed her, it was going to be good to spend a few days with her before going to Italy. Looked at the text from Cordi that was waiting for her to reply to.

'Sorry was talking to my Grandma, she's coming here to get me, we're driving out to Cali together.' Ignored the question of when Conner was due back, what did it matter. He'd said he was going to be gone for a few days. That meant like three or four surely, which meant she was going to be long gone before he even knew she was gone. Even if she was still in California when he got back, it was a full day's drive out there, one and a half if he stopped overnight. So, still five full days before he knew she was actually really gone.

Freedom was so close now she could practically smell it, looked around her room and made sure she'd packed everything she would need, was taking the big suitcase. Logan had stated he might let her stay a few days longer if she did everything he asked her to do. Well, she was going to do that, for as long as she was still in the country anyway. Then bye, bye, Logan and his weird a*s, gated community and that possessive son of his, who thought she belonged to him.

Rubbed at her chest, at the thought of not seeing him anymore, but it was the best thing to do, for her own sanity and she knew it.

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Chapter 49

Conner POV

He'd not been able to leave without seeing El. He just couldn't do it. Had been standing in that elevator going up to the fifth floor, not knowing what was going to happen in the New Moon Pack, if he or all of their warriors were going to come back. How long they were going to be gone? He'd seen his father be gone for weeks at a time when assisting with allied packs.

It wasn't just the battle you helped out with, it was the prep work, the training of warriors in smaller packs. The clean-up of the dead and the assistance needed to help the pack come back to life, secure the borders once more. Make the she-wolves and their pups feel safe and secure. It could take weeks of assistance.

The door opened and his eyes moved down to the western end of the packhouse where he knew she was sleeping. He was likely going to miss the full moon and he knew it. So did Atlas, for that matter, and neither of them were happy about it.

“Go to her, Conner.” Adam commented quietly.

His eyes had moved to his Beta, they were alone up here. It would take an hour or more for Brayden and Cameron to get back from their patrol shift. “I guess now, that’s why you showered before training some days. Getting her scent off of you, huh?”

He sighed, bloody nothing got passed his Beta, “It was.” He nodded, and saw Adam shake his head, “Brayden is going to kill you when he finds out, you know.”

“I know.” He nodded “I did try to fight it.” he sighed.

Heard Adam snort with full amusement “You really are dumb. Sometimes you know that right, Conner. She’s amazing, or did you just not see the courage in that girl, went right after your father, who bloody does that.” Gave him a shove in the direction of the western end of the packhouse. “Not even you.” He chuckled and walked away.

Conner smiled, she really was, had not only had the balls to take his father on, but had the balls to threaten calling the police on him. Hadn’t been afraid to show that bruise he’d given her off either. Knew that every time he saw it, so did everyone else.

Walked himself down to her room and let himself in, stripped right off as he walked across the room, she was sleeping so soundly, he wasn’t going to wake her, but then there was that fear in the back of his mind that something was going to go wrong, and it wasn’t just his need but Atlas’s as well to be with her.

Devoured every damned inch of her, the two of them together sharing their mate, she was so perfect in every way. Knew it was not over and smiled down at her, knew Atlas was also looking down at her as they grew hard inside of her, and that m**n that came from her, the way she sighed out his name.

He would never love another and he knew it, she was it for them both. Moved slow for her, would love her tonight, kissed her long and slow, took her slow and gentle and relished in the feel of her body so tight around him. That was until she wanted more from him, saw that nervousness in her, so very cute as she sat atop of him, biting her lower l*p, before she actually told them what she wanted. ‘Like in the woods Conner.’

Atlas howled inside his mind, she wanted his beast, and he knew it, he had never felt so much pure joy roll off his wolf before. They would not deny her. Atlas was right there for his Mate, to give her what she wanted. All of him growled right down the same question he had in the woods and relished in the ‘yes’ response, took to his human mate with wild abandonment, till she was satisfied completely.

It was hard to leave her there in her bed, a place he should stay and sleep, but he still needed to wait till he scented her out before laying his official claim on her. He headed to his room and crashed out the moment his head hit the pillow.

It was Adam who woke him, put a boot right into his ribs. "Hey sleepy head, you're making us all late you know."

Conner g*****d and sat up. "What time is it?"

"About 15 minutes til sunup, you might want to shower. I still smell Eliza on you." he chuckled "Didn't get much sleep huh?"

Conner shook his head 'no' he'd not, had spent several hours with her, "I'll be down in like ten."

"Have you even packed yet?"

He g*****d as he got up, "No." He muttered.

"Go shower, I'll pack your s**t. Don't say your Beta never does anything for you." though Conner knew the words were loaded with full amusement, Adam meant every word of them. Not only was he out there packing for their allied assistance. He was now keeping Conner's secret about El being his Mate. Had likely stopped all from coming into his room to wake him, did it himself just in case he wasn't in there, or as he'd stated, smelled like El still.

Washed and scrubbed himself clean, looked at himself in the mirror and sighed, did not want to be away from her and he knew it. He didn't bother with shaving this morning, he wasn't likely to see El before he left. If he was this tired, she'd likely sleep all morning, that put a smile on his face. Dried off and headed for his wardrobe, only to find Adam had laid clothes out for him. They were going on foot, with heavy hiking packs on their backs.

He was a good Beta, and it was likely that Brayden was going to beat the hell out of the two of them when he found out Adam knew about El and hadn't said anything either. Stepped out of his room shrugging his pack on to see his father coming down the hall from his own suite. "Son, a word."

"Sorry, overslept."

Saw his father wave it off. "Don't worry about that, you were awake all night and day, to be expected." Looked him over "Still look like you could use a few more hours." Smacked him twice on the side of his face "Couldn't even be bothered to shave huh."

"Might just come back with a beard." He smiled at his father.

Saw his father really looking at him, then shook his head, "I don't see it son. You're too darn good looking without one."

Laughed at his own father and shook his head a little as they headed off towards the elevator, his father was quiet for a long moment and then hit the stop button and looked right at him "This is big Conner, dangerous for you, your unit and all that go with you. I elected to send you and your unit, not because I want to, but..." his father looked right at him "Brit is pregnant, about three weeks."

Conner stared at his father, that heir that was going to be stronger than Conner, was now a reality. If his father elected to pass him over and wait another 20 odd years for that child to grow up. He was useless to this pack. An Alpha blooded wolf with no pack to run, to look after.

"Don't think that, Conner, I can see your brain ticking. I'm not about to pass you over for your brother or sister."

Conner didn't know if he really believed that, could well be sending him off to this battle, not expecting him to come back from it, which would, put that baby Brittney was carrying as the heir to the pack.

"I just want to be here, with her. She is human and an Alpha pup grows quickly, will cause her pain a lot of the time, and she'll need me here is all. To comfort her when it hurts. She's going to deliver quicker than a normal human pregnancy as well, anywhere from four months onwards. You know this."

He did know this, still hadn't said a single word to his father, was just standing staring at the man, they'd had a really good father-son moment upstairs, and now here it was what he didn't want to happen, a sibling that would outrank him.

"Conner son, say something. I haven't told anyone else yet, only found out a few days ago myself. You're the first person I've told."

"My mother, she was a chosen mate to you, wasn't she?"

Saw his father frown, clearly had not been expecting that to come out of his mouth.

"Yes, she and I had an arrangement. She wanted out of her pack, and I needed a Mate to take over due to our pack laws. We knew each other, though had not actually come across each other on a full moon. So it worked."

"Explain further." He stated, wanted to know the whole truth.

"I was in her pack for a mating ball, the first with her there. I found her out in the woods crying and," He sighed, rubbed a hand over his face, "not in a good state, let's just put it that way. When I asked what happened, she tried to run away. I stopped her, told her I could help. She didn't think so, said he would never stop."

Conner was staring at his father absolutely horrified. He knew what that all meant, someone in her home pack was taking her against her will, and more than once.

"I offered to pretend to scent her out, to take her as my Mate. She was a lovely girl Conner, we got along, would hang out at uni sometimes. She stared at me for a long time. Then just nodded and hugged me. So, I walked her back to her house and told her to clean up, to be in the packhouse when the moon set. It's not hard Conner, to make anyone think you've scented out your Mate. I did just that. Walked right up to her and smiled down at her like she was the love of my life, touched her face and then sank my fangs into her right in front of that bastard who'd been hurting her for goddess only knew how long."

"You knew who he was?"

"Not at the time. But I knew he would be there if she was there. Wolves are possessive of things they want. I assure you he's dead. I did that myself a few months later. Unbeknownst to that pack, lured him out with the thought of giving her back to him, he came, wanted her back. Hale and I, took his head clean off for her, while she stood there and watched."

"You and her?"

"We were happy most of the time, but in the end she scented out her Goddess Gifted Mate, it was not pretty. Everyone here thought she was my Goddess Gifted. Your grandfather was royally ticked off. We never told anyone of her history. Promised we'd never talk about it to anyone. I couldn't keep her here, she wanted to be with him. He also wanted her, was a simple warrior. She was going to lose everything, her position and her title here, to be a warrior's Mate. I tried to keep her here, Conner. But it just ended up with us hating each other. I couldn't touch her anymore, she wouldn't allow it. Hale and I, we loved her. It was very hard to deal with."

Conner sighed he'd asked the question and gotten the answer finally, he was the product of a chosen Mate bond, wondered if that was why Atlas was grey and not black briefly. Not that it mattered really, his beast was big and impressive, he was big and strong, reliable and was going to make for a strong Alpha to the pack.

He reached out and started the elevator himself. He'd heard enough. "I'll want to talk about mother when I get back." He muttered and stepped out of the elevator.

"Of course, Conner. You only have to ask I will answer you son. Now about this alliance assist."

"I've got it, father. Just protect all that are here within the pack. If Victor comes here, I want to know, and not hours later, on the spot. I will come right back regardless of the assist we're giving. Our pack comes first, above all others."

"That is the Alpha in you talking." His father smiled at him and clapped him on the back.

Conner didn't think that was it, he had an unclaimed human mate here inside the pack and he was not letting that viscous man put his hands on Eliza. He would bring all his warriors back and unleash Atlas's raw power on that son of a b***h before he had the bloody chance to breach the packhouse.

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Chapter 50

EI POV

EI came down the stairs with her suitcase first thing in the morning, placed it by the front door and then headed off to have breakfast with her mother in the dining room. She'd had to have all her meals with her mother and Logan yesterday. It was one of the conditions for her being allowed to go. She'd done so, lunch and dinner, even spent time walking in the community with her mother yesterday, they'd sat last night and watched a movie together as well. She didn't understand it, her mother's sudden need to be with her all the time. But Logan had simply told her, it's just one day Eliza, can't you spare some time for your mother?

Other than packing, which she had done right away, she didn't have anything on her plate, so she had no reason to say no. He knew it. She didn't have to worry about running into Conner, he'd gone off on some company retreat apparently along with a hundred other of his employees, she'd been told, when she'd mentioned the dining room was much quieter than normal. Would be gone for several days, maybe a week, depending on how the retreat went.

She'd also not hung out with Marlo and his friends in days, and as far as she could tell, they were fine with that. None of them attempted to talk to her or interact with her when they'd seen her. And one or two of them had seen her, she'd smiled at Hayden himself and he'd frowned right at her.

She'd simply dropped her eyes from him and his hard stare which had made her more than uncomfortable, and moved on. She'd been right. They were told to hang out with her. It had hurt more than a little she'd realised, none of them understood how it felt for her to be here. What was going on with her, her daily struggle with herself, the way Conner was with her. How that in itself hurt, caused pain in her all the time.

So, she had elected to be on her own, after that. It was better being solo, she'd decided, to go back to just being on her own all the time. They were all on Willah's side of things, not that El had ever encouraged Marlo, but with Willah hating her, so did everyone else, it seemed. They were all Willah's friends.

So, spending time with her mother was no real hardship. So, she did, spent most of that afternoon and night with her. Then she had gone off to bed early in the hope that she would be able to sleep, though even there in her room, she felt lonely. That ache inside her chest was worse tonight as she lay there in her bed, more so than it had ever been before.

She took several deep breaths and reminded herself she was doing this for her own sanity, couldn't stay here, it was not healthy. She felt like she was losing herself to that man, wasn't at all herself when he was in this bed with her. Needed to get away from him, from this place, to get back to feeling normal.

Though she tossed and turned a lot in that bed, couldn't sleep, couldn't seem to shut her mind off, her head and body were at war with themselves. She knew she had to leave for herself, but a part of her never wanted leave here, knowing Conner would come to her room and have his way with her. That raw need in him, created so much in her.

"Stupid a*****e." She muttered into the room as those words of his rolled around in her head once more, crave me, want me, need me. Even right this minute she did want him, one last time before she ran the hell away from him. He wasn't even here and still she wanted him. It was sick, is what it was to want a man that only used you for s*x and nothing more.

Now she was sitting at breakfast, showered and dressed in her harem pants and her soft green cashmere top, clothes that were comfortable to wear for long periods of time. She needed to be comfortable for the long drive.

She smiled at her mother, was actually happy to be going, though she had slept terribly. She was going to stop by her father's grave before getting on the plane, tell him she was going to Italy, to get that degree and make him proud of her. Lay his favourite flowers on his grave, he loved daffodils, they had a whole garden full of them. She'd seen him some days after they had just first bloomed stretched out in the garden napping down there by them.

They used to do that together when she was little, nap outside in the garden down by the flowers. He always told her they were the sweetest smelling things, that he just really liked them. The colour, their shape, their scent. Everything about them drew his attention. She also noted that her grandma grew them too. Had potted plants of them in her sunroom. As well as several garden beds of them, all different kinds. Her father, though, he just liked the yellow ones, it was all that he planted.

She was walking with her mother and Logan to the front of the apartment complex when Marlo called out to her. She turned and looked at him, hadn't spoken to him in days. "El, where are you going?" he was looking from her to Logan, she realised. Didn't actually think he was asking her, it was more like he was asking Logan.

"To California." She stated simply.

"What? Why?" his eyes moved right to Logan "Really now, when the full."

"Enough Marlo." Logan cut him off. "I have given El permission to go and visit her father's grave site for his birthday."

"But Logan." He shook his head slightly. "Really now?"

"Yes. I think now is a good time. She will be back in five days."

"If she doesn't run off again."

Her eyes moved to Marlo, and she glared right at him, didn't need him bringing that up, Logan might just change his mind and then her plans were shot to s**t.

"She is going with her Grandma, Marlo. A family trip, and rules are laid out. I think this will be good for El, show her we trust her to come back. Right El?" Logan's eyes landed right on her.

"Yes, Logan." She nodded "I do appreciate you letting me go. It is important to me."

"I understand El." Logan smiled at her. "I'll work a bit harder on our relationship when you come back, less rules for you."

"That would be nice. I would like that." She nodded.

"You can use all those lake toys you purchased."

"Oh, yeah I forgot about those."

"It's fine El, I'm glad you're starting to fit in. Now remember you have to use the card I gave you, the whole trip. Check in on social media and pick up your phone when I or your mother call."

"I will." She assured him, would do so till she was on that flight that was. "I do need to go, or grandma will be waiting on me at the airport."

"I'll take your suitcase." He nodded and picked it up "A bit heavy, El."

She walked next to him, not something she would normally do. "You said if I was good, I could stay a few more days and hangout with Cordi, I packed extra clothes for that."

Saw him smiling down at her. "Good, thinking ahead and I will let you stay extra days if you follow all the rules. As I said I would."

She smiled right up at him, "I will, oh I got my acceptance to the university and got a dorm with four rooms allocated to me as well, got that yesterday afternoon, but only read it this morning before coming downstairs."

"Excellent. Would you be amenable to me selecting some roommates for you?"

She looked right at him and huffed. Although she wasn't going to be attending that university, it was actually still annoying that he wanted to do that. Saw him look right at her at her reaction to his question. "Can't the university just allocate students and I can make my own friends?"

He nodded. "I guess so. How about a compromise, one I choose two perfect strangers you can make friends with."

She nodded "Alright, I can live with that." She wasn't going to live with any of it. But if he thought she was, that was all that mattered right this minute, she was still letting him know she was annoyed but compromising with him. Likely better than her just nodding and agreeing, he might see right through that.

He put the suitcase in her father's car, which she was being allowed to drive. He'd not even argued it, just nodded and said alright, when she'd brought it up. Her mother hugged her tightly, "I'll miss you El, come back safe, okay. Don't be any trouble for your grandma."

El actually laughed at that one. She was never actually any trouble for her grandma. "Like I would do that." Couldn't, even if she wanted to, that woman would smell a lie a mile away. "we're just going to sing crappy car tunes at the top of our lungs and eat junk food a lot."

Saw her mother smile "Try to eat at least one proper meal a day."

She nodded "I will, If I can convince grandma to." She smiled and got in her car, looked at her mother as she started the car, this was likely the last time she would see her for a very long time. Years in all likelihood "I love you mum." She told her.

Saw her mother hug Logan as she stood next to him. "We love you too, El." She said, "Now you'd better not keep Sloan waiting."

Eliza nodded, and clipped her seat belt on, before driving away from them, was finally getting out. Freedom just a short, 15-minute drive to the front gates, prayed with all she

had that they would be open for her to leave. That Logan didn't suddenly change his mind, nervousness was setting in and her stomach was all squirely, as she approached the gates, they were closed, slowed down as she approached.

Then they slid open, and she breathed a sigh of relief, bit her lip as she drove out of that place and looked in the revision mirror to see them close. That part of her life was over now, she was about to take that huge step on her own. Drove herself all the way to the Salt Lake City airport. A two and a half hour drive or thereabouts.

She parked the car and headed into the airport to find her grandma, wasn't hard to do. Her flight had landed 10 minutes earlier and she was strolling from her gate towards the front of the airport. Smiled right at El and waved at her. Eliza ran right over to her and hugged her so very tight, just stood there and held on to the woman. Uncaring of anyone looking at them.

"You're alright El, we've got this."

She pulled back, and looked at her, nodded her head as tears welled up. It was really starting to hit her, that she was really going to do this, run away to the other side of the world, to likely not have any contact with her own mother ever again. Took a deep breath in and said, "I'm alright grandma."

"Your scared, is all."

Eliza nodded "A little."

"Come on, we've got a few hours before your flight."

"What?"

"El honey, this is an international airport. Why I chose it? You're going today, will be on a flight in a matter of hours." She touched her face and really looked at her. "Are you certain, Eliza?"

She nodded "I am, I don't belong there, grandma."

Got a slow nod from her grandma, "Alright I've book us a hotel room for a few hours, I need some things from you to keep them off your trail for as long as possible. I'm good at finding people El, so hopefully I'll be good at hiding you."

"Until they know what you did to help me get away."

Saw her grandma smirk. "Let them come, my bite is worse than theirs, I assure you."

They went off to the hotel and to her surprise, her grandma had her sit down and record her voice, read out phrases that she thought would be good responses to any questions

that Logan or her mother might ask her. Had El put her own spin on those phrases. Even had her go and stand in the bathroom and holler from there, a few phrases.

Had her laugh a few times, and g***n, sound annoyed even. "You've done this before haven't you." Eliza asked her.

"Maybe just once." Her grandma chuckled "I'm not just a find your daughter kind of person. That's just what I'm known for."

"How many people have you gotten out, grandma?"

"You don't need to know that. I don't keep records either." She smiled at her. "Now, give me your phone and credit cards, everything that man Logan is using to track you all the way to California."

"Grandma?"

"Oh, you're going to make that trip. Check in like he told you too, answer all those phone calls and then the day before you're supposed to come back, I'm going to shut all your social media down and poof, your gone. Though for him only a day. When realistically it will be near on a week."

"You have done this before."

"Mm, it's in my nature to be cunning and clever. Do sneaky underhanded things. And honey, I like letting my true side out more than you could possibly know at this point." Looked right at her and tilted her head a little. "Perhaps one day you just might."

El laughed softly and handed over everything. She watched her grandma pull everything out of her suitcase and pack it into a new one altogether. Frowned at that, "did your stepfather offer to put it in the car for you?"

"Yes." She nodded.

"Likely put a tracker on it then, I'll be taking that with me. Right, I got all your important stuff. Now I need you to transfer all your money to this account in Italy, it's your new bank account. Your aunt Juliana will give you full access to it when you get there."

Looked right at her and smiled "You ready to start your new life, Kit Hunt."

Eliza nodded, Kit was her middle name, "then let's get you on your flight. And me off on our family trip."

Her Grandma took her right to the Gate, not something she would normally be allowed to do, but somehow managed it, looked right at the security guard and he nodded

“Sloan, good to see you.” opened the gate for her, to let her through. El looked right at her. “I know some pretty high-up people, get a bit of leeway.” She smiled right at her.

Stood with her at the Gate and hugged her tightly, “I love you El, you’ll be safe with Juliana. She lives on a massive commune, might be a bit weird for you, but after Logan’s gated community, I think you’ll do just fine.”

Hugged her right back and thanked her once more before stepping onto that plane and being directed to her seat. Surprised her that she was going to the first class. Had never travelled like this before, knew her grandma had money but never brought it up or asked her about it. She didn’t live like a wealthy person, the only things she spent money on was her garden and her fox collection.

Then the plane was taxiing and then up in the air and she was flying away to the other side of the world, to her new life. Free and clear, for at least, as her grandma said, almost a week. Rubbed at that ache in her chest, that just wouldn’t go away.

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