

16

“What exactly are you accusing me of?” Doyle Mackenzie’s irritated voice asked through the speakerphone in the center of Eric’s desk.

Pacing back and forth, Eric suddenly stopped to turn toward the speaker phone. Fangs growing long and his claws slashing into the edge of his desk, he snarled. “You know what I am talking about! Your mate’s messed up drama just showed up on my doorstep today!”

“I don’t know what you are talking about, Eric. Are you saying that you encountered one of Malca’s enhanced soldiers in your own territory?”

With a disbelieving scoff, Eric shoved away from his desk. His rage filled eyes, turning over to Mark who lounged against the far wall. With a slight nod, Mark stepped up to the opposite of Eric’s desk. Folding his arms over his chest, Mark sighed.

“Doyle; its Mark here.”

“Thank God, at least there is one rational person there that I can talk to.” Doyle’s voice dripped with sarcasm.

With a look of anger, Eric clenched a tight fist against the top of the desk beside the phone. Fearing that his temper would cause him to smash the phone to bits, Mark held up a calming hand to Eric.

“Doyle the situation is...complicated down here.”

“When is it ever not?” sighing heavily through the phone Doyle added, “Tell me what is going on.”

“Eric’s home was attacked while his children were there.”

“No offense, but why would you assume it had anything to do with what we are dealing with here? How do you know that it’s not members of your pack, Eric? It’s widely known that you wolves are known for attacking other packs to acquire more territory.”

“They attacked with guns, Doyle.” Mark replied. “To my best knowledge, most shifters prefer a more personal approach when killing someone.”

Before Doyle could respond, Eric bit out a snarl of frustration. His eyes glowing as his wolf attempted to leap forward, possibly in a vain effort to attack the grizzly shifter through the phone. “What I think is that when I saved your troublesome brother that your mate’s problems have followed me!”

Though Doyle wasn’t wrong about the possibility of it being other wolves behind the attack, Eric knew that wolves didn’t possess the scent that he, Jason and Mark remembered. It had to be the freaks that were always hunting Doyle’s mate.

Tension became as thick as a heavy cloud of smoke as Doyle spoke again, his normal deep voice echoing with the inner fury of his beast—of his bear. “Are you blaming my mate?” instantly, Eric felt the chill of Doyle’s words, but being a leader himself; he shook it off. Before he could respond to the enraged words of his ally, Eric’s hearing picked up shuffling sounds on the other end of the call.

“Give me the phone.” A soft feminine voice ordered.

“I’ve got this!” Doyle snarled, clearly still miffed about Eric’s comments concerning his mate.

Was it possible that Doyle’s mate; Aria, had heard their conversation? A wave of shame hit Eric at the thought and he found he was angry at himself. The last thing he wanted was to burn his new bridge with the Alpha of Darkwood Springs, but he had to know what he was facing.

Voices on the other end continued until Eric heard the sounds of a scuffle. Were they fighting for possession of the phone? As the rough shuffling sounds lessened, Eric recognized the sound of the phone being passed to another person.

“Hey this is Doyle’s irritated mate, what do you want?” Aria’s soft, yet stern voice asked.

“We need your help, Aria. Why would those guys be coming after Eric?” Mark asked before Eric had the chance to piss off anyone else.

“As far as we know; Malca’s main players have followed her to Washington D.C. we’ve just arrived there and are working on another lead on her. I don’t see how she would know anything about you, Eric. Which makes it unlikely that she is personally targeting you and your family. My advice to you is to look more closely at your own pack; I’m sure the answer is there somewhere.”

Eric scoffed. That was not the answer that he needed. “Thanks for nothing, Aria.”

“You called us; remember.”

“My last mistake with you and your pack.”

“Give me that damn phone!” Doyle bit out in the background. With a sound of a light slap, Aria sighed into the phone.

“Little tip for the day, Eric; take a Midol and go play fetch with a ball or something. Then once you’ve done that, maybe you want to look at what enemies you have next to you instead of working to create new ones.” Without another word, the line went dead.

Reaching across the table, Mark hit a button on the phone to turn off the speaker; all the while he eyed Eric with a hard look. Catching his gaze, Eric bit out a foul curse. Pacing the length of his office behind his desk, Eric fought the need to break, tear or maim something.

“You know she’d got a point, Alpha.” Jason said quietly from his spot by the door.

When Eric flashed his beta a hard glare, he was surprised to see Chris was nodding his head in agreement. Alright so maybe he could have handled that phone call a bit better. Mentally shrugging it off, he forced his mind to focus on the issue at hand.

Glancing back at Jason with a shrug, Mark turned back to Eric. “What do you want to do?”

Wincing at the only option open to him, Eric came to a slow halt. “Call a pack meeting.” Eric reluctantly said. “Every wolf under my rule, call them all here. If one of them is behind what happened today, I am going to give them the opportunity to have a second try at me. When they do; I will end this threat to my family permanently.”

When Jason and Chris moved to do as Eric ordered, they paused after barely taking a step when Eric spoke again. “I want the information on Rebecca that you both learned today to stay secret for the time being. Once I discover who attacked my house and the threat is eliminated, then I plan to tell her the truth.”

“Eric,” Chris began with disapproval ringing loud in his voice. “I couldn’t be happier that you not only found your true mate, but that you finally pulled your head out of the sand when it came to Rebecca. That being said, do you think it is wise to introduce her to the pack before you claim her fully?”

“What are you getting at?” Eric raised a brow at his beta’s question, his lips pressing into a hard line at the thought of not fully claiming Rebecca.

“If you introduce her to the pack before there is a bond between you, what’s to stop her from running or denying your claim on her as her mate?”

“Either scenario will get Rebecca killed by the pack, Alpha.” Jason agreed with a solemn look.

Rising to his feet, Mark held up a staying hand as he stepped in the middle between the two betas and their Alpha. “Hold up here. Are you guys suggesting what I think you are?” Mark asked, pointing an accusing finger at Chris and Jason. “Are you really suggesting that Eric forcibly turns his mate and then just tosses her in front of the pack? Giving her a take it or leave it deal?”

As if I would give her an option to say no...Eric thought with a dark scowl.

“What other option is there?” Jason asked. “It would ensure that she’d be safe from the pack. I’m sure she’d eventually understand.”

A mocking laugh rang out from Mark. “Trust me, I know from experience that forcibly binding your mate to you and dealing with the consequences later never works out for the best.” Mark replied with a heavy look of regret.

At Mark’s words, Eric felt his curiosity peaked. Was there more to Mark than he knew about? Mark had never mentioned a mate or any family other than his elusive pack. Making a mental note to discuss the topic with Mark at a later date, Eric settled heavily in his chair, his thoughts returning to his own mate.

Could he really find it within himself to take away Rebecca choice as Jason and Chris suggested? Did the pros and cons truly balance in this? Sighing he began weighing the options. Pros: Rebecca would fully be his, she would be safe from the Act of Revealmnt, and she would become a shifter within a week’s time; making her impervious to most injuries. Cons: It would destroy any headway he’d made with her in the last week, she could come to hate him or even fear him, and the possibility that she would run from him regardless was still a concern.

Either way he looked at it, he’d be silting his wrist when it came to Rebecca.

Go to her. His wolf urged. You’ll know what to do then.

For the first time, Eric found solace with his beast's reasoning. He still had at least two days before all of the pack would be here. He had time to bind her him in every other way. Perhaps that would be enough to convince her to accept his mating mark. Rebecca was a reasonable person; she'd see it his way.

With his mind made up and the pull of his mate too great to ignore any further, Eric rose from his chair and passed the arguing trio. As he left, Mark, Jason, and Chris's voices fell silent. Turning down a separate hall, Eric made his way to the kitchen. With every step his wolf prowled in a nearly stalking manner as the scent of their mate grew stronger.

* ~ * ~ *

Winching with pain as Rebecca reached out to hand both Travis and Emma a small bowl of chocolate ice cream, she forced a smile as the sad eyes of the twins gazed up at her. The simple treat did little to lift the dark clouds from their minds.

"I want Mr. Stripes." Emma said with a sad expression. Knowing that Emma needed the comfort of her stuffed tiger, Rebecca took a seat beside Emma. Looking down at her bowl of ice cream the small girl's bottom lip trembled as a single tear tracked down her face. The small drop of moisture was like a knife in Rebecca's heart.

Earlier when they'd left the infirmary, Sarah had told the children that they would be staying at the lodge for a few days while Eric tidied up a few things. Their reaction hadn't been the best. The twins had instantly cried and grumbled with displeasure that not going home to their toys and seeing their friends at school for the next few days. If not for Rebecca's suggestion that they get some ice cream, the two shifter children would still be stubbornly sitting on the tiled floor of Dr. Tessa's office.

Reaching out to wipe away the fallen tear, Rebecca softened her expression as she spoke. "I'm sure your daddy will go and get Mr. Stripes for you, Emma. It's just for a few days."

With crossed arms over his small chest, Travis grumbled shoving his bowl of ice cream away. "I want to go home. I want my game boy."

Turning to look at Sarah who stood at the sink, Rebecca sighed before turning her attention back to Travis. "I'm sure you guys can go home in a day or so." Turning back to Emma as more tears continued to fall down her reddened cheeks, Rebecca looked pointedly at the untouched ice cream in front of her. "You should eat your ice cream before it melts. I think ice cream tastes so much better when it is cold, don't you Emma?"

Pressing her small lips together, the small girl nodded. Slowly, her small fingers curled around her spoon before pulling her bowl closer. With a scowling look, Travis eventually did the same. Once both children were quietly eating their treat, Rebecca stiffly rose to her feet to join Sarah by the kitchen counter. The old woman was busy working on adding spices to some type of dough in a mixing bowl. As Rebecca leaned wearily against the counter beside her, Sarah lifted her gaze to her.

Eyeing the crudely wrapped bandage around Rebecca's left forearm with a critical eye, Sarah shook her head. "You should have gotten that looked at."

Smiling faintly against the humming pain in her arm, Rebecca shrugged. "I'll be fine. It's just a few scratches." Rebecca said, attempting to downplay her actual injuries.

The truth was that when they had taken Emma and Travis to be checked out by the doctor in residence at the lodge, Rebecca had been too scared to let the glaring woman near her. Dr. Tessa was a shifter like all the rest, but even she could see the inner hate boiling in the doctor's eyes.

The extent of her injuries had been from when she'd dived under the table to rescue Emma during the attack. Shards of glass had cut into her arm that had slid along the floor on impact. Other than a few tender muscles and bruises, she would be fine in a day or so. Not that she intended to stay here this long.

Emma and Travis had Sarah to look after them—they didn't need her; which had been her excuse for lingering all morning. With Eric occupied elsewhere, now was her chance to slip away for good. Turning to Sarah, Rebecca positioned her body until her back was facing Emma and Travis.

"Sarah I need a favor."

Lifting her gaze from her mixing bowl, Sarah frowned. "What type of favor?"

"I need to get a ride back into town. There are some things I need to take care of at home."

When Sarah looked hesitant to say anything, Rebecca felt her hope deflate in her chest like a balloon. About to say something to persuade her further, Rebecca was cut short when she sensed someone else coming into the wide kitchen. Every bone in her body froze as she took in the sight of Eric standing in the doorway. His hard gaze fell on her in an assessing manner and made her nervous. She still hadn't forgotten what she'd overheard in the kitchen this morning.

They know...

Swallowing past the thick knot in her throat, a gust of breath escaped her lips when Eric's gaze dropped from hers and to his children. Instantly he strode towards them, his hands falling on the top of their heads to gently brush at their hair as he spoke softly to them. She could hear what was said, but whatever he did say seemed to put the children at ease.

Almost too quickly he turned toward her and Sarah, his eyes filled with displeasure.

Oh God. I'm too late.

Was this it? Would he expose her now in front of Emma and Travis? Did Sarah already know too?

Before she could question it further, Eric stood toe to toe with her. His eyes latched on to hers like a steel clawed trap. With a gentler expression warming his face, he turned to Sarah with a faint smile.

"Could you keep an eye on Emma and Travis for a few hours?" at Sarah unconcerned nod, Rebecca felt herself become sick with fear. Too fast for her to anticipate, Eric's hand settled over her uninjured arm, tugging her toward the kitchen doorway.

"Eric, where are you taking me? Stop." She hissed out, attempting to twist from his hold. Once they were out in the long hallway that led to the main lobby, she fought harder, no longer afraid of drawing the attention of the twins. "Let go of me."

"I will let go of you when I am good and ready to do so." He stated in a surprisingly calm tone. "First thing; we have some unfinished business that needs to be dealt with."

Dealt with?

Her worst fears had been confirmed. He was going to drag her off somewhere and kill her. Just as that murderous werewolf had attempted to do all those years ago. Shoving away her fear that demanded she cry and cower, she fought harder. She struck at his back with a feeble closed fist as she kicked out at him. She may as well have been attempting to beat up a steel vault with a rolled up newspaper for all the good it did.

Still forcibly tugging her along, Eric dragged her back through the main lobby before heading toward the infirmary once more. When no others were in sight, Eric promptly stopped, spinning towards her with a hard look.

“If you don’t stop hitting me, I will have to ensure you don’t otherwise.”

Still tugging at her captured arm, she glared at him. For the first time since the attack, her fear of what he would do to her once he knew the truth no longer held sway over her. Courage mounting, she bared her teeth at him with anger.

“If you think I’m going to make this easy for you; think again! Now let go of me before I do some real damage to you.” She threatened. It actually felt good to strike back at him, almost like she’d been freed in some way.

Eric’s reaction hadn’t been what she’d expected. Surely at this point he would have turned and attacked her. After all; what was stopping him at this point? Instead of attacking her, his hard expression softened into a mocking grin before he carelessly shrugged his shoulders.

“Fine by me.”

Her world suddenly shifted as Eric jerked her close before bending at the waist heaving her over his shoulder. With one arm around the back of her knees, he pinned her legs to his chest as he began walking again. Gasping in outrage she did everything she could think of; biting, cursing, slapping and punching at his back, though not one single effort seemed to make a difference.

Before she knew it, she saw that he was striding through the double doors of the infirmary. Why was he bringing her here? Before she could ask, he drew her off his shoulder to sit her on an examination table with jostling movements. Quickly she gripped the edge of the table to prevent from falling forward at her abrupt landing.

From across the room, Dr. Tessa stood up from behind her desk with stiff movements. It was clear that she wasn’t happy to see Rebecca back. With angry pursed lips, she attempted to give Eric a look of submission.

“Was there something you needed?”

“I am taking use of your infirmary since you cannot be trusted to do your job.”

Scoffing with dismay, Dr. Tessa shoved at her long black hair, causing the glossy waves to fall down her back. “I do my job to the letter, Eric. I have always done whatever you’ve asked.”

“Until today,” Eric bit out shoving back from Rebecca. Giving Rebecca a hard look, he muttered “Don’t even think of moving from this spot.” Shoving past the glaring

doctor, he began retrieving bandages and antiseptic from the tall mounted shelves against the far wall before returning to Rebecca's side.

What was he doing?

Looking past Eric as he laid out the items he'd collected, Rebecca found her eyes drawn to the glaring woman a few feet from her. If she wasn't so terrified in at moment, Rebecca may have conceded that she was pretty in an average sort of way. She wore her hair nearly down to her waist in long black waves. It wasn't until Dr. Tessa had shoved impatiently at her hair that Rebecca took notice of a thick scar on the right side of her face, where an ear should have been. From what she'd learned of shifters, they had excellent healing abilities, so why was this doctor so horribly scarred? As if feeling her scrutiny, Dr. Tessa stiffened before pulling her long hair over the right side of her face, hiding the hideous scars from view.

"Leave us." Eric bit out when he noticed that the doctor had made no move to help or speak.

With an angry huff the woman stormed from the room, the edges of her white lab coat drifting behind her with her quick strides. Once they were alone, Eric took possession of her bandaged arm and quickly unwrapped the work she'd done just hours ago.

Still surprised at why he was attempting to attend to her wounds instead of killing her, she stared at him stunned. What was he doing? Slapping at his hand, she attempted to pull her arm from him. "See the bandage, genius; that means I already took care of it. Now let me go."

"Shut up and hold still." Eric grated out as he ripped the rest of the gauze wrapping away to reveal a bloody bandage beneath. Tossing the length of gauze aside, he tenderly held her arm still as he lifted the bloody bandage away.

Eric felt his heart squeeze in his chest at the sight of her wounded arm. He supposed in retrospect it wasn't that bad, but inside he shook with fury that someone had harmed his mate. On the underside of her forearm was several thin cut from glass, the edges of each cut was red and irritated. The worst of her injuries was a single three inch cut diagonally across her arm. It was deep and still bled a bit.

"You should have had these seen to." he scolded, turning to rip the cap from the bottle of antiseptic. Quickly dumping nearly the whole bottle on her arm, he held her still as she cried out in pain as the wound bubbled with the contact.

"Ow! You ass!"

"There you go with your language problem." He teased. Taking a thick gauze pad, he patted the area dry then he worked on bandaging the treated wounds. "Perhaps something needs done with that mouth of yours. A good wash with soap would help your disposition too I bet."

"You're such a jerk, Eric." she grumbled out before wincing in pain at the pressure to her wound.

He inclined his head at her words as he secured the bandage on her arm with two crisscrossed strips of tape. "I may be a jerk, but I am the only jerk you will know."

Rolling her eyes, she scoffed. Oh look; arrogant Eric is back. What a surprise. "Why? Are you saying you're meaner than every other man?"

Lifting his amused gaze to her scowling one, he smirked. "No. But I am the only jerk that is going to be inside you." His hands settled on her thigh, as his hands squeezed and caress her muscles. His touch had her shivering within second. Bastard.

Slapping at his hands until he moved them to rest on the table beside each of side of her hips, she glowered at him. "Do you always feel the need to talk about sex? Don't be so vulgar."

"Vulgar?" a single brow rose at the word. "That wasn't me being vulgar. If I wanted to be vulgar I would tell you how I loved how you clawed at my back like a sexy kitten or how I loved being inside you. The feel of your hot body wrapped around mine..."he groaned with the memory as he leaned closer to her. "I couldn't decide whether to sink so far into your soft body and stay there or drive into you until you never remember what it felt like to be without me."

Womb clinching, Rebecca felt her breast grow heavy. Heat flooded her face as every cryptic word slipped from his lips. Gulping she looked away from him, her body trembled slightly at the feel of heat from his body as he pressed between her splayed legs.

What the hell was wrong with her? Just moments ago she was sure he was dragging her off to kill her and now he had rebandaged her arm and now was flirting with her. Was it possible that he didn't know her secret after all?

If that was the case then why had Chris and Jason showed up as they did and what was the scheme Eric was involved in and how did she fit it? Ugh! Too many questions crowded her brain, confusing and irritating her. Not to mention that the feel of Eric

hard body pressing between her spread legs was causing her body to vibrate with need, distracting her from her thoughts.

She flinched with surprise as his hand cupped the side of her face, his face lowering closer to hers. Like a trapped animal, she held herself still. Surprise filled her when his forehead suddenly pressed against her own. Then for the briefest moment, she could have sworn she'd felt him tremble against her. It was more likely that it had been her instead or simply her imagination.

“You should have demanded that Dr. Tessa looked at your arm. What if you had been hurt worse?” When he lifted his face from hers, Rebecca gripped his wrist and tugged his hand away from her cheek.

She shrugged. “It doesn't matter.”

“It does matter!” he snarled. His eyes gone wild and were glowing. “And don't think for a moment that I have forgotten how you kicked me in the face and ran straight into a shower of bullets! I should tan your ass for that!”

“I am not a child!” she shouted at him. “I wasn't about to let Emma get hurt because...” of me. Was it possible that other shifters had discovered her secret and decided to attack Eric's home? Had she nearly gotten them all killed?

“No, you're right.” Eric agreed in a quiet tone, his eyes still boring into hers with a look of anger. “You're not my child, but you are mine.”

She would be lying if she said that his possessive words didn't make her heart swell. She wanted that. To hold onto that look that he flashed at her now, the same look that he'd given her last night as he'd taken her. With everything in her she wanted to be able to trust that Eric wouldn't turn on her if he knew her secret, but it wasn't a gamble she was willing to take.

Forcing her gaze away, she shoved at his chest. “Let me down.” With an annoyed roll of his eyes, Eric stepped back allowing her to slide down from the tall table. Straightening her blouse, she looked up at Eric. “Thanks for saving my life. I would be dead if not for you.” She admitted with a slight smile.

Crossing his arms over his chest, he replied. “Don't remind me how close you nearly came to dying, Rebecca. I don't like thinking about it. If I have anything to say about it; you won't be put in danger like that ever again.”

Her fragile smile fell. If only she could believe him. Sighing, she looked away from him. Without a word she started for the door. It wasn't long until the small hairs at the base of her neck stood on end as she felt him coming up behind her. Stopping, she glanced over her shoulder to see that he was walking beside her as if they were going for an afternoon stroll.

“What do you think you're doing?”

“Following you. Something tells me that you shouldn't be left on your own or I may have to hunt you down.”

Hunt you down...

If that phrase didn't worry her, nothing else would. She was correct about trusting Eric; it wasn't something she could risk. “I'm leaving, Eric.” She said with a firm look, daring him to tell her otherwise.

His eyebrows rose in mocking surprise. “Oh, are you now? Did you really think that I would let you out of my sight, especially after what nearly happened this morning?”

“As much as I worry about Emma and Travis, I know they will be safe here with you and your family. But what happened has nothing to do with me. I'm leaving.” When she turned to walk down the hall once more, her head fell back against her neck as she growled with frustration at the echoing sound of his footsteps beside her.

“Even if I was willing to let you run from me again, you could be in danger after today. You will remain here until I can figure out who tried to kill us this morning.”

Before she could question if Eric knew anything about who had attacked them this morning, she heard a voice call out to her from behind her. “Rebecca.”

Knowing the voice wasn't Eric's; her curiosity was peaked, causing her to turn toward the voice. She froze in place as she saw Damon striding to them. Dressed in a pair of jeans and a black t-shirt with his blonde hair slicked back, Rebecca was surprised there wasn't a fan club of panting girls trailing behind this man.

At the thought, Rebecca found herself mentally slapping herself. Why was she ogling him? She had to remind herself that she wasn't convinced that Damon hadn't spilled her secret to Eric or the rest of Eric's pack. What other explanation was there for the events this morning? She highly doubted that as an architect; that Eric had attempts on his life.

Though Eric hadn't attempted to kill her—yet, she still felt wary as to why he was so desperate to keep her from leaving him. He had to know. He more than likely simply wanted to keep her close to find out what all she knew before he killed her, which meant that she had no ally now; least of all Damon.

Schooling her apprehension, Rebecca smiled friendly at Damon as he came to stop in front of them. Almost instantly she noticed that Eric's face had darkened at the sight of Damon. His hands fisting at his sides as a low rumble echoed so softly in his chest that she would have missed it if she hadn't been standing so close.

“What are you doing here, Damon?” she asked.

Before he could answer, Eric echoed her question as well. “Yes. What are you doing here, Damon? I would have thought that since your business was concluded here, you would be on your way.” Eric bit out with a murderous glare.

Shrugging his shoulders, Damon chuckled. “I found something to stay for I suppose.” His eyes turning to give her a lingering look before flashing Eric a knowing look.

Was she missing something here? Was Damon still attempting to make Eric jealous as he had that one night?

Waste of time, if you ask me. She thought.

Regardless of what Damon's personal game was, she had to find out what he'd told Eric and who else knew her secret. If she was lucky she could find a way out from under Eric's watchful gaze and escape to freedom. She just had to get Damon alone.

Easier said, than done. She acknowledged grimly.

*~ * ~ *

Fire burned in his stomach as Eric watched Damon look down at Rebecca with a gentle look. I should have killed him! What right did he think he'd possibly have to Rebecca? As far as Eric knew; Rebecca and Damon hadn't seen each other since the night of their date. God; that word had never tasted so foul in his mouth before, it was even worse when he remembered that night.

Surely Rebecca wasn't fooled by Damon's playboy charm. Much to his irritation, he acknowledged that Rebecca was even able to resist his own brand of seduction.

To a degree. Eric thought with a smug grin pulling at the corners of his lips.

Despite what Rebecca may say, her body didn't lie when it came to him. She was his in every way. Without a doubt he knew that he didn't need to worry about Damon attempting to pouch his mate.

Turning to look at his soon-to-be-claimed mate with his jaw slackening, Eric felt his blossoming pride in the situation deflate rapidly as he took in her returning smile. She looked at Damon like she was...happy. Happy to see Damon?! Why the hell hadn't she ever looked at him like that?

Jealously filled his gut like a thick oil, sickening him and fueling his rage all the more. Damon wouldn't be getting within a foot of her after this if it was the last thing he ever did.

Grinning at Eric, Damon ran a smoothing hand over his jaw. "I'm sure you'll be happy to know that I didn't sustain any permanent damage to my handsome face from your little tap the other night."

Fighting against the need to lunge at him and remedy the situation, Eric muttered. "Ecstatic."

Shrugging his shoulders at Eric's response, he turned back to Rebecca with a softening expression. "I heard about what happened this morning." Reaching out his hands settled on Rebecca's shoulders as he stepped closer to her. "I am so glad you are alright."

Eric's eyes widened as they fell on the hands that dared to touch his mate. Now I really will kill him!

Take our mate from him! She isn't properly bound to us and he will take her! His wolf snarled as he shared Eric's rage at another touching their mate.

Before Eric could step forward to kill the back stabbing wolf in front of him, much to his relief, Rebecca shrugged his hands off of her shoulders.

"I am fine. Just a few cuts and bruises." She stated nonchalant with a shrug.

Eric bit on his tongue to prevent from pointing out that she'd nearly gotten herself killed and had injured herself badly. The last thing he needed was Damon fawning over his mate even more than he already was.

"I'm glad you both are safe; especially you Rebecca."

Not bothering to cover his scoff at Damon's sweet words, Eric stepped between the two as one of his arms curled around Rebecca's stiff shoulders. "Regardless what your real reason for staying here; run along. Rebecca and I are busy." He prayed that Damon was intelligent enough to understand the not-so subtle hint in his voice. Moving to steer Rebecca away from the possible threat, Eric flashed Damon a look that said; this one is mine.

"Damon, wait." Eric froze at Rebecca's pleading tone as she held a staying hand out to Damon. "I need to talk to you...privately."

Privately? PRIVATELY?! Why the hell would they need to be in private—without him there? Mere thoughts of why this would be needed had Eric nearly grinding his teeth into powder. Perhaps they wanted to pick up where their date had ended? There was no way in hell he was leaving Rebecca alone with this wolf.

Clearly enjoying Eric's anger at what was occurring, Damon shrugged his shoulders. "Sure. Will you walk with me?"

Returning his smile, Rebecca extracted herself from under Eric's heavy arm too quickly for his stunned mind to act. His breaths became more ragged with his control of his wolf slipping when she allowed Damon to clasp her hand tenderly within his own.

His pelt will be a nice addition to my bedroom décor.

Rebecca must have sensed his anger at Damon, because she turned to look at Eric like he was a third wheel nuisance. "I'll see you later." She stated with a distracted voice.

Had she just dismissed him? Oh no. He wasn't going to chase after his mate like some pathetic lap dog. Feeling his wolf breaking through the bonds that kept him from shifting and ripping Damon's throat out on principle alone, Eric forced himself to spin away from them and head toward the main section of the house.

He was in no way done with Rebecca, but until he informed and accustomed her to what he was, he couldn't risk scaring her. Once his rage wasn't so high he intended to drag her back to his room and have a long drawn out talk with her. The first thing he would be sure to decree to her was that she would have absolutely no contact with Damon ever again.