



pressing a flat hand against the middle of her back. “It’s not safe to talk out in the open. We might be overheard. Come with me.”

Too surprised at the new revelation, she mutely allowed Damon to direct her to a small room that served as a storage room. Closing the heavy door behind them, Damon pulled her amongst the maze of towering shelves until they were out of sight of the door. Placing his back against a wooden shelve, he allowed his hand to drop from her.

Taking a step back from him, Rebecca shook off her shocked expression to eye the werewolf warily. Could she trust that he was telling the truth? If what he said was true and Eric didn’t know her secret, that information only left her with even more questions than answers.

Crossing her arms over her chest, she took a step back, placing a comforting foot of space between them. “What did you mean that’s why you’re still here?”

He sighed. “Listen to me. As far as I know; Eric doesn’t know your secret and neither do anyone of his pack.”

“How can you know for certain? You even said, “as far as I know”. That means you could be wrong.”

“I’m never wrong.” He stated smugly. “As for why I am still here, the reason is I’m here for you.” Shoving his hands into his jean pockets, he took a step towards her, his golden eyes bearing heavily into her own.

“What do you mean?” she stuttered out. “If you’re trying to hit on me again; now is not the time.”

Chuckling low, he shook his head. “I’m not hitting on you. I am here for you—to help you.”

“Help me how?”

“You need to confide in Eric.”

Air rushed from her lungs as panic swelled within her. Was he insane? She may as well as take a gun and blow her brains out herself. “Are you crazy?” she hissed out. Shaking her head, she stepped back from him like he was a dangerous animal. “You promised you would help keep me safe. How is revealing my secret to Eric helping?”

“I cannot remain here in his territory for much longer. I have been called back to my pack. I’m here on borrowed time already. But I don’t want to leave unless I know for certain that you will be protected against the wrath of Eric’s pack.”

“I’ll run and disappear. I’ve done it before I can do it again.”

“Running and hiding will not protect you from the Right of Revealment.”

Squeezing her eyes closed she shook her head. “What are you talking about?”

“The Right of Revealment. It is a law that is evoked by shifters whenever our secret is threatened to being exposed by a human. It states that if a human knows or even suspects what we are; they are to be eradicated immediately for the good of all shifters. There is only one loophole in this law that can save the human from a painful and terrifying death.”

Nearly afraid of what he would say, Rebecca found the courage to ask, “What?”

“If the human is claimed as a true mate.”

“Like a wife?”

“It's much more than that, but yes. True mates are rare amongst shifters. Only a small number of shifters have been lucky enough to find their true mate's. For my kind, true mates are our soul mates times thousands. Our true mates have the ability to draw out our inner beast fully and doing so; uniting the shifter and their inner spirit. True mates are our matches in every way and become our lifeline once we claim them.”

“Claim?”

Waving away her question, he continued. “In all of our history, a human has only turned out to be a true mate in a couple of times, but here recently more and more shifters are finding their soul mates amongst humans. You are Eric’s true mate.”

For a moment she blankly stared at him. Then; a moment later a snort of laughter bubbled up from between her lips. Covering her mouth as she laughed, Rebecca shook her head at him. “You’re funny.”

With a stony expression, he replied. “I’m serious.”

Laughter fading, Rebecca’s expression filled with doubt. “No. it’s not possible.”

“Answer me this; do you feel drawn to Eric? Like something is tying you to him and won’t let you stay away from him? Do you feel a connection to him even though you don’t know why? Do you hunger for him against your own will? Do you feel possessive of him?” The dawning realization on her face was Damon’s answer. “Those are all signs of true mates.”

“You’re mistaken. Yes, I find him attractive and feel a connection to him, but that’s just because we had sex.”

Nodding in understanding, he stepped into her personal space. “Let me prove it to you.” His hands suddenly clasped her hips in his hands, jerking her up against his hard body. “Kiss me.”

“E-Excuse me?”

“If Eric is not your true mate and you are not his; nothing should stop you from wanting another. Kiss me and you will know for certain.”

When Rebecca made no move to kiss him, Damon grew impatient and reached up to grip her ponytail in his fist. Holding her still with his hand in her hair and the other wrapped around her waist, Damon’s mouth crashed down over hers.

Eyes wide, Rebecca stiffened under his moving mouth. Even as she held herself stiff against him, she felt Damon’s mouth move against hers, attempting to entice a reaction. She expected to feel the warm rush of sensations that always accompanied Eric’s kisses. But Damon’s kiss only left her feeling cold. It wasn’t a moment longer until Damon lifted his mouth from hers. The hand that had held the back of her head still, now slid down to rest at the back of her neck.

With a blank look, Damon shook his head at her. “Even I know that you didn’t find that kiss remotely stirring.” Dropping his hands from her, he took a step back. Crossing his arms over his chest, pulling the material of his t-shirt tighter over his muscled chest, he watched her. Waiting for her to deny his words and to deny that Eric wasn’t the only one she wanted.

Rebecca shook her head. “This isn’t poss—”

“Don’t even bother to finish that sentence. It’s true, Rebecca. The longer you fight this the less time you have to save your life.”

Turning away from him, her arms wrapped around her middle as she paced back and forth. Spinning back to him, her gaze was troubled as her teeth bit down into her bottom lip. “How did you know?” she asked softly.

“If you watch someone close enough and often enough, you can see things that they won’t admit to even themselves. Every since you came into Eric’s life, he’d been different. More on edge and almost everyone could sense his wolf rising against his control more and more. Eric simply didn’t want to admit it to himself.”

Her eyes narrowed with suspicion. “Why then did you ask me on a date if you knew that I was his?”

That night, Damon had said that he wanted to force Eric out of his own stubborn ways, but for what purpose? What did Damon have to gain for Eric to know the truth about her?

His crossed arms fell as he rubbed a tired hand at the tight muscles of his neck. With a groan he answered. “There is only one thing that can push a shifter’s beast over the edge faster than anything and that is another male threatening to take a mate away. I knew that if Eric wouldn’t see reason; his wolf would force him to.”

“I still don’t see why you went through all this just to throw me and Eric together. We don’t even like each other.”

“You may think he doesn’t like you, but trust me when I say that Eric would kill anything and anyone that came between him and you.” Taking a step closer a heavy weight seemed to settle upon his shoulders. “Listen to me, I am telling you this not to scare you or to push you; but to warn you. The only chance you have at surviving is to tell Eric your secret as soon as possible.”

Icy terror filled her at the thought of doing what he asked. There was no way she possessed that kind of courage to lay her life on the line and pray with fingers crossed that Eric would be understanding and protect her. “I can’t do that.”

“You have to.” he said earnestly.

“You said that you would be my protector.” she pointed out, grasping for anything but telling Eric the truth.

“I can’t.” his voice strained woefully. With a defeated look, he clenched his fists at his sides. “I hoped that I could keep others from finding out your secret, but I had always

hoped that you would eventually confide in Eric. But things are happening that changes all that.”

Sensing the seriousness of what he was trying to tell her, she asked. “What things?”

“A power struggle is occurring within Eric’s pack. Many will want him dead and anyone who stands with him. It won’t matter whether others know about you or not.”

“Power struggle? What about this scheme Jason and Chris mentioned?”

“Thing you have to know about wolf shifters is that we are very power hungry and territorial beings. We don’t do change well and for our safety; we stick with our own. Eric has been secretly forming alliances with other packs of different castes, something that no wolf shifter has done in a long time. He’s changing traditions that have stood for thousands of years and it is causing his own pack to rebel against him.”

“With all that happening you still think it’s a good idea to unload my secret on Eric? You’re crazy.”

“Rebecca, regardless how your secret comes out, Eric is the only person that can spare your life. I have no doubt that Eric’s enemies are watching him, his children and you for a weakness. As bad as this will sound; you are a liability to Eric. Why do you think that his home was shot up this morning? You will never be completely safe until Eric claims you as his.”

Eyes filling with tears at the finality of her situation, she squeezed her arms tighter around herself. Running was out of the question now. Eric’s enemies would find her, whether to kill her for the secret she harbored or to strike back at Eric. Unmistakably; she was a walking target.

Seeing her watering eyes, Damon stepped forward, his arms wrapping around her and drawing her to his chest. Smoothing a flat hand over the top of her hair, he sighed. “I promise to stay until the next full moon; that’s a week away. According to my information, Eric has summoned everyone to gather here in the next few days. He plans to use the opportunity to draw out his enemies. You need to tell him before someone tries again.”

Tilting her head back to look at him, she blinked her hopeless tears away. Damon was right. She couldn’t hide any longer. It was time for her to stop running. She had to trust Eric and trust this bond between them.

“You promise you won’t leave me?” She was disgusted at how pathetic she sounded, but the truth was, Damon was her safety net, at least for the time being. She wanted to trust Eric to cling to him like she did with Damon. Though Damon was just a precarious friend, Eric was more and could be much more if their reaction to each other was anything to go by.

His hand cupping her cheek, he smiled down at her. It was a warm, caring smile and his touch against her face no longer felt flirtatious, but brotherly. “For as long as you need me, I promise.”

“She doesn’t need you.” A dark voice said from behind them. “She’s mine and you; my back stabbing friend are dead.”

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Unable to walk any further, Eric feet stumbled as he fell against the wall to his left. His claws spouted from his fingertips, leaving grooves in the wall as he fought to hold himself up. It was too much, he couldn’t fight it. Beneath his skin, his beast rose.

Panting he bit back a snarl of pain as his beast rose, so did the deep ache in his chest, the ache of refusing to claim his mate. To make matters worse, he’d walked away from another mate, leaving her with another male! His wolf wouldn’t accept it and now; neither could he. If he was forced to reveal what he was to Rebecca this day because of his lack of control, then so be it. He would attempt to make her understand what he was and quell her fear that would follow, then he intended to claim her until there was no chance of her ever leaving him.

With a determined look, he shoved the pain in his chest away, forcing his legs to move, he straightened to his full height. Turning back toward Rebecca’s lingering scent, with his claw fisted hands at his sides, he followed her trail back to her. When he passed Doctor Tessa on her way back to the infirmary, he snarled in her direction, never breaking a stride.

Coming to a stop, Eric found he could no longer follow Rebecca’s scent. Her sweet drugging scent was cut off as he came to a stop at the heavy door of the large medical storage room. Why would she need to talk to Damon in here?

Carefully pushing the door open, he stepped into the sun lit room. Immediately Rebecca and Damon’s combined scents hit him in the face. It should be his scent mixed with hers and his only.

In time, He silently assured himself. Breathe. Control.

Past several shelves he could hear their murmuring voices, but he was too frenzied at retrieving his mate to pay attention to their words. Moving on quiet steps, he flattened his body against a shelf, peering around the edge. He needed to retrieve his mate; but he needed to know what pull Damon had over her. Observing them for a moment wouldn't cause any harm.

Gripping the edge of a wooden shelf, he felt his hands pulverize the thick wood to splinters as his eyes took in the sight before him. Just a few feet away stood Rebecca...being kissed by Damon.

His eyes took notice of how Damon held her against his body. His arm around her waist as his free hand buried amongst the strands of her ponytail, his clenching fingers holding her close as his mouth moved over her.

Killing rage seized him. It was official. He was going to let loose his wolf and kill Damon in the most bloody and painful way possible and if he was lucky, he'd have time to shift to his human form and do some damage as well before the traitor died.

Glancing away, he gritted his teeth as his wolf fought to attack. If he attacked Damon now; he risked his human mate. Sighing, he forced himself under control. He blocked out the sound of their hushed voices as they spoke. He didn't want to hear what the two were saying to each other. If Rebecca were to say that she loved Damon, there was no way his wolf would be able to remain calm. It was Beth all over again. Why would fate be so cruel to give him his true mate and have her fall for another? He vowed silently that he would fight this time. He wouldn't another mate to leave him. Rebecca was his, if he had to win her from Damon, he would do so.

As he focused on his breathing to bring down his primal aggression, a thought occurred to him. As they had kissed, Eric had noticed that Rebecca didn't return Damon's embrace, nor had her lips moved against Damon's with willing abandon. Not like they had with his.

When he'd taken Rebecca last night, she'd clawed at him as her lips moved over him. Her body had strained against his, as though she couldn't get close enough. Even this morning she'd responded to his kiss with such passion even without him touching her. Was it possible that Rebecca didn't want Damon? The thought gave him hope.

When he could finally see past the red haze of jealousy that had clouded his mind, Eric turned back to the two. This time, Damon had his arms around her in a different way. His arms held her to his chest while his hand smoothed tenderly over the top of her head. More focused, Eric picked up more scents in the room; sadness and fear.



The bitter smelling emotions rolled off Rebecca in waves, urging him to go to her. But when Damon spoke, Eric felt his feet freeze, unmoving.

“I promise to stay until the next full moon; that’s a week away. According to my information, Eric has summoned everyone to gather here in the next few days. He plans to use the opportunity to draw out his enemies. You need to tell him before someone tries again.”

Tell him what? Though he was furious that Rebecca had turned to Damon for comfort when she was obviously upset over something, he felt his mind whirl at what he was hearing. What was Rebecca hiding from him? He recalled their conversation earlier this morning, how she’d told him that she had parts of her that he would never touch. How bad was it that she felt more safe telling Damon than him?

“You promise you won’t leave me?” Rebecca’s voice sounded pleading. Like a child begging a parent not to leave them alone in a dark room. There was so much fear in her. Her fear would be his enemy and he would defeat it. He just needed to discover what she was hiding.

Gazing down at her fondly, Damon cupped the side of Rebecca’s face as he said, “For as long as you need me, I promise.”

Unable to stand remaining in the shadows any longer, Eric stepped from his hiding place. “She doesn’t need you.” He smirked when he saw Damon’s and Rebecca’s startling gaze turning to look at him. Focusing on Damon, Eric bit out. “She’s mine and you; my back stabbing friend are dead.”

Lowering his hands from Rebecca, Damon stepped away from her. Holding his hand out, Damon lowered his head in the universal shifter sign of surrender. Eric scoffed. Like that would save him in the end. The thought of wiping the floor with Damon on principle alone was tempting, but he had more important things to do first, such as discovering what Rebecca was hiding from him.

“How...” Rebecca began with a shaky voice. “How long have you been watching us?”

“Long enough to see that Damon doesn’t know how to keep his lips to himself.” He bit out with a narrowing look to Damon.

Turning to look down at Rebecca as her face flushed, Eric couldn’t resist reaching out to her. Grabbing the front of her blouse, he jerked her to him. Ignoring her gasp, he cupped the sides of her face. He could feel her breasts rising and falling against his

chest as she panted for breath. With a concentrating look, Eric smoothed the thick pad of his thumb over her lower lips, wiping away whatever lingered of Damon's lips.

When his hands fell away from her, Eric smirked at her look of confusion. "When I kiss those lips, I want to only taste you—no one else."

Aware that Damon was watching their exchange, Eric rounded on him. "This is the second time that I've caught you with your filthy mouth on my woman." as though sensing Rebecca's outraged response, Damon grinned with a boyish shrug.

Whack! With a dark scowl, Rebecca slapped the back of her hand against Eric's chest. Though she'd most likely put a good amount of strength behind her slap, it felt like a love tap to him.

"Way to make me feel like some toy to be fought over!" she hit him again, her breath escaping with frustrated pants. Shoving impatiently at a lock of hair that had escaped from her ponytail to fall in her eyes, she glared at Eric. "If you even think about attacking Damon I promise I will make you sorry."

She's so fierce, so beautiful...So mine...

Rubbing a hand over the spot where her hand had struck him, he smirked down at her. Right over his heart. She couldn't have hit a more appropriate spot. Emotions that Eric would normally scoff at the mention welled up. He had to uncover everything he could about his mate, because for the first time in years, he was seeing things with perfect clarity.

He was in love this scowling human, with Rebecca.