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High above the waterfall, flames of jealous rage leapt into Myra's eyes as she watched the embracing couple in the water below. Her claws flared, slashing through the bark of the tree she peered around. A growl escaped from deep within her as she watched that disgusting human twine her arms around the Alpha's neck pulling him closer as he deepened their kiss.

Myra hadn't wanted to believe what she'd seen earlier when Eric had turned away from her only to slink off with the human. This was who he wanted?! A pathetic, weak human woman! A leader like Eric needed a strong mate, he needed her! He was hers!

She'd had her eye on Eric ever since his mate of convenience ran off with her lover. She was destined to rule beside him and no human was going to stand in her way! Her bitter thoughts fueled her rage. She wouldn't go along with this quietly. Eric would be hers, no matter what.

Turning away from the sight of her Alpha with his hands on that filthy human, Myra called upon her inner beast. Bones snapped and reformed, skin turned to fur and her flawless face changed. In her wolf form, she turned away from the couple with a snarl. She was going to make that human wish she'd never stepped foot in Eric's territory and she knew just how to.

With her lupine lips curling, she lunged forward. Her legs rushed over the ground, scattering leaves and snapping twigs in her run. She ran and ran like the devils of the earth were on her heels. After traveling for several miles hours later, she finally reached the border of the pack's land and onto the land that now belonged to the previous Alpha. The Alpha that Eric had defeated and spared all those years ago.

Her father.

Moving through the over grown forest, she leapt over a rotten log before shoving her small form through the large brush that stood on the edge of her family home. The gray two story plantation home loomed a couple feet in front of her in the fading light like a beacon of hope. She would find what she needed here.

Shifting back into her human form, she calmly made her way up the wooden steps of the porch to the towering structure. Carefully opening the door, she entered the quiet house. Hanging on pegs to the left of the door was a spare dress of hers. With a pause, she snatched it up and pulled it over her head.

Traditionally; shifters didn't bat an eye at nudity, but when shifting without first removing your clothes resulted in destroying them. Out of habit, she had always left a spare item of clothes lying around just in case it was needed. Curling her nose at the musty scent of the short black dress, she wiped at the dust along the hips before moving past the curling wooden staircase toward the living room.

In the living room, she found her father sitting in his usual seat. The wingback chair was a faded blue, the material so worn and covered in dust that it was obvious it had seen better days as had the rest of the house. Ever since her mother had been killed by humans thinking she was just an average wolf, her father had simply existed. His hate of humans was the one thing she had in common with him.

Sensing her, Senan tossed back the rest of the amber alcohol in his glass tumbler before tossing it against the wall beside the roaring flames within the stone hearth. The glass shattered, the shards fell to join a growing pile in the floor. Her father looked out of place in just a neglected room. He was a well kept man dressed in a silk shirt, dark slacks and his fine shoes. He must have just returned from the city. His face was worn and unshaven, his eyes dark. He was like this when his anger was brewing and he was recalling the death of his mate.

Must be Tuesday. She thought bitterly.

Instead of skulking around his manor, she wanted her father to get back the fire he'd once had. The same fire that burned deep within her. It was obvious that he longed to seek revenge for her mother's death. But as an old man, he didn't have the strength to face Eric for a second time and come out alive if he wished to challenge pack law.

"Why are you here?" he said emotionlessly. His eyes never strayed from the dancing flames in front of him.

"I bring you news of the pack." She answered, stepping further into the room. She came to a stop beside the fireplace so that he was forced to look at her, pursing her lips in anger when he still didn't look at her.

Rubbing at the side of his left temple, Senan sighed. "I do not care about the pack." Eyes flaring, he nearly spat the word "pack" from his lips in anger.

"There may finally be an opportunity for us, Father. An opportunity for you to take your revenge against the kind that took your mate from you."

Her words worked like a lure for a hungry fish. Slowly his gaze shifted to her face, interest colored his expression. “What kind of opportunity?” after a moment he asked. “Have you heard from our allies?”

“Don’t worry about our allies. This is even sweeter than what those freaks have promised us. This is an opportunity for you to claim double fold revenge for your mate; against the humans and against Eric.”

A dark smile curled along his thin lips. “I’m...intrigued. Tell me more.”

Stepping forward, the fire light casted her shadow across the room, making her blonde hair glow with the fading light. “Eric Daniels is secretly bedding a human woman. I suspect he has for some time.”

Senan smirked mockingly at her. Settling his elbows on the shredded arms of his chair he tented his fingers. “Are you jealous that a human is trying to steal your prospects, my daughter?”

Expression hardening, she pressed her lips together in anger at the thought. “She is not worthy to be an Alpha’s mate.”

Her father gave a cynical laugh. “A human? I wouldn’t worry about that happening. The elders would never allow such a thing and Eric isn’t that stupid to attempt it.”

“Don’t be so sure. There are rumors that he’s already gone against the elders and formed peace treaties with other kinds of shifters.”

His face darkened with the news. “What?” he whispered in a dark voice, laced with anger.

“There’s more. According to the elder committed to our cause, he also is looking into the missing shifters. He’s rule is ripe for the plucking, Father.”

Standing, her father slowly approached her, narrowing his eyes in question at her. “You would want me to kill the male you have been working so hard to convince to make you his mate?”

“Of course not.” She bit out. “I want him broken. Once the human is dead and the pack is back under your rule, I will spare his life by offering the protection of my line to him. With his two little brats to consider; he won’t refuse me then.” She said confidently.

Her father smiled conspiringly at her. “You have the blood thirst of your mother.” He said proudly.

A scream of rage erupted below the floor beneath their feet, echoing through the large house. Nodding his head at her slowly, her father stepped back. “I have plans to make with our allies. Go and tell the good news to your brother.” With a loving brush of his knuckles along her jaw, he turned and left the room.

Smiling to herself, Myra headed in the opposite direction toward the snarling roars of her older brother. Turning down the dark hall, she pulled open the door to the basement. The old door creaked with the movement as she crossed the threshold.

Descending down the dark stairs, the smell of the rotting foundation and moist wood filled the air making her grimace. No longer would her brother have to be locked away like an animal. Not when Eric was no longer Alpha.

Her brother, Derik was just one of many shifters that didn't allow the rules of secrecy to stop them from meeting out justice to humans for crimes done to their kind. Her brother was brave and strong. For years he hunted humans as their kind had been. But once the elders had heard of his exploits, the cowardly members of their pack had grown concerned that he would expose all shifters to the humans and endanger them all.

Nothing was more important than to keep the truth of their existence from the human world. Without hesitation, the council of elders had sentenced him to death. It was only because her father had been Alpha at the time that he'd been able to spare him. Her father had spared his life, but in return; he'd sworn that Derik would remain locked away from the world where he could never endanger their kind. At long last his freedom was near.

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, her eyes were drawn across the large empty room to the far wall. With rusty manacles around his wrists, a length of heavy chains led from each wrist to where each was bolted into the hard steel plates drilled into the cement wall. Six feet from his position were five inch steel bars forming a cage around the surrounding area. He was locked away like a savage dog.

Glaring at the sight, she walked toward the bars. Reaching out she flipped a switch on the nearby wall, with a hesitant flicker, the few lights above lit the room with a dim glow. Her brother sagged in his bonds, his head down. He wore only a pair of dirty pants. His skin was dirty and cover in sweat from his attempts to free himself. His once beautiful hair was now long and fell in shaggy strands.

“I have good news my brother.”

With a growl rumbling in his chest, he slowly lifted his head. His glowing eyes met hers with feral rage overtaking them. Flashing his fangs at her, he attempted to smile at her, but locked in his feral state for years he no longer looked like his beautiful human self. His face was a mix of wolf and human, perfect and terrifying.

The elders would pay for what they did to him. Eric would pay for his actions of going against the pack law. Then the humans would finally know the strength of the shifters that no longer would hide in the dark. The humans would finally know death.

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“What do you mean you didn’t tell him?!” Damon exclaimed.

Wincing, Rebecca glanced around the empty kitchen to make sure that Damon’s outburst hadn’t drawn any attention. “Shh!” her eyes scolding him. “Try not to tell everyone, alright?” she bit out.

“Don’t you realize what you’ve done?” Damon hissed out as he began to pace back and forth in front of her. His eyes quickly began to glow with the presence of his rising beast.

“I tried to tell him, Damon, but Eric wouldn’t let me.”

Damon’s agitated pacing strides came to an abrupt halt. “Wouldn’t let you?” he eyed her with heavy suspicion. “Wouldn’t let you?!” his voice rose once more.

Not liking his attitude, Rebecca crossed her arms over her chest, leaning back against the kitchen sink. Lifting her chin at him with a hard look, she replied. “It wasn’t from lack of trying, Damon.”

Eyes flashing, he shook his head at her. “How about the lack of a painful death, Rebecca? The Gathering is in a few hours! By that time, there will be hundreds of wolf shifters all over these grounds. You are a human alone without someone to speak for you. If you suspect that some know your secret, you need Eric’s protection.”

“Eric has asked me to stay in my room tonight. I’ll be fine for one night.”

Damon gave a humorless laugh. “If your secret is out, you will be hunted down and killed, Rebecca. You need the protection of the Alpha. You need to go to him right

now and tell him.” He urged, giving her a desperate look. She was surprised to see that Damon almost looked...scared.

Lips parted, she shook her head slowly, almost in a daze, she answered. “Eric isn’t here.”

Earlier that morning, Rebecca had awakened to a note and a tray laden with breakfast food upon her nightstand. In the note; Eric had told her that he had some things to take care of before the Gathering later that night. According to Sarah; Jason and Chris had been taken with him.

No one could tell her where he’d gone or what was so important that he had to leave easily in the morning. Without Eric hovering over her as he had in the past few days, Rebecca felt her cowardice of discovery return. She should have forced Eric to listen to her yesterday at the falls. No matter how afraid she had in that moment, she should have told him!

Scrambling for a course of action, Rebecca dropped her arms, her teeth biting down harshly against her bottom lip. “Perhaps there’s no proof that anyone knows.”

Damon’s tense muscles relaxed; not out of assurance, but with defeat. “Proof isn’t needed. All is needed is a shifter stating that their existence is threatened because of a human. That’s all they would need to kill you and all they will care about. Though only some shifters; that I know of, are prejudice against humans, with the wolves within Eric’s pack; its worse.”

“Why?” she breathed out.

“Many of my kind have been harmed by human poachers. Mates and children murdered in their animal forms and their families unable to have the closure of justice. Families have been torn apart because of it. Pain like that can become like poison within the mind and many would kill you out of revenge.”

Pressing a hand to her throat, Rebecca turned away from him as the seriousness of the situation hit her. Looking out the double kitchen window above the sink, she stiffened when Damon moved closer to her. The heat of his body brushed against her back even without him standing too close to her.

“The point of the matter is that we’re out of time, Rebecca.” He said gently at her back. “You need to tell Eric now. He is the only one that can protect you now.” he stressed with a tone full of worry.

Turning around to face him, she crossed her arms over her chest, attempting to comfort herself against his words. “What do you mean?” she asked perplexed. “You told me that you would protect me. Would you just...let them kill me if it came to it?” a shuddering breath accompanied her words as they emerged. Her stomach knotted at the thought, making her feel sicker than she’d ever felt before.

Closing the space between them, Damon looked down at her with eyes filled with gentle determination. Gently, he pulled her shaking frame into his embrace. His strong arms enfolded her against his chest. In effort to calm her, his hands running in soothing circles over her back as he held her tightly.

Resting his chin on the top of her head, he sighed wearily. “I do not tell you this to scare you, Rebecca, but the fact is; I am not a member of Eric’s pack. I cannot protect you if the Act of Revealment is called. I would kill anyone that tried to harm you; but that wouldn’t keep you safe. The only one that has the power to spare you and prevent the pack from harming you—is Eric, your mate. You need to tell him so that he can prepare you for what will happen.”

Pulling out of his comforting embrace, Rebecca shook her head dejectedly. “Eric isn’t here. He left early this morning.”

Damon’s gentle expression turned grave in an instant. “By the time they get back it will be too late.”

Desperately, Rebecca tried to search for a solution. Shaking her head at him, she waved a hand in the air between them as her hushed voice rose. “How can you say that? You don’t even know—”

“I know because I’ve seen this happened before!” he snarled.

Eyes wide with fear, Rebecca took a step back from Damon as his eyes began to glow with the presence of his inner wolf. She’d never seen Damon this enraged. It almost was as though his worry was turning to near rage.

Ignoring the way she flinched from him, Damon gripped her shoulders. His glowing gold eyes burned into hers demanding she listen to him. “I won’t let the pack hurt you.” He vowed with a soft voice.

Blinking against the hopeless tears that burned her eyes, she shook her head against his comforting words. “How?”

“Wait until sunset. If Eric isn’t back by then, you can’t wait any longer.” Reaching into his pants pocket, Damon withdrew a silver ring with two gold keys dangling from it. Forcibly taking hold of her hand, Damon pressed the keys into her palm before forcing her fingers to close around them. Keeping his hand blanketing her closed hand, he lowered his voice. “These are the keys to my car and hotel room in town. At sunset, if you haven’t seen Eric yet and told him the truth, I want you to use these. Take my car and go to my room for the night. Tomorrow; when it is safe for you to return I will come for you.” Slowly, he inhaled a breath. “If I do not come for you and you don’t hear from me—”

Sensing where this conversation was going, Rebecca recoiled from him attempting to pull her hand from his. “Whoa! What are you saying?” when he wouldn’t let go of her closed hand, she glared up at him.

“If Eric doesn’t declare you his before the pack and state you are under his protection; nothing can save you.”

“You want me to run?”

“I don’t want you to run—I expect you to run.”

Shaking her head stubbornly, she attempted to pull her hand free once more with the intention of giving his keys back to him, but his gripping hand prevented her from doing so. “I’m not running, Damon. I promised Eric.”

Letting go of her hand with a jerk, Damon looked at her with anger. “If you don’t; you could die.” gripping her shoulders roughly, he bit out. “Eric will be more upset if you let yourself get killed. Eric will find you when this is all over if it comes to that.” taking a breath, he attempted to calm his temper. “Promise me you will do this, Rebecca.” His eyes softened as he pleaded with her. Seeming to fight some internal struggle with his beast, Damon released her only to turn and stride from the kitchen, leaving her standing alone.

She didn’t know how long she stood there staring sightless across the empty space of the kitchen. Her fingers tightened around Damon’s keys as they pressed painfully into her palm. It seemed impossible to wrap her head around what Damon had told her. She’d never thought that she’d be in danger for just being there. She recalled when Eric had told her to remain close to their room for the night. Had he known that she could be in danger for simply being a human amongst shifters?

Looking down, she opened her hand to stare down at the two dissimilar keys. Their slight weight in her palm felt like a thorn in her skin that she desperately wanted to

pluck out and toss away. Could she really do as Damon asked her? Could she chance not running if it came to it?

She didn't want to go back to the way things had been since she'd been attacked, the constant fear and running. She trusted Eric to protect her; there was no doubt in her mind about that. But what if he arrived too late to protect her? As Damon had said, he wasn't a member of Eric's pack and therefore; he could do nothing to sway the others. Only Eric's voice carried power here.

Closing her eyes, she wished she didn't have to face the hopeless odds laid before her. She was now forced to chose between running from the man she'd come to care deeply for or risking her life.

"Eric, where are you? I need you now more than ever..." she whispered to the empty air around her.