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Pulling the hummer to a skidding stop, Eric barely put the brake on before he jumped from the driver's seat. The long drive that led to the lodge was filled with hundreds of parked cars, blocking their path. The sun had set and the Gathering had begun. Slamming his door shut, Eric barely spared Chris a glance before he took off running toward the large lit structure in the distance.

"Eric!" Chris yelled as he ran after his Alpha.

Panting, Eric's arms pumped as his legs flew across the ground. Terror and shame at how arrogant he had been nearly had his heart stopping. He was too late. He couldn't stop now. He had to make sure that Rebecca was safe and that none of the pack had discovered her. He even desperately hoped that Damon was with her. At least with the back-stabbing wolf; she was safe.

Reaching the lodge, Eric shoved past groups of shifters that eyed him warily. Panting for air, he flew across the lobby floor, not bothering to apologize when he knocked people out of his way when shifters stepped forward to talk to him. Reaching the stairs to the second level he took two at a time out of desperation to reach her. Running down the hall with his beta close on his heels, Eric reached the door of his and Rebecca's room.

Seeing the door closed, he breathed a heavy sigh as he prayed he'd simply find her sleeping in their bed. With his hand wrapped around the door knob, he froze as he took in the smell of fear and blood on the other side. Shoving the door open with enough force to wrench it off its hinges, he clawed up the side wall until his hand encountered the light switch. Flooding the room with light, Eric froze as his heart ceased beating.

The window across the room was uncovered, displaying a large circular crack through the darkened window. The dresser—or what used to be the dresser now lay across the floor in broken chunks. A foot from the end of the bed was a large dark stain of crimson. It was blood. Taking a deep inhale as he stepped into the room, Eric breathed a sigh of relief to find it wasn't Rebecca's blood. Pausing he discovered it was shifter blood; more importantly, Myra's blood.

His body stiffened at the thought of that manipulative she-wolf in his room with his mate. What had happened here?

On the bed Eric saw an unfamiliar bag with a keys lying no far out of reach. Approaching the bed, he turned toward the bathroom, still hoping to find his mate and an explanation on what had happened. When his mind refused to calm, his wolf rose to the surface, aiding him to search out her scent. Rebecca's scent was faint. He could detect her fear, her pain, and small traces of her blood in the air. Ignoring Myra's enraging scent, he froze when he discovered the scent of three more shifters in the room.

Others have our mate! His wolf snarled. Find her!

Eric allowed his restraints on his beast to loosen as he made his way to the door. If someone had attacked his mate again and had harmed her, they would meet his wrath. Fuck the consequences! Fuck the pack and the elders! Rebecca was his and no one touched what was his!

When Chris's towering frame filled the doorway, his face paled as he took in the sight of the room. With eyes darting from the wreckage, Chris turned to Eric, taking in his enraged state. "What happened here?"

"I don't care." Eric said slowly, "Find her!" he snarled, his face beginning to change with the threat of his mate.

Not wasting a second both males raced out the room running in different directions. Eric struggled to locate Rebecca's scent, but with so many people crowding the lobby below, he couldn't locate it. Desperate to find her, he flew down the stairs like a madman before rushing back outside. Breathing in deep gulps of air, he fought to pick up even a hint of her familiar scent.

"Eric!" a deep, frantic voice called behind him. Turning with a snarl, he saw Damon rushing towards him with wide eyes. Not giving Damon a chance to speak any more, Eric lunged for him. Wrapping his hands around the male's throat, Eric slammed Damon into the side of the lodge so hard that the wood cracked.

Squeezing until he thought he'd kill him, Eric snarled with an animalistic voice. "Where is she?!"

"They...they have her!" Damon gasped out, fighting for air.

With a roar, Eric shoved Damon away from him. Falling sprawled on his stomach, Damon quickly jumped to his feet just as Chris came rushing around the side of the building with a confused look.

“Who?” Chris asked with a hard voice, revealing that he’d heard Damon’s strangled response.

For a moment, fear and uncertainty warred within Damon’s eyes as he looked between Eric and Chris. It was then that Eric noticed that Chris’s t-shirt was torn in places, the light blue material stained with blood. Had he been attacked?

“The pack.” Damon gasped out, his chest rising and falling rapidly. “They took her. You have to come with me, Eric. I am telling you the truth.”

“The pack here knows that Rebecca is under Eric’s protection.” Chris said, attempting to calm the two apprehensive males. “We will find her. They would never harm her when they know Eric would protect her.”

“They would if they found out that she knew the truth.” Damon bit out with an impatient snarl.

Eric felt his blood turn cold. She knew? Rebecca knew that he was a shifter? “What are you talking about?” he asked while taking a threatening step toward Damon.

“I told her to tell you the truth! And now her life is in danger.” Damon said with an accusing look to Eric. “You should have never left her here!”

“What does she know?” Chris asked stepping forward. His voice growing fiercer as Eric’s did.

“She’s always known what you are, what we all are and now they have her.” inhaling a deep breath, he stepped closer to Eric with a hard look. “Listen to me, Eric. You have to come with me. I tried to stop them, to take her from them. I tried to protect her, but now only you can.” With a final look of desperation, he whispered out in a haunted voice. “They are going to kill her.”

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Coming away, Rebecca’s eyes blinked with confusion. Where was she? In an instant the memory of Myra attacking her came back to her and then the men that came to her

aid. Struggling to move her arms, Rebecca found she couldn't move. Behind her she could feel a hard post at her back. Moving her restrained hands, she discovered that her hands were bound together by some abrasive rope around the post at her back.

When struggling against her bonds did nothing, she fought to discover where she was. Darkness was all around her, stealing her sight from her. The air was cool and she smelled of earth. She was outside. They hadn't killed her yet; which meant there was still time for her to escape and find Eric.

She jumped in fright at a whooshing sound to her left as her eyes closed against a blinding light thrusting near her face. When heat nearly scalded the side of her face, she instinctually jerked away. Opening her eyes against the brightly dancing flames in front of her, her sight adjusted until she could make out the form of Myra standing in front of her.

Smirking with dark intent, Myra purposely moved the torch she held close to Rebecca's face, forcing her to arch back as far as the post at her back would let her. "You're awake. Good. I'd hate to do this when you're unconscious."

"What is going on? Where is Eric? You can't hurt me, I am under his protection." Despite how firm her voice came out, Rebecca knew that it wouldn't be enough to make Myra back down. She needed to stall until Eric came for her.

Laughing, Myra took a step back from her. With the movement, the swaying flames of the torch revealed the dark shadowy figures of more shifters watching her. Looking around at the glowing eyes in the darkness, Rebecca made out at least thirty if not more. When the moon light above broke through the clouds, she was rewarded with more light. She wished then that she couldn't see their faces.

Everyone looked upon her with disdain and hate. She was surprised that she wasn't already dead. Looking back to Myra, Rebecca saw the thick bandage wrapped around her upper thigh. She couldn't fight the satisfaction at knowing she'd nearly taken down a shifter with just a piece of pointed wood.

Stakes aren't just for vampires.

She jerked back when Myra approached her once more. "It doesn't matter what Eric told you, human. No one can know the truth and live. It's because of your kind that we live in secret. All the more fitting that we burn you like your people did to us centuries ago. No one here will lift a finger to save you now."

“Eric will.” Rebecca said with absolute faith.

Myra laugh was bone chilling as she shook her head. “Eric will be the one to condemn you. You attacked one of his pack members. The penalty is death.”

Fighting against the terror at Myra’s words, Rebecca forced herself to glare at Myra, showing no fear. “You think killing me will endear Eric to you, Slut? Eric didn’t want you before I came along, he won’t want you after I’m gone.”

Her words had the desired effect. Myra’s lips curled over her teeth as she snarled with rage. When Myra prepared to lunge for her, she was shoved away from Rebecca as a silver wolf shot from the dark cover of trees. When they fell to the ground, Rebecca watched with amazement as mist drifted around the two tangled bodies as the large wolf’s form quickly melted away to tan skin. With swirling mist thinning around his sweat coated body, Chris rose to his feet; his eyes looked hard and held an inner rage that demanded to be let out. His muscled chest rose and fell with heavy panting breaths. Picking up the torch from where it had fallen from Myra’s hand, he turned despite his lack of clothes to snarl at the on lookers.

With a slow movement, Chris took a threatening step toward the group until he blocked their path to her. In one tight fist he held the flaming torch while his other hand brandished long, sharp claws with intent. With glaring looks none of the enraged crowd approached him, but neither did they cower at him as snarls filled the air.

Rebecca gasped in fear, making her heart pound when hands grabbed hers from behind. Warm breath brushed against her face as soft words were whispered into her ear. “Shh. It’s me,” She’d never been so glad to hear Damon’s voice before. “I’m getting you lose, hang on.” He urged gently.

When others began to partially change, claws and fangs bared at Chris who stood guard, Rebecca feared they would attack, but like a flash of lighting, another wolf exploded from the trees. Coming to land on the ground beside Chris, the white and black wolf was bigger than Chris’s form had been.

Snarling, the wolf bared its sharp fangs at the crowd, causing them to take several quick steps back. Still growling in challenge, white mist swirled around the massive beast as the form of the wolf grew taller until fur reseeded and skin took its place. Paws became hands and then there was no wolf standing fiercely in front of her. The sliver moonlight chased the dark shadows from the dark form in front of her, highlighting the strong muscles in the man’s back and arms as he stood tensed. With a

slow shift of movement the man before her, turned to look at her over his naked shoulder. With eyes glowing gold in the darkness, her heart stilled in her chest, from fear or relief, she wasn't sure.

Before her wasn't just a man. He was both beast and man, dangerous and unpredictable. Standing between her and countless enraged werewolves was the only one that could save her now.

Eric.