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Looking over her shoulder as they left the pack behind, Rebecca felt her stomach drop in fear. What had just happened? When Damon had freed her from the ropes that bound her, she could do nothing else but watch as Eric argued on her behalf against his pack. When he'd turned to look at her with pleading eyes, begging that she tell him that everything Myra said was a lie, she hadn't had the strength to see the look of betrayal on his face.

Instead of stepping aside and letting his pack deal with her as the others expected him to do, Eric had stood like a towering, insurmountable giant before small men. Fear had nearly caused her to run with his chilling words, "I will handle this and eliminate this threat to us."

What had that meant? With now knowing that she'd lied to him, would he kill her? Would his anger at her betrayal overshadow everything they'd shared in the past week?

"Eric? Where are you taking me?" he didn't even spare her a glance. Heart pounding, she tried to twist her hand free from his hold, but he refused to release her. With a strong jerk, he continued to pull her forward. "Tell me what's going on!" she demanded, her voice rising out of terror.

Coming to an abrupt stop, Eric turned to face her. His cold expression was so frightening that Rebecca had to fight not to shutter. Jerking her close, he whispered in an emotionless tone that didn't even sound like the man she'd come to love. "Keep quiet. I have to clean up the mess that you've created for yourself. It will all be over soon."

Her heart shattered as her lungs burned for air, but it was beyond her to draw in her next breath at his hard expression. Damon had told her that she was Eric's mate, that he'd protect her. But clearly his rage at her deception was too strong for him to see past.

He's going to kill me...

Well; she didn't survive her previous attack by a werewolf to die at the hands of another. Pushing aside the paralyzing fear that mounted within her, she struck out. With all her might, she fought. Kicking, and swinging her free fist at him, she fought for freedom.

"Let me go! I won't let you kill me!" she fought with everything she had.

"Stop fighting." Eric bit out as he began dragging her along once more.

Out of nowhere both of them were knocked to the ground as a heavy missal struck collided with their backs. The hard impact sent them forward, tearing her from Eric's strong hold. The sound of a loud snarl had Rebecca lifting her head to see a large, blonde wolf standing between her and Eric. Glaring unafraid at the wolf, Eric tried to reach across the grass and grab Rebecca but the wolf growled dangerously at his movements.

Lips curled back and snapping its jaws at him, the wolf prevented Eric from touching her. Not wasting the opportunity, Rebecca picked up herself and ran for the lodge as the other wolf had Eric cornered. If she was lucky, she would reach Sarah or a reach a road where someone could help her.

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When Rebecca took off running through the darkness, Eric's wolf roared in rage. Shifting he attacked the rival wolf that kept him from his mate. Both wolves collided in a tangle of fur, claws and snapping jaws. Rolling his opponent, Eric bit down on the back of the blonde wolf's neck, holding the strong male immobile in the strong grasp of his jaws, he tossed the wolf aside. The wolf flew a foot away to hit the trunk of a tree before collapsing at the base. The panting wolf stood on staking legs, its blonde fur stained with blood. Deciding not to attack, the blonde wolf's image melted away, until Damon stood before Eric in all his glory. With first look at him, Eric snarled in rage as he allowed the change to over take him, returning to his human form.

"I won't let you kill her, Eric. I will kill you first." Damon challenged.

Rising to his feet, Eric brushed himself off. His hard gaze locked on Damon's. "This doesn't concern you, Damon."

Damon shook his head at him like he didn't recognize him. "She's your mate! And you would kill her just to please the elders? You have no idea what she's been through! You do this and you will lose her."

Stalking closer, Eric bared his teeth in anger. "You would know, wouldn't you?" with each next word, he stalked toward Damon with angry steps. "At every turn I have seen you sniffing around my mate like you have a claim to her! All this time; you knew. You should have told me! It's because she kept this from me that I have to fix this now. That's all I care about."

Damon eyed him mockingly as his temper rose. "Boo hoo, she lied to you. Think, Eric! Don't you think she would have told you if she could have! What choice did she have? Damn your pride and open your damn eyes! You've finally found your true mate—"

"I KNOW SHE'S MY MATE!" he roared. His eyes glowed, cutting through the shadows around them. A rumbling growl vibrated his heaving chest as he spoke once again. "I have to do the only thing I can to protect my pups and her."

Desperate to sway him, Damon stepped forward, giving Eric a beseeching look. "Eric, think about what you're about to do. Rebecca loves you. She refused to run and leave town when she could have all because she made a promise to you. How will she feel if you do this?" Damon tried to reason.

Using a rough hand, Eric shoved Damon away from him. "I am Alpha. My word is law, and the law states that no human can know our secret can remain so and live. I do this for my pack and for Rebecca; my hunters wouldn't be so merciful."

"I can't let you do this." Damon warned. Before he could act, Eric rushed forward. Swinging his fist, he smashed Damon in the face, causing him to stumble back stunned. Pulling back his fist again, Eric drove it into his gut, causing him to gasp. Before Damon could recover, Eric fisted his hand in Damon's blond hair. Jerking his head down, he smashed his knee into his face before tossing him back into the tree behind him.

Eric watched as Damon struggled to get up, his face painted with blood. He'd broken Damon's nose and traumatized his solar plexus. Frowning down at his friend, Eric stood over him. When Damon's unfocused eyes lifted to his, Eric fisted his hand in Damon's hair once more, forcing him to hold his gaze.

"Your job of protecting my mate is done. It's my responsibility now." using every ounce of his shifter strength, Eric drove his fist into Damon's face once more, rendering him unconscious.

Panting as battle rage heated his blood; Eric took several steps back from Damon's still form. He had to get to Rebecca and end this before a member of his pack did. Closing his eyes, he pulled his wolf to the surface, seeking out the scent of his mate. Once he located the mouth watering scent of Rebecca, his eyes snapped open, glowing in the darkness. Turning toward the direction of her scent, he frowned grimly. They were at least a mile away from the lodge, so there was nowhere for her to run, but that didn't mean that others wouldn't go after her now that they knew the truth.

With a heavy heart, Eric ran toward the scent of his mate. Damon's words reverberated through his mind like a blade in his gut. He'd once told Rebecca that he'd never let anything hurt her. Yet now he hunted her, his mate and what he was intending to do would hurt her more than anyone else ever could. The frail trust she'd gifted him with would be shattered. Ignoring the pain in his chest at the thought he forced his legs to run through the dark forest faster. He couldn't think of his personal feelings now. He was Alpha and he had to do his duty and except the consequences.

Once this night was over he would lose her. But at least he could keep her safe from others.

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Tripping in mid run, Rebecca fell heavily against the tree in front of her, her nails clawing at the bark in effort to hold herself up right. She gasped for air as her heart pounded from fear and exertion. Winching, she pressed a hand against her side as her ribs pulsed with pain, making breathing all that much more difficult. The pain was beginning to make her head swim, but she couldn't think about that right now.

She didn't know where she was going for even how much longer she could run, but she had to. The other option open to her was too terrifying to accept. Part of her told her to trust Eric to allow him to find her and talk to him. But the icy emptiness of his eyes when he'd been forcibly dragging her off somewhere had frightened her.

All at once the memory of her attack came to the forefront of her mind. Consuming and drowning her until she felt she'd go crazy. All over again, she could see the image of her attacker in her mind; only this time it was Eric. Every slash of claws, every hate filled taunting word. She had to get away until she could face him, when her terror wasn't stronger than her stubbornness.

She flinched as the air stilled around her, the night growing silent. Chills pebbled her skin as she felt as though someone was watching her. Not waiting to find out, Rebecca forced herself to run again. Her aching legs carried her a few feet before they gave out, forcing to fall to the ground with a painful jarring. Gasping for air, she pushed herself up onto her hands. Above her the moon broke through the heavy clouds to shine light down over the trees around her. She could see that she was in an open grove; trees stood like towering pillars around her and gave her the impression of being caged.

She turned on her hip to look in all directions. All around her it all looked the same. Every direction possessed the same darkness that held no hope of a good outcome. Where should she run? Where could she run that others wouldn't find her?

Before her mind could sort it out, the deafening sound of a branch snapping had her jerking around. The soft sounds of moment reached her ears, causing her to crab walk from the approaching footsteps.

When she could make out the dark form of a man standing in shadows, she felt her heart still in her chest. Whoever had found her didn't instantly attack her like she assumed he would, but simply stood there for a moment. Her survival instincts screamed at her to run, but her mind reasoned that even if she did; she wouldn't get far. Like an animal caught in a trap, she was out of options.

"Stay away from me!" she cried as the dark figure stepped from the shadows.

She didn't need to be able to see in the dark to know who it was a moment later. Ducking his head beneath the low hanging branch, the moonlight hit Eric's emotionless face, chasing away the shadows of the overhanging leaves above.

Taking another step forward, Eric paused to look around them with a hard look. Seeming satisfied that they were alone; he turned his attention back on her.

"Don't run from me again, Rebecca. I don't want to hurt you." The words emerged hard, almost scolding. Whether his last words were meant as a vow or a threat, she didn't know. Scowling uncertainly at him, she crawled to her shaking legs with a wince. Making sure to keep distance between them, she braced herself to run if he made another step towards her. Eric seemed to be watching her as well. His icy gaze studied her as if she were a strange animal that he'd found.

She'd expected him to rush at her, to become the beast she knew lurked behind the face that she'd come to love. His hands clenching into tight fists at his sides, Eric continued to watch her silently, his eyes filling with a look of regret and pain.

Taking a slow breath, he took a step towards her. "Come here, Rebecca." He said softly, his hand outstretched to hers. When she simply stared at his offered hand, with no interest in taking it, he sighed. "You cannot out run me, Rebecca." He stated it like it was a fact.

Rebecca froze, her body refusing to move. What would happen if she took the few steps toward Eric and laid her hand in his? Would he hold her close and comfort her for the events of tonight or would he attack her?

I will handle this and eliminate this threat to us...

Eric's previous words echoed in her mind like a pulsing wound. Unforgettable and bringing so much pain. She wanted to run to him, but his harshly spoken words from moments ago prevented her. But his anger had her second guessing whether she could trust him.

Taking a slow step back, she shook her head at him, her lips pressing tightly together. "Leave me alone Eric." her voice soft but firm.

Eric dropped his offered hand with a hard look. Obviously he'd expected her to just fall into his arms without question and when she didn't, it angered him. Too damn bad. After what had happened to her; what could still happen to her, she wasn't willing to trust anyone without a good cause to.

"You know I can't do that, Rebecca. Come here. You know me. You know you can trust me." He said gently despite the way his eyes blazed with anger.

"Can I?" she asked, raising an inquiring brow at him. "I just want to be left alone. Can't you give me that at least?"

Without a pause, Eric shook his head at her. "No. I can't. Not tonight and not after what just happened. I don't have the time to explain this to you; so you will just have to trust me." He said firmly as he moved closer to her. As though they were involved in some sort of dance, without missing a beat she met his approaching step with two retreating ones.

"Trust you?" she released a shaky breath. "I do trust you. But the way you are acting...this isn't the Eric I know. I heard what you said back there Eric. Why should I not run from you right now?"

Eric flinched from her words like they were a strong blow. If she'd hurt him with her words, he didn't show it or comment on it. Instead, he pushed his shoulders back, a cool mask over took his expression as he erased the distance between them. Rebecca recoiled with a shocked gasp, but was unable to move quick enough to evade his hands as they gripped her arms.

"Let go of me!" she shouted, punching out at him. Each time she struck him, Eric seemed to not notice. Fear and frustration mixed and caused her to strike out with her whole body. Using her leg she brought her knee to slam it into his balls as she had once before. Her hopes of hurting him long enough to escape faded when Eric anticipated her attack and used his thigh to block her strike.

Jerking her up onto her tip toes, he lowered his face to hers until their noses brushed. “The one time you did to me was the last and only time it will ever happen.” He raged at her. Taking a deep breath, he made an effort to gentle his voice, but it still emerged ruthless. “Stop fighting me and hold still. I promise this will be over soon.”

When Eric lowered his eyes to look at the bare column of her neck, she knew she had to act and act fast. Rearing her head back she slammed it into Eric’s. Taking him by surprise, Eric shouted in pain as he released her. Stumbling onto her feet, Rebecca turned and ran. She didn’t care where she ran to, so long as it was away from him.

With a loud growl, Eric pursued her. She’d not put but a three feet of distance between them before his arms came around her. Pinning her arms to her sides, Eric lifted her off her feet. Air rushed from her lungs as his arms tightened around her. The pressure of his embrace caused the pain in her side to build higher. His arms loosened just by an inch before he shifted his arms around her. With one arm holding her immobile against his chest, Eric’s free hand moved to cup the underside of her jaw before tilting her head to the side. The forced position caused her to expose the left side of her neck.

With her heart pounding with fear, tears filled her eyes as Eric used his cheek to brush her fallen hair away from the skin of her neck. His lips skimmed softly over the skin at her pulse point before they moved down to the point where her shoulder merged with her neck.

His warm breath brushed over her skin, making her shiver with fear of what he would do next. Inhaling deeply, Eric’s arm tightened around her middle as his grip on her jaw held her firmly.

“Forgive me...” he whispered.

Then her worst fear was realized when Eric’s sharp fangs clamped down on her soft skin. Pain raced along her shoulder as he savagely bit her. The pain of her body and the overwhelming fear in her mind suddenly exploded in her mind.

Without warning, darkness began to cloud her mind. Was she dying? Was it finally over? Relief flooded her entire being like a soothing balm, drawing her closer to the darkness that pulled at her. With a soft sigh, she let the darkness take her.

It was finally over.