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Eyes fluttering open, Pain echoed through all Rebecca's limbs as she came awake. As her vision cleared, she found the sight of the covered window of Eric's room greeting her. What had happened? Where was she? Inhaling deeply to push the pulsing pain from her mind, memories of the previous night rushed back to her. Myra attacked her and nearly had the pack kill her....except Eric came.

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

The memory of his emotionless words caused her stomach to clench painfully in denial. The man that saved her hadn't been the Eric she'd come to know. He'd been just as Eric had warned her of days ago; ruthless and cold. Had everything they'd shared had meant nothing in the end, when faced with the truth; he'd chosen to attack her rather than protect her.

Her heart rate skyrocketed when she remembered how he'd looked at her as he told her it would be over soon. Eric had chased her and attacked her. Instantly she felt the spot between her neck and shoulder throb with the memory of his savage bite. She was alive? How was that possible?

"You're awake." Eyes going wide at the sound of Eric's hard voice, she turned over on her back to find he was sitting in a chair beside the bed, his chin braced atop his interlaced hands. The abrupt movement had burning pain exploding through her side, causing a cry to escape through her clenched jaw. Instantly, Eric moved to sit on the side of the bed, pushing her shoulders down to the bed when she attempted to rise. At Eric's gentle touch, Rebecca flinched from him throwing herself against the headboard to avoid his hands.

"Don't touch me!" she bit out, her eyes watching him with wariness. Looking down, she found she was dressed in one of Eric's sleeveless under shirts. The hem of the shirt fell loose around her hips leaving her legs bare to his eyes. Jerking her head back toward him, she ignored his concerned look before speaking. "Why am I dressed like this?" she demanded to know even as her hands shook with fresh memories of the previous night.

Eric reached for her, but with a heartrending look when she jerked away from him, he dropped his hand to the bed. "Your clothes were ruined by the time I got you back here. Dr. Terra needed them to be removed before she attended to your wounds."

“What?” she whispered with disbelief at the idea of the woman that obviously disliked her touching her.

Pressing her hand to her aching side, she felt a thick bandage wrapped tightly around her ribs. Reaching up to her throbbing neck, she felt a wide gauze bandage taped against the area that Eric’s teeth had bitten. When her hand lingered too long on the bandage, Eric reached out to remove her hand with a firm shake of his head.

“Don’t touch it; it will heal in a day or so. She found bruising around your ribs as well from your attack with Myra. She said you may have a cracked rib.”

Jerking her hand from his grasp, she frowned at him. “You let her touch me after everything that happened?” she asked with a look of utter betrayal. Would he let one of his pack that obviously would rather see her dead be alone with her?

Narrowing his eyes at her, he admitted softly. “I did. I remained in the room with you the whole time. I’ve not left your side for two days.”

“T-Two days! I’ve been unconscious for two days?!”

He nodded grimly. “You were.”

Looking from him, she released a shattering breath. It was all too much to accept. Why would he have attacked her the way he had and then care for her afterwards? What game was he playing?

“You attacked me.” She acknowledged aloud before turning her distrustful eyes to his. A shadow of regret flashed through Eric’s eyes at her words. His sorrow-filled gaze lowered to look at her bandaged shoulder before he forced his eyes to look at the bed. Swallowing, he briefly shook his head before answering.

“You didn’t leave me a choice.” He whispered with a tight voice, his lips pressing into a thin line. Did he regret what he’d done? Or could he not stomach the memory of it?

Panic swelled within her mind when she kept seeing the memory of Eric grabbing her, holding her prisoner in his crushing embrace. His eyes had held no mercy in their icy depths just before his mouth lunged toward her neck. Shaking her head, she squeezed her eyes against the racing images.

Opening her eyes, she found Eric watching her with an unreadable expression. “Why didn’t you tell me?” Eric asked with a slight hint of hurt in his voice.

Rebecca opened her mouth to list her reasons but she found that it no longer mattered. Shaking her head, she shrugged uncaringly. “What would it have mattered?” she murmured with a weary look before she turned from him.

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Eric felt his body go stiff at her coldly spoken words, as though all emotion and meaning had fled her stubborn spirit. She looked broken and lost. He scrambled to find the right thing to say to her to make her look at him with that mix of trust and love in her eyes as she had but a day ago, but he only found himself closing his mouth with a helpless groan.

Fix this! His wolf roared.

How could he? Didn't she understand he'd done what he had to in effort to save her life? He remembered that night and felt his heart strangle in his chest. When he'd held her tightly in his arms and forcibly bitten her; for the first time in his life, the taste of his mate's blood and silky skin under his mouth had sickened him.

Cradling her unconscious body close, he withdrew his fangs from her torn flesh just as tears trailed down his face to fall onto her exposed neck. The small drops mingled with his mate's smeared blood that painted her mating mark. No joy had filled him at seeing his mark on her as it should have. It sickened and shamed him to see what he'd done to her.

How could he fix this? How could he win back her trust and...love? Did he even deserve it?

He'd never wanted to mark her as he had the other night. He'd pictured in his mind something more romantic. Not that he knew anything about that sort of thing. Now because of fear of losing her, he'd destroyed what fragile trust she'd had in him. To add to it; his pack had been ripped in half because of his actions that night.

What a mess! Pushing a hand through his tussled hair, he groaned with regret. He had to fix this. He would fix this. All of it.

He found himself pondering her words as he searched for a course of action. What would it have mattered? The words enraged him at her lack of trust in his honor as her mate. Did she really think that he would have turned from her and left her to her fate with the justice of the pack?

Wouldn't you have? His wolf asked with a knowing tone.

Considering the possibility, Eric found that he couldn't say how he would have reacted if she'd told him the truth. One thing he did know is that he never would have left her to face the brutality of his world alone.

He didn't know what he hated more; the scared look in her beautiful chocolate brown eyes or the idea that she'd feared telling him the truth about her scars and how she knew. He had to fix that this moment. Once they got past this wall of secrets that separated them, he could focus on mending what little of a pack he had left.

Shifting his weight further onto the bed, he moved until he sat beside her feet. Getting comfortable, he took hold of both of her feet before pulling them into his lap. When he startled Rebecca with his actions, he frowned at her as he began rubbing the length of her calves to her feet with a firm massage.

"I'm not going to hurt you." He murmured when she continued to look at him as though he would bite her again.

Her lips pursed with anger and Eric found he liked seeing her fire once more. "You said that once already." She bit out, giving him a tight, cynical smile. "So, forgive me if I don't feel inclined to jump back on the Trust Eric train after it already crashed."

Sighing heavily, he moved his deep massaging hand from one of her legs to the other. "I had to do what I did last night to protect you." He explained.

"It didn't feel like protection to me. You may as well have let them kill me."

Eric's moving hands stilled on her foot at her words. Breath left his lungs at the thought of him just standing by as his pack killed her. After how he'd found her that night, he had no doubt how they intended to kill her. Never! He would have killed every wolf in his territory to keep her safe.

"I never would have allowed you to be harmed." He vowed. "I would have done anything to have that night turn out differently, Rebecca." His willed silently for her to believe him, but he only found her regarding him with distrust and uncertain eyes.

"Eric," she began, her small tongue darting out to flick over her bottom lip before continuing. "I know how your kind views humans. I'm weak and unworthy to even be in a place like this." she said, waving her hand around the room.

The way she spoke, it almost was like he could hear someone else saying those words to her. He felt his mind peak with interest and curiosity as he fought to find the pieces that remained of the puzzle to Rebecca's past. Damon had said she'd known about

shifters. How? It was rare if shifters exposed themselves to humans and the ones that usually did didn't do so with innocent intentions.

Was that it? He froze as his blood turned cold. His eyes moved to the raised white scars across her chest. Seeing the scars as if for the first time, he realized that Rebecca had lied to him about how she'd obtained them. They weren't from some animal attacking her. They were from a shifter attacking her.

He forced back the rage at the thought of someone of his own kind attacking and trying to kill his mate before he'd had the chance to even meet her. Pausing, he fought against the need to know the truth and the need to let her tell him herself, but in the end he couldn't.

"Those marks on your skin, your scars; those weren't made by some random animal were they?" he asked hesitantly, never missing the way she flinched and tensed under his rubbing hands.

Drawing her legs from beneath his warm hands, she pulled her knees to her chest before wrapping her arms around them. She winced with the position, but he didn't say anything. Avoiding his gaze, she pressed her lips together. Her eyes watering when she shook her head slightly.

"No."

"It was one of my kind? A shifter?"

Releasing a shuttering breath, she nodded. "A werewolf."

He frowned at the term, but accepted it for the time being. Perplexed, he shook his head. "Why would you stay near my kind after that? From what I know you've been around shifters for years and that was before I ever met you."

"I guess I thought I was safer with your kind in front of me then sneaking up behind me."

"How did you get your scars?" when a tear slid from her right eye to trail down her face, he felt his gut clench in pain at the sight. "Please." He was actually begging. "I need to know."

Gulping past the lump in her throat she nodded. "I don't know what I can tell you other than, one night I was at my parent's house. I was on break from college. There was a knock at the door and then it happened."

“What happened?” he pressed.

“My world ended. I woke up to darkness. I found my mother and father lying in large pools of their blood. It was like a wild animal had gone crazy. Then he found me.”

“He?” Eric asked, echoing her words with confusion.

“The monster that gave me these.” She said, her hand rising to her scars. “He meant to kill me slowly, but he was interrupted. Before he ran off, he said that his kind would never let me live now that I knew. I was in the hospital for a week, every day I prayed that it all had been some type of nightmare.”

Kill...Hunt...Protect! His wolf roared.

Eric couldn't have agreed more. If it was possible, he planned to scour the world until he found the shifter responsible for Rebecca's attack. He wanted to find the man that did it and make him suffer!

“Why would you go against your pack for me?” Rebecca's abrupt words had Eric jerking from his vengeful thoughts. She looked at him expectantly, awaiting his answer. One truth deserves another.

“Because,” he breathed out. “You are my mate. My true mate.” He admitted, his chest puffing out with pride at admitting it to her.