

Watching carefully as Rebecca took in his words, he was surprised when he saw that there was no confusion or surprise in her expression. Her brows lowered before a sad look filled her eyes. Shaking her head at him, she reached up and ran her hands through her hair.

“I may have been at one point, Eric, but now...” she trailed off helplessly before turning to look out the window.

His entire being rebelled against her soft, defeated tone. Deep in his heart and soul, his wolf howled in pain at her slight rejection, but his mind quickly took front seat as he quickly went over her words. Rebecca hadn’t seemed surprised with this admission that she was his mate. Ignoring how she shrank from him, he moved further up the bed until they sat hip to hip.

“Why do you say that? Why do you seem unsurprised that you are my mate?” his question heavy with suspicion.

Leaning away from his crowding frame as much as her sore body would allow, Rebecca replied. “Damon told me.”

“What?” he asked astonished.

“Damon told me I was your true mate the day of the attack.” She repeated as she explained further. “He explained what it meant. Though I have to say; I wish I would have taken my chances and ran after all that’s happened since then.”

“Don’t say that.” he bit out, the muscle along his jaw tightening at her words. “I regret how I claimed you, Rebecca. I wanted it to be different but I feared that you wouldn’t accept me. That you’d run from me if I told you the truth.”

Sighing, she shook her head at him, her hand rising to cover her aching ribs once more. “I doubt the result would have been different.” She admitted. “You know the truth now.”

“But I didn’t when I should have.” He argued. The thought that she’d turned to Damon of all people for help instead of him, irked him. “Damon knew the truth but not me. Why would you tell him and not the man you were sleeping with?” his tone

sounded jealous even to his own ears, making Eric wince with disgust. He prayed that Rebecca hadn't taken notice of that.

"I didn't tell Damon a damn thing." She bit out, her hand slapping at him in retaliation. Eric found he had to struggle to contain his amusement at her temper. "The night I went on a date with him, he told me that he knew. Instead of turning me over to your people for justice—" she said, spitting out the words like it was distasteful. "—He vowed to protect me. After the attack he urged me to tell you the truth."

"Then why didn't you?"

"How could I have?" she asked, exasperated while giving him a look that clearly screamed; are you stupid? "Maybe I should have told you after we had sex that first night? 'Hey Eric, last night was great, by the way; have I mentioned that I know what you are because years ago my family was attacked by a werewolf. Don't worry, I promise not to tell anyone.' Would that have been better?" she asked sarcastically.

Sighing, he shook his head. "No. I just wish you could have come to me. I would have protected you regardless."

"You can't say that for sure." She denied, with a shake of her head. "After what happened that night it's clear that your pack wouldn't have accepted me regardless." She said with a look of deep disappointment. "It's better if I just go, Eric."

Growling low in his throat, Eric swung his legs over the bed, jumping to his feet; he paced away from her to avoid grabbing her and giving her a good shake. She thought she would run from him—again?!

"That won't be happening." He said firmly. Spinning around, he saw Rebecca carefully sliding to the edge of the bed before allowing her legs to dangle limply over the edge of the mattress. Fingers curling around the comforter beneath her, she swallowed before asking. "What do you mean? Am I still in danger?"

He scoffed with humor at her words. "Of course you are. You're my mate. You will always be in danger. Others will come after you to get to me. It's the way of the wolf shifters to dominate other packs by killing the competition."

Scowling, she huffed out an angry breath. "Then I don't want to be your mate."

It would have hurt less if she'd stabbed him. She...didn't want him. She didn't love him. Reality was like a cold bucket of water over him. Of course she didn't. Why

would she after everything? But he had too much plaguing his mind to worry about the personal feelings between them.

Burying his instincts that demanded he go to her and show her that he loved her and that she was his, Eric pulled on his emotionless demeanor that he reserved for others. "It's not like you have a choice." His words emerged flat and cold. "Not after I've bitten you."

Reaching up to cup her bandage, she raised a confused brow at him. "What does that have to do with anything?"

"The Right of Revealment comes with two outcomes." He stated, holding up two spread fingers. With each next word, he ticked off each extended finger. "Death or claiming." When she just stared at him expecting him to explain further, he did. "I chose to be the bearer of Revealment and rather than kill you, I claimed you as my mate; my true mate."

"I still don't see what you're trying to say, Eric. What does you claiming me have to do with me leaving for the best? I care for you; I do, but did you ever stop to think that maybe your home was attacked because others found out about me? I can't have your death on my conscience."

Expression softening, he strode back across the room to her. Cupping her face, even though she tensed, Eric bent to brush a tender kiss over her lips. She did care. She may not think she loved him anymore, but he was stubborn and ruthless enough to keep at her until she admitted it again to him.

Pulling back, he sighed before falling to his knees in front of her. When she lightly brushed her fingers through his tousled hair, he had to stiffen a groan of desire. Her touch was a drug and he was content on being addicted to her until the end of time.

"There is more to the claiming bite or as we call it; the claiming mark." He admitted. Raising his eyes to see she was paying attention, he revealed the ugly truth that he was certain Damon hadn't shared with her. "In a few days to a week of a shifter claiming a human for his true mate, during the next full moon, the bitten mate will change."

Stiffening, Rebecca's hand fell from his hair with dead weight. Her fear filled the room around him like a foul stench. "What do you mean, change?" her voice was firm, but the tremble of fear still echoed out, hidden deep.

Rising to his feet, he braced both arms on either side around her, caging her in as he towered over her. "Shifters live for nearly three times longer than the normal human

lifespan. The claiming mark allows shifters to make their human mates like them, so they will be forever tied to each other.”

“As romantic as that sounds, I can still feel that you aren’t telling me something.” she observed with a frown. “There’s more than just a longer life involved, isn’t there?”

Looking away briefly, Eric nodded. “The bite allows us to change our human true mates into shifters. At the next full moon, you will take your second form for the first time.” He explained, proudly.

“What?!” she cried out, shoving away from him. Stumbling to her feet, she cried out when her ribs protested. When Eric moved towards her to help her when she staggered away from the bed, she slapped at his hand, angrily. “Let me get this straight; you’ve infected me?!” she questioned in outrage.

Eric's eyebrows lowering with confusion at her outburst. He nodded, dumbly. “Not the way I would put it, but yes.”

Face falling to one of panic, Rebecca turned away from him, pacing as fast as her weaken body would let her. Hand going to stomach, she moaned while shaking her head. “I think I’m going to be sick.” Fearing she was telling the truth, Eric lunged toward her to help her to the bathroom, only to have his assisting hands slapped away from her again. “Don’t touch me!” she bit out, her eyes blazing at him in anger.

“What can I do?” he asked, feeling out of his limit with Rebecca for the first time.

She seemed displeased with the news that she’d be turning in less than a week. He didn’t know what Doyle had encountered with his mate; Aria, but he knew from rumors that Robert Mackenzie’s mate had been ecstatic at the news. The small Latina had even had the event filmed so she could study it later on. Rebecca on the other hand appeared to be in the midst of a panic attack. Should he hold her? Kiss her and tell her it would be alright? Or should he call Dr. Terra?

“Take it back!” she demanded. Coming to a stop in front of him, she stabbed her puny finger in his chest, punctuating her words. “Right now!”

Aghast at her at her words, he shook his head slowly. “What? I can’t and even if I could I wouldn’t.” he answered with absolute confidence. “It’s a gift, Rebecca.” His hands settled on her shoulders before sliding down to tangle with her hands. “It’s a gift I can only give to you. It means you will become nearly as strong as me and beyond living longer, your senses, your ability to heal and resistance to injuries will increase.”

Jerking her hands from his, Rebecca shook her head at him. “Gift? Gifts can be returned!”

“Not this one.” He bit out firmly. His gaze turned hard at her refusal to accept what she was being offered.

At least she’d not scared of you anymore...his wolf mused teasingly.

Shut. Up. Eric fired back.

“This is part of being my true mate, Rebecca. I will be with you through all this. I know you are scared, but you can trust me.”

Jerking away from him, she yelled. “Damn it! I never wanted this, Eric! I want no part of being your mate!” she seemed surprised at her own words, but she made no move take them back.

His world shattered around him at her words. Anger filling his being at her thoughtless words, he strode past her, only stopping long enough to whisper his parting words. “You are my mate. I accepted you when you were just a human and I will do so when you change. Perhaps you should think about that.” he gritted out between clenched teeth.

Moving past her, he jerked the door to their bedroom open. Striding out, he slammed the door behind him as he left. Growling in anger and in confusion at her odd rejection, he rushed down the stairs to the lobby, leaving his mate alone for the first time in days.