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Exiting the men's room, Eric straightened his dark blue t-shirt over his tan cargo pants. Several of his workers had come to the Red Horns to unwind from the first day with the construction crew as they'd begun building Damon's home. His mother had taken pity on him and offered to stay with Emma and Travis while he went out for an hour or two.

With a grimace, Eric felt his thoughts turn back Rebecca. The woman was testing his wolf's patience. He'd called her several times in the last few days that she'd been able to elude him whenever he came home late nights. Frankly; he was getting at his wits end. If he didn't see her soon, he may just show up on her door step and force her to face him.

Before he could return to the table where himself and his work crew had been enjoy a large pitcher of beer, he was immediately hailed over to the bar by Mick. Mick Torus was the owner of the Red Horns bar and grill. He also was a rouge bull shifter, more precisely; an Ankole longhorn bull. Mick was an enforcer that worked for Eric outside the pack. Mick's job was to police rouge shifters and maintain the peace; not only between other packs, but between ignorant humans as well. Walking up to the noisy bar, he leaned close to hear Mick as he spoke over the loud music and idle noise.

"How's it going, Eric?" He greeted as they gripped each other's forearms, a display of their long friendship.

"It's going. How's business and other things?"

"Business is good tonight. But I have some information for you that you will not like."

Frowning, Eric braced his weight on his palms that rested against the edge of the bar. "What is it?" he asked grimly.

"I looked into the favor you asked a few months back. I'm afraid you may be on to something."

The favor that Eric had asked of Mick was one that had to keep secret, especially from the pack elders. For several years, shifters from different packs all throughout Virginia had mysteriously gone missing. Women, men, and children simply disappeared without a cause or trace. He suspected that there were more cases throughout the U.S. but he needed to confirm his suspicions before he could take action.

Reaching into the breast pocket of his button up black shirt, Mick withdrew a thick white envelope. Laying it on the bar, he discreetly shoved it toward Eric. Taking the envelope, Eric reached inside to pull out a large pile of photos. The photos were of shifters that had been reported missing in the last ten years. On the front of each photo was the shifter's name, date they disappeared and location. Flipping through several he was dismayed to see that several of the children missing were no older than Travis and Emma. What the hell was going on?

“Do you think we may have some fanatical humans hunting shifter again?” Mick asked. His tone told Eric that he was enraged as much as he was at the unexplained disappearances.

Shoving the photos back into the envelope, he tucked it into one of his deep pants pockets. Sighing, Eric shook his head at Mick's theory. “I don't think humans did this. If this was the work of fanatics, there would be bodies and evidence. These shifters are disappearing without a trace, leaving no sign of whom or what took them.”

Mick nodded solemnly with a grunt “Plus; humans would leave a scent behind. Every place I've investigated where there was a disappearance, the only scent I could find was an overly sweet scent. I've never encountered it before. Have you?”

Eric's frown deepened as his thoughts were pulled back to a nearly six months back. During his time in Darkwood Springs, he recalled the same excessive sweet scent. The scent had come from those strange enhanced soldiers that had hunted Robert Mackenzie's human mate. Could they be involved in the disappearances of so many shifters? Regardless; he would have no choice but to contact Doyle Mackenzie about it—and the elders. Shaking his head he pinched the bridge of his nose with annoyance.

“Thanks for your help, Mick. I'll keep you posted.”

Nodding with a grim expression, Mick turned and walked down to the other end of the bar to several waiting customers.

Feeling the heavy weight of the knowledge he'd just received, Eric slumped down in a bar stool. He turned to look to his left as the bar stool beside him was pulled out as someone took a seat. His hard eyes flashed over the familiar face of his second beta, Jason. For a moment neither said a word to the other. Jason was busy nursing the remains of his beer as he cast a brief glance in Eric's direction.

Hesitantly; Jason finally broke the silence between them. “What did Mick say?”

Shaking his head, Eric held up a flat hand; indicating that Jason was treading on a topic that Eric couldn't or wouldn't discuss at that time. "Just something I'm looking into."

Not taking the hint, Jason pressed forward. "Is it something that we need to be concerned about?"

Flashing an irritated glare at him, Eric sighed. "It's too soon to tell. Once I have more information I will share what I know. Until then; I want you to keep your mouth shut about what you saw between Mick and I."

Jason rolled his eyes before scoffing. "You just had to go and ruin all my fun. Here I was planning on going to the elders and telling them about all your evil plans." When Eric didn't even glance his way, Jason placed his empty bottle on the bar with a sigh. "Seriously; Eric, you've been treading a thin line where the elders are concerned. I agree with what you want to do for our pack, but you need to be careful that you are not creating more enemies than allies."

Pushing his seat back, Eric rose stiffly to his legs. He was tired and his wolf was on edge. He just wanted to go home and fuck everything else for one night. "Good night." before he could walk past Jason, a scent floated from his beta that had Eric pausing. Crowding close, he scowled as he drew more of the scent into his lungs. Vanilla mixed with jasmine perfume—it was Rebecca's scent.

Catching the realization in his Alpha's eyes, Jason rubbed a tired hand against the back of his neck. "You're not going to like what I'm about to tell you." He muttered.

Eric's eyes narrowed to small slits. "You've been with my...Rebecca." He bit out accusingly.

Jason frowned before shaking his head. "No. I'm afraid it's worse than that." tilting his chin toward the dance floor and the throng of dancing bodies, Jason motioned at something.

Turning to the side, Eric followed the direction of Jason's eyes; he wasn't prepared for the sight that lay before him. Everything inside him froze at the sight that burned and taunted his eyes; causing rage began overflowing inside of him. Rebecca looked breath taking, making all the blood rush to his lower reign at just the sight of her. With her dark makeup, her upswept hair and short skirt she wore; she looked like a dream—a temptress. She danced like sin; her body flowed gracefully as her body pressed up against another man, a man that wasn't him!

Every motion of their in tune bodies caused the rage inside him to build. The man began tempting fate as his body thrust up against Rebecca's high supple ass, her arms wrapped around his neck from behind as her lips parted with a sensual smile. If that wasn't bad enough; Eric watched; as if in slow motion, as the soon-to-be-deceased man ran his fingertips along the outside of one her breast, before his caressing fingers slid back up tracing an invisible line around her succulent breasts.

Flames leapt from the depths of his eyes, as the predatory side of him emerged to the surface. Clenching his fists at his sides, his chest rose up and down in fast, angry pants. Someone had dared to touch his woman. He didn't care if he was acting like the possessive neanderthal. Any doubts or concerns he had about his attraction to Rebecca suddenly didn't matter anymore. She was his, case closed. She'd just have to accept it and get over her doubts about him.

Kill him. His wolf demanded with a tone that was filled with bloodlust. The thought was almost too tempting to pass up.

Placing one heavy, booted foot in front of the other; he stalked through the crowd and made his way up behind the unsuspecting dancing couple. Couple? Hell no! They were defiantly not a couple, the very idea of Rebecca with another man, loving another man; made a killing fury course through his veins. Rebecca and he was a couple—or at least they would be after tonight. This man was just a bug on his boot, waiting to be swashed!

He couldn't shake off the heavy pressure of rage building and tightening inside his chest as his wolf fought for freedom. It was a tempting idea to release his beast on the man, but he quickly squashed that idea—for now. Not wasting a breath; coming up behind them, he tapped firmly on the man's shoulder to get his attention. While he waited for the man to turn around to face him, Eric felt like a coiled rattlesnake; waiting to strike than a wolf in that moment.

The man let go of Rebecca for an instant to turn and see who was behind him. The second their gazes collided; Eric pulled back his fist and slammed it into the smug man's face. The impact from the punch, threw him off his feet and landing hard on his back. At the sound of Eric's fist connecting with the man's face, all dancing around them stopped instantly as all eyes turned to watch them with interest. At all the commotion, Rebecca swung around just in time to watch her dance partner get thrown off his feet. Her mouth hung open in a silent gasp as she turned her eyes to see Eric standing in front of her, panting, his eyes wild.

Walking around her, Eric leaned over her dazed dance partner; prepared to beat some sense into him. Placing herself between them, Rebecca planted her hands on Eric's muscled chest, giving him a good shove away from the bleeding man.

"What the fuck is your problem?!" She yelled at him, punching him in the chest.

Gripping her wrists he pulled her into his hard frame. "Watch your language." He whispered, scolding. His stern eyes bore into hers as she swayed slightly on her heel covered feet. Her normal soft jasmine scent was clouded with the stench of alcohol. "Are you drunk?" He accused.

"It's none of your damn business! Let go of me!" She struggled to pull her wrists out of his retraining hands.

Eric was all too aware that they were drawing every eye in the bar toward them with the commotion. He had to get Rebecca out of here where he could talk more with her without the worry of others. Tugging on her captured wrist, he began dragging her off the small crowded dance floor. Not that Rebecca was making it a simple task for him. Behind him; she cursed, striking at his back—not that he noticed much; she possessed the strength of a butterfly.

Seeing that there was no other way around it, he sharply turned to face her just as they cleared the dance floor. His hand released her as if he'd been burnt. With fast, fluid motions; he bent down and unceremoniously tossed Rebecca over his shoulder. One of his heavy muscled arms clamped down over the back of her thighs, holding her squirming body still. His eyes glared; dangerously down at Jason, while Rebecca beat her small fists against his lower back.

"Put me down you big ape!" Rebecca shrieked while kicking her feet back and forth, her fist pounding on his back with angry strikes.

Striding past the gasping faces and shocked looks of all the on lookers, Eric marched out the back entrance and into the nearly empty back parking lot. Coming to stop beside his black hummer, he roughly lowered Rebecca back onto her feet, making her stumble unsteadily. Jerking the passenger door open, Eric held the door open for her. The harsh look on his face told Rebecca he was not in the best of moods.

"Get in." Rebecca appearance looked like she'd just been through a war zone. Her hair was tussled and her dress was full of wrinkles. To anyone else; she looked like she'd just been thoroughly pleased, were it not for her angry expression.

“Go to hell.” She said in anger as she tried to walk around him, but he was too fast for her. His hand shot out and shackling her wrist in an unbreakable hold.

“Rebecca.” His tone was dangerous. “Get in now. I’ll take you home, we can discuss this later.”

Folding her arms over her chest she didn’t take a single step toward the opened door. Pursing his lips with anger, he slammed the door closed. “Fine, I was going to drive you home and not do this until tomorrow, but you obviously want to have it out right here, right now, in the middle of a dark parking lot.”

“I have nothing to say to you.” She stated out flatly, not looking at him.

“Well; that’s a shame, because I have plenty to say. So I guess I’ll do all the talking then and you will just have to listen.”

“I don’t have to do anything.”

“Yes, you certainly do. You can start by explaining to me, what the hell you were doing in there.” He exclaimed, pointing over his shoulder at the Red Horns structure.

“It’s none of your business.” She replied, stubbornly.

“It is my business! Another man just had his hands all over you, I’m well within my rights to go back in there and beat the life out of him!”

“Well within your rights? What rights? Big deal; you touched me and kissed me! That doesn’t give you any rights when it comes to me.”

“You’re mine—”

“I am not—” She tried to interrupt, but he went on as if she hadn’t said a word.

“—By now, everyone in town is aware of the fact that you’re under my protection and anyone stupid enough to try to touch you or anything along that line, it would give me the right to set him straight.” He finished with confidence.

Rebecca stared at him with shock; her mouth slightly hung open, “Are you insane? What I choose to do with other men and who I sleep with is none of your concern or anyone else’s.” She shot back at him, while her hands curled into fists in frustration. “Get this through your landmine of a head! I am your employee! You are my boss!”

Beginning to pace back and forth in front of her; Eric braced his hands on his hips, his eyes burning into hers. Coming to a stop, he curled his hands into tight fists. “Then you’re fired.” He bit out.

Rebecca blinked up at him with confusion. “Excuse me?”

“You heard me; you are fired. Now that you can’t use that stupid excuse anymore, perhaps you will take what I have been saying to you more seriously.”

“You’re insane. You can’t fire me without a reason.”

“You’re mine. That’s all the reason I need. I’m not letting you push me away because you have some ethics about dating in the workplace.”

Rebecca’s mouth parted, speechlessly. With a cry of outrage, she walked around him, heading for the sidewalk at the other end of the parking lot and toward her car. Her steps faltered when she heard Eric’s voice again.

“You can’t run from me or this anymore, Rebecca. You either get in the car with me now or I will follow you back to your apartment and we can have this discussion there. Either way; we will be having it.”

She spun around on her heels so quickly that she nearly fell clear out of them. Taking a moment to right her unbalanced feet, she glared at him. Folding her arms over her chest, she squeezed her lips together in frustration. “Did it ever occur to you to take the hint that I was not interested? Why couldn’t you just accept what I want and move on. Is your pride so large that you can’t take rejection? Yes, I’m attracted to you and what woman with a pulse wouldn’t be? But even I know when to stay away from a ticking bomb, which is why I was in there.” She indicated at the back entrance of the Red Horns bar.

Eric’s eyes flashed with fire. “You came here to find someone to sleep with you.” He acknowledged.

“No. I came here to find someone to have sex with, because that is all that is between us; a need for sex.”

“If that is the case; I am more than willing to accommodate you.” He sneered, taking a threatening step toward her. “If I wanted just sex, I could get that anywhere if I wanted. But I don’t just want you for sex, Rebecca. You intrigue me and that is a hard feat for many people I know. I want to know more about you.”

Releasing a huff, she shook her head at him. “That’s just it, Eric.” She took a few steps closer to him, erasing some of the distance she’d put between them. He could help but feel pleased that she had made the first move. “I don’t want to get to know you.” It would appear that her unyielding stubbornness hadn’t weakened.

His wolf stirred at the foul scent of her lie along with it other scents reached him; desire and fear. Rebecca may be holding him at an arms length not because of her job, but because she was truly scared of him. The realization was like a punch in the face to him. He admit that he had been harsh with her when he’d first met her and over the past few months out of necessity, but it was different now.

He no longer wanted her to fear him. He wanted her to trust him. Wooing her in a traditional way was out of the question. He wasn’t a gentleman. He was a wolf and he acted every bit like one. Winning her trust wouldn’t be easy, but he wasn’t about to give up on her. His most powerful weapons available to him were his ability to seduce her and his brutal honesty. With everything in him; he intended to use both to his full and complete advantage.

Shoving his hands into the front pockets of his jeans in an effort to look non-threatening, Eric shook his head gently. “Did you really think you could just say some words and my interest in you would vanish? You won’t be able to get rid of me that easily.”

Releasing a sound somewhere between a groan and a hiss of outrage, Rebecca threw her hands up. “I give up; there’s no reasoning with you. But; listen carefully, because I’m only going to explain this once. If you ever try to interfere in my life again, I’ll have you in handcuffs so quick your head will spin.” She threatened as she turned around, stalking away from him.

Eric followed behind her with a relaxed ease, his hand remaining shoved in his pockets. “Just a little tip, angel, if I ever catch another man with his hands or any other body part even near you, I’ll make what I did inside look like I just introduced myself to him. Just keep in mind; I will fight for what is mine.”

Eric felt his wolf howl with victory as his words cause her to jerk to a stop. That got her attention like nothing else could. He was going to force Rebecca out of her small, orderly comfort zone even if it killed him. Before the night was out; she would be his.