

Kidnapped by My Mate Novel

Chapter 31 –

Filed To Story:

And he was the only person here who I was comfortable around.

I shook my head, trying to clear the tears away. I will not be this girl. I would not be the clingy, codependent girl I was acting like right now.

I was going to be strong and get through this.

I was probably just affected by his words so much because of the stupid mate bond.

I squared my shoulders and straightened, wiping away my tears. A new determination ran through me.

I decided to get dressed and show myself around the pack. I thought about asking Kyle to show me around, but couldn't imagine taking him away from Elijah.

They needed time to catch up. And my newfound independence fueled me.

I started with the floor that I was on and slowly made my way up each floor of what Grayson called the 'pack house.'

It was insanely impressive, with too many rooms to count and tons and tons of people. I tried to smile and start a conversation with some we passed in the hallways, but no one would look at me. They'd give me short answers and treat me like I was that one girl from class that nobody liked.

It was beyond strange.

As the day went on, my spirit felt more broken. This was not the first day living with Grayson that I had been imagining. All I wanted to do was to go find him and refuse to leave his side, even if that meant sitting next to him silently while he worked.

But I held myself back, remembering our conversation from earlier this morning.

I would hopefully see him tonight.

It was late in the afternoon, and I was getting really hungry.

I tried going into each of the pack house's three kitchens to find some food, but they were filled with huge werewolves tearing through the pantries to cook.

I was extremely intimidated.

I was so much smaller and weaker than all of them.

Once when I'd tried to snag an apple off a counter, one of the male werewolves grabbed it before me and took a bite while making intense eye contact that said,

"Back off."

I had left immediately after that.

I decided to talk to Grayson about food when I saw him later tonight. Maybe he would take me to the kitchen and show me where everything was.

I had no problem making my own food, but I just needed to know how to get around all of the angry werewolves.

I sat in Grayson's room for a couple of hours, feeling like that was the only place I could really be without being a bother. I kept reminding myself that the first days were always the hardest—that it always got better. I'd learned that from all of the jobs I'd had over the years.

Maybe I could find something to do to help out around here and earn my keep since Grayson would be busy during the day. People seemed to always be working and moving.

There had to be something around here that I could do. Maybe tomorrow I could try to find some books on werewolves and educate myself on this new world that I was now a part of.

When the sun set, my excitement to see Grayson rose.

I had no intention of telling him anything about what had happened to me today with his pack or how horrible I felt.

I didn't want to add anything else to his plate. Instead, I had come up with a list of everything I liked about his pack, and was going to tell him about that.

After changing into my-his pajamas and getting ready to sleep, I sighed and walked over to his bed, where I plopped down face-first. It was only eight, but I was exhausted.

This had been the worst day ever.

I tried to stay awake for as long as possible, hoping to get to talk to Grayson, but I couldn't keep my eyes open. I drifted off into a restless sleep.

Sometime during the middle of the night, I was awoken by the feeling of fiery kisses on my neck. My eyes flew open immediately and I gasped, recognizing the familiar sparks.

"Grayson?" I asked into the darkness, reaching out for him.

"Mm-hmm?" he asked as he continued his kissing and gripped my waist.

I blinked as my eyes adjusted to the light.

My heart soared when I realized that he seemed to be in a better mood than the last time I'd seen him. He seemed to have found his old passion for physical contact with me.

I sighed in relief. I guess he was just stressed earlier.

I wrapped my arms around his neck and pulled his lips to mine for a deep kiss that chased all the tension out of my body. After a few minutes, I pulled away to try to catch my breath, and Grayson returned to kissing my neck.

I tried shoving him away from me playfully so that I could see him and talk to him, but he just growled loudly and snapped his teeth at me. Okay...

Suddenly, he tore my shirt to shreds so that my bare chest was on full display.

Grayson didn't waste any time as he latched his mouth onto my breast roughly.

I gasped and my back arched involuntarily.

My mind was all foggy from his sinful mouth, but somewhere in there, there was logic. This was getting way too hot, way too fast. I grabbed his hair and tried to pull him away from my chest, but again he growled roughly. He wouldn't look at me, so I couldn't see the color of his eyes, but I could only assume that his wolf had taken over.

"Grayson," I tried again. His lips were moving down my stomach now. I was starting to panic as he got closer to my center. "Grayson, stop!" I said firmly.

Acting as though I had said nothing at all, he continued his trek downward until he finally reached my cotton panties. It was then that I remembered I had only worn underwear and one of his shirts to bed.

This didn't leave many obstacles for him to get through before I was completely naked.

My heart rate increased as I tried to move away from him. I wasn't ready anymore.

Something was off, and I didn't want to do anything with him while he was acting like this.

I pushed him away more forcefully and tried to get out from under him.

"Grayson, I mean it. Stop."

A dark chuckle left his mouth. His black eyes connected with mine and he smirked at me.

"Oh, come on, Belle. Have a little fun. I've been dying to have you. Let's finish what we started last night."

I shook my head. "Not tonight. I'm not ready right now."

"I'm not ready," he imitated me in a high-pitched voice. "That excuse is getting old.

All you have to do is lie there while I do all the work."

My jaw dropped at his words. I couldn't believe he'd just said that.

What had happened to the man who'd told me he would wait as long as I needed—

who'd taken me into his arms when I'd been embarrassed about my lack of experience?

I tried to pull away again, but he just latched a hand onto my leg and squeezed painfully. His other hand moved up to the band of my panties and began to pull them down. Panic was creeping in.

I grabbed his hand to stop him, kicking my legs upward. "Grayson, I said no! Stop!"

When one of my feet connected with his jaw, he jolted backward. "Are you kidding me?"

I immediately sat up and placed my back against the headboard, trying to get as far away from him as I could. I grabbed the sheet and wrapped it around myself.

I didn't even notice I was crying until I felt tears traveling from my eyes down to my neck.

Grayson looked furious. His entire body was shaking with anger.

"What the fuck kind of mate are you? First, I get stuck with a human, and now you won't give me the pleasure that you owe me?"

A sob escaped my throat. I shrank further in on myself. "What do you mean? What are you talking about?" I paused. "Do you really mean that?" I managed to get out.

He nodded. “What the fuck are you crying for? If anyone should be upset it should be me. This is your duty as my mate. Your only duty. What else are you good for?”

“Excuse me?” I snapped. “My only duty? Having sex with you is not my job! I am not here to be some object for your personal pleasure!”

I tried to keep my words strong, but toward the end of my speech, my voice began to shake.

I covered my face with my hands to try to hide the pathetic tears spilling from my eyes.

I heard Grayson sigh. There was a shuffling of the sheets and then I felt his hands wrap around my wrists to uncover my face. I flinched at the contact and moved away. Another sigh.

“Baby, I’m sorry. You know I didn’t mean any of that,” Grayson said. “I just had a rough day and was hoping to relieve some of my tension tonight.”

My body was still shaking with pure terror, and I couldn’t bring myself to respond.

“Beautiful, please look at me,” he said. He put a hand on my knee and began to make soothing circles with his thumb. “C’mon, please?”

I slowly removed my hands from my face and sniffled. I probably looked like an absolute wreck.

Grayson smiled softly. “There we go.”

He leaned forward and placed his forehead against mine. He breathed in deeply, and we stayed like that for a while, although his hurtful words were still ringing through my head.

I calmed down as he continued to whisper soothing words and rub circles on my legs. I was starting to feel like maybe Grayson had returned to normal.

With every passing second though, his lips were getting closer and closer to mine, until finally, they connected. At first, I didn’t mind.

The kiss was loving and passionate like usual—unlike the hard and demanding ones he’d been giving me just moments before.

But then I felt him tugging on the sheet, trying to pull it away from my body. I frowned into the kiss. Was he really trying to start something again?

I attempted to pull the sheet tighter around myself, but he just growled and yanked harder until I couldn't hang on anymore. I gasped as my upper half became exposed and his hands moved upward.

I immediately moved away from him and shoved at his shoulders with everything I had in me. "Grayson, no! Stop! We are not doing this tonight!"

I seemed to catch him off guard, and he fell back just the smallest bit—enough for me to scramble off the bed and grab the sheet from the floor to wrap back around myself.

"Fuck!" Grayson yelled. "You are so fucking ridiculous, Belle!"

"I'm ridiculous? Are you kidding me? No means no, Grayson! What the hell is your problem?" I yelled.

Grayson let out a dark laugh. "Well, you weren't saying no last night. You were practically begging me for it."

I gasped. The tears were rushing down my face in rivers now. It took me a couple of seconds to get my emotions under control enough to whisper, "Who are you?"

Grayson was opening his mouth to respond when a loud growl came out of his throat. His entire body flinched, then he grabbed at his hair, holding it in tight fists.

Suddenly his head began whipping back and forth as louder growls escaped his mouth.

"Grayson?" I asked. His entire body began to shake.

I slowly stood and walked over to him, keeping in mind that the last time I'd seen him act like this, he'd shifted and chased me throughout a hotel suite.

Chapter 32 –

Filed To Story:

His body turned away from me, and a strange hissing noise came from him that was nothing like the growling sounds he usually made.

"If you don't stop, you won't like the consequences," I barely heard him hiss.

I took a step backward, startled by how his voice sounded. "I-I'm sorry," I stuttered.

His body abruptly snapped upright, making a horrible cracking noise.

He turned to me, and a sinister smile spread over his face as he watched me cry.

“Oh, here we go with the crying again,” he said. “Your little innocence act is getting old, Belle.”

I didn’t say anything. I had no clue what to do. I felt like curling up into a little ball and staying like that forever.

“Whatever,” Grayson said. “It’s not like I would want to fuck you while you looked like that anyway.” He gestured to my blotchy face and messy hair.

He lay back on the bed, turning away from me, seemingly going to sleep.

I stood there for a few moments, in complete disbelief of what had just happened.

I wasn’t sure what I should do. I didn’t want to get back into bed with him, but I couldn’t leave the room dressed like this either. And I couldn’t go get new clothes without walking in front of him. This sheet didn’t cover much, and I wasn’t about to give him a show.

I began shuffling toward the bathroom, having decided that would be the best place to collect my thoughts. As I did, I tried to keep my sobs at bay so I wouldn’t make Grayson more upset.

“Turn off the fucking lights,” he suddenly growled, making me jump.

I quickly ran over to the light switch and flicked it off before running back to the bathroom and shutting the door behind me, being sure to lock it.

I fell asleep on the bathroom floor that night. It was a bit demeaning to sleep on the cold, marble floor, but I couldn’t bring myself to leave. I didn’t want to face Grayson.

I groaned in pain when I awoke, then rolled over and sat up so that my aching back was against the cabinets. I sighed when I finally stood and saw what I looked like in the mirror.

My hair was going in every direction, and tear stains streaked my face and neck.

I’d spent most of the night silently crying, not wanting Grayson to hear me but also not being able to stop myself from replaying what had happened between us.

I didn’t know what I had done to deserve all of his harsh words.

It took me awhile, but I finally worked up the courage to leave the bathroom. I felt terrible after last night. What hurt the most, though, was that I knew he was partially right. I was his mate. I was supposed to be okay with him touching me.

Wasn’t I? Take the time you need... His earlier words repeated in my head...

He had brought me to his home, and was providing for me and making sure that I never had to work another day in my life. The least I could do was make his nights a little interesting.

And yet, I just couldn't bring myself to do it—not after the way he'd treated me.

Something about how Grayson had behaved last night made me feel used and gross—not to mention terrified.

I'd just wanted to talk, but he wouldn't even talk to me. Was sex really the only thing he wanted me for? It made me wonder if our whole time in Paris had been just an act: he'd acted kind and sweet while we were there so he could get me back to his pack and have his way with me—show me his true colors.

It was the only explanation that made sense.

Had my mother been right? Did all alphas truly treat their mates like this?

Or was he already done with me?

The thought made my heart shatter into a million pieces. What if I'd just encouraged his newfound distaste for me by rejecting him? What if he really didn't want me now?

My stomach dropped. I couldn't lose Grayson. It hadn't been long, but I already didn't know what I would do without him. I wanted to put this all behind us. I wanted things to go back to the way they were before.

Thankfully, when I exited the bathroom, he wasn't there, and I was able to get dressed and go downstairs in peace. The first thing on my mind was finding some food after not eating anything all day yesterday. And maybe I would run into Grayson and be able to talk through everything that had happened.

But unfortunately, the ground-floor kitchen was jam-packed with people, and none of them were Grayson. It was full of werewolves cooking, laughing, and eating. My stomach growled at all the different smells surrounding me.

I desperately wanted something to eat. I looked at a bowl of apples sitting in the middle of the island. I sighed in relief. I could grab an apple without getting in anyone's way.

I approached the island as quietly as possible, watching the large werewolves around me warily, painfully aware of the fact that they could all kill me without barely lifting a finger.

However, before I could reach out to grab an apple, a large, burly man I'd never seen before grabbed my arm and harshly pushed me back. I gasped as I lost my footing and fell onto my butt. The man didn't say anything or offer to help me up.

He just glared down at me and shook his head slowly while raising his eyebrows, as if daring me to try again.

"I-I'm sorry," I said, scrambling to get up before I made more of a scene. Everyone was already staring at me, looks of disgust painted on their faces.

I dropped my head in shame. I wasn't even sure where this shame was coming from. Some luna I am. Wasn't I supposed to be a leader of this pack? Hadn't Elijah even said I was the most powerful member? He'd been so, so wrong.

I was a joke.

I walked out of the kitchen quickly, wondering what exactly I had done to deserve this. Why were they getting mad at me every time I tried to get some food? It made no sense.

I wandered around the pack house some more, just like I'd done yesterday, trying to find something to fill my time. My hunger eventually passed and was replaced by total and complete boredom.

There's nothing to do around here.

Well, there were things to do, but every time I entered a room with anybody else in it, I'd get stares that made my blood run cold—from a bunch of scary werewolves, at that.

So I just walked. I walked around the entire pack house so many times that I lost count. I thought about going back to Grayson's bedroom, but something always stopped me.

Maybe I didn't want to be reminded of what had happened last night; my heart still ached from the things he'd said to me. Or maybe I was afraid that he would come back to the room and we'd have a repeat.

I didn't think I could handle that.

After a few hours, including some minutes outside in the freezing cold to try to fill my time, I came across Kyle, who was looking down at some papers in his hands and seemed to be in a hurry. I almost didn't bother him, worried that he'd decided he hated me now too for some reason. But I knew that if anybody would be willing to talk to me, it would probably be Kyle.

"Kyle," I said, shuffling my feet. "Hey."

He looked up and immediately smiled when he saw me. "Luna!"

I let out a breath of relief. It was good to see that at least one person was acting normal.

“How have you been? How was your first day as luna?” he asked.

“Oh, um...” I smiled nervously. I was afraid if I told the truth, I would completely break down. I needed to talk to Grayson before I told anyone what was going on.

“Good. Really good.”

“That’s great!” he said happily. “I knew you would love it here.”

I nodded my head in agreement. “Yeah, it’s great,” I lied. “I actually wanted to ask you something if that’s okay. If you’re not busy, that is.” I gestured to the papers in his hands.

“It’s more than okay! I was just on my way back to something, but I’ve got some time. Ask away!” Kyle said.

“Okay. Um, it’s actually about Grayson. I was wondering if he seemed a little off to you?”

Kyle frowned. “Off?”

I shifted. “Yeah, just not his usual self.”

He thought about it for a second. “Well, I’ve been with him all morning, and he seemed completely normal to me.

“He seemed happier than his usual self. It probably has something to do with you being here.” He elbowed me playfully and wiggled his eyebrows.

I chuckled, but my heart dropped to my stomach. “Yeah, maybe.”

I was starting to think that this was all in my head. Was I just being over-dramatic?

“Are you going back to him right now?” I asked.

Kyle nodded. “Yeah, we’re in the middle of a meeting in his office. I just had to go grab these.” He held up the papers.

“Oh, okay,” I said quickly. “Then I won’t keep you any longer. Actually, could you tell him something for me?”

“You can’t tell him yourself?” Kyle asked.

I looked down at my hands and backed up. “I don’t want to bother him. You’re already going there anyway.”

“I’m sure it wouldn’t be a bother, Luna,” Kyle said. “He would probably love to see you and find out how your day has been going. He—”

“No, no, that’s okay,” I interrupted. The last time I was in Grayson’s office ran through my mind—when he’d asked me to stay away during the day. “Will you just tell him for me?”

Kyle hesitated for a moment, obviously picking up on my discomfort. He looked me up and down as if assessing whether I was all right.

He stood a little straighter. “Okay,” he finally said.

I smiled slightly. “Thank you.” I paused for a moment, trying to think of the best way to phrase this.

“Uh, will you just tell him that I’m sorry? Tell him I’m really sorry about last night, and I wish that I could take the entire night back. I just want things to go back to normal.”

His frown intensified. I could tell that he wanted me to explain, but thankfully he let it go.

Kyle wasn’t one to ask questions.

“And you’re sure that you don’t want to tell him this yourself?” he asked, head cocked.

I nodded. “Yes, I think I would rather have it come from you if that’s okay.”

He studied my face. “Okay. I will be sure to tell him.”

“Thank you, Kyle. I don’t mean to make you the mediator. I really appreciate this.”

Kyle nodded. “Of course. It’s no problem at all.”

“Okay, I guess I’ll stop taking up your time and let you get back to your meeting.” I tried to give him a sincere smile.

“Yeah, okay,” Kyle said. He looked like he didn’t want to go, but eventually he stepped away from me and began to walk in the direction of Grayson’s office.

Before he got too far though, I heard him call, “Luna?”

I turned around and gave him a questioning look.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Kyle asked.

I sighed and tried to put a convincing smile on my face. “Oh, yeah, I’m fine.”

Kyle nodded slowly, looking unconvinced. “Whatever is going on between you two will get better. I promise,” Kyle said. “You were made for each other, and nothing can change that.”

I hope so. I nodded. “Thanks, Kyle,” I said. Then I turned and walked away.

I succeeded in avoiding Grayson’s room until late into the night. I was hoping that I could sneak in while he was sleeping and use the couch across from his bed. I didn’t want to sleep in the same bed as Grayson until we talked. But I also didn’t know where else I would sleep if it wasn’t in Grayson’s room.

I could feel the anxiety building up inside me as I approached his door, hoping that he wouldn’t be angry at me anymore. I opened the door and peeked in to see if he was asleep, then frowned when I saw an empty bed. Maybe he was still working?

Chapter 33 –

Filed To Story:

But right as I stepped in, I was immediately slammed against the door, my head banging painfully against it. I yelled out in pain and shock.

“Who the fuck do you think you are, huh?” Grayson yelled at me.

I whimpered at the harsh grip he had on my arms. “W-what do you mean?”

Grayson growled loudly, “What happens between you and me stays between you and me, got it? You don’t go blabbering to the first person you see just because your precious feelings get hurt.”

My anger flared. “Get off of me!” I shouted. I pushed against his chest with all my strength, furious that he would even think about putting his hands on me in this way.

I heard a loud slap, and the most intense pain I had ever felt in my life spread across my cheek. I screamed and grabbed my face as shock raced through my system.

He...he just hit me!

I didn’t have time to process what had just happened because before I knew it, Grayson had his hands on my shoulders, pushing me back against the wall.

“You’d better listen to me when I’m talking to you,” Grayson said, spitting his words into my face. I whimpered in response, completely terrified. “What exactly did you tell him?”

“Do you mean Kyle?” I sobbed. “I swear I didn’t tell him anything! I just told him to tell you I was sorry!”

“Yeah, that’s all you better have told him.” His hand came up and gripped my jaw tightly. I winced. I knew I’d have a bruise there tomorrow to add to my new swollen black eye.

“Listen here, little mate. You tell a single soul about anything that goes on in this room, and I swear you will find out just how angry an alpha male can be.

Understand?” His grip tightened on my jaw. “I said, do you understand?”

I nodded, “Yes! Yes, I understand!”

“Good,” he grunted.

He dropped his hold on me, and I immediately dropped to the floor, holding my face. The tears were streaming again, and I desperately wished for them to stop, remembering how Grayson had reacted the last time he’d seen me crying.

Suddenly, something soft hit my face. I looked down. He had thrown my pajamas at me.

“I want you sleeping somewhere else tonight. I slept better last night without you in the bed.” He paused for a second. “That is... Unless you want to crawl up onto this bed and show your mate just how sorry you really are?”

He raised an eyebrow at me and then slowly looked my body up and down. He licked his lips.

Never had I thought that Grayson’s eyes on my body would make me feel this disgusting and used. I didn’t even know how to respond.

So instead of saying anything, I just brought my legs up to my chest and shrank in on myself, hoping that would give his eyes less of my body to roam.

A hissing noise left Grayson’s mouth, followed by a bitter laugh. “Fine. Room 101 is free on the bottom floor. Use that one and get the fuck out of my sight.”

I let out a silent sob. I knew then and there that I was losing him. He didn’t want me anymore. I’d only met this man a few weeks ago, and he’d already become my entire life. And now I was losing him.

Grayson began to walk away from me, leaving me sobbing on the floor by the door.

“What did I do wrong?” I whispered through my tears. “What did I do?”

Grayson groaned and ran a hand down his face in frustration. He turned to look at me.

“I don’t have time to deal with you right now. Just stay the fuck out of my way and don’t cause any more problems. I didn’t sign up for this shit,” he said, gesturing to my hunched form.

My heart sank deep in my chest, and I sucked in a breath.

I paused for a second, not sure if I should ask this question. But then I knew that I didn’t really have another option. “Grayson”—I took a breath—“do you not want me anymore?”

His eyes narrowed, and he slowly approached me, moving like a lion that was about to catch its prey. “Look here, mate,” he spat. He lifted his pointer finger, and I watched in fascination and horror as a sharp claw emerged from the tip.

He brought it close to my face. “I’m going to let you in on a little secret: the only reason alphas want their mates is for the power they give them.”

His sharp nail traced my chin and then trailed up my swollen cheek. I whimpered, surprised that even such a light touch could cause me so much pain.

I knew that the bruise and swelling would be hard to cover up tomorrow. I hadn’t realized that I was bleeding before, but when Grayson took his hand away from my face, there was blood on the tip of his nail.

I watched in horror as he brought his claw up to his mouth and sucked it clean. He smirked at me. “You are here to bring me pleasure and power, that’s all.”

It felt as if he’d opened up my chest, grabbed my heart, and crushed it in his palm.

I squared my shoulders and looked him dead in the eyes. “Then I’m going to leave.

And you can’t stop me.”

Without warning, an ear-shattering growl left Grayson’s mouth. He clutched his chest and his entire body shook as he bent down and began breathing heavily.

He seemed to be in extreme pain. Having no clue what to do, I just watched.

Grayson shook his head violently and clutched his hair. He screamed “No!” loudly and fell to his knees.

This went on for a few minutes, and while it did I tried to come up with a plan for getting away from the crazy monster in front of me.

Had I caused this by saying I was going to leave? The last time he’d shifted in front of me, it hadn’t seemed nearly this painful.

What the hell is happening?

Suddenly, Grayson stilled as he looked down, still clutching his head. And then his eyes snapped to my wide, frightened ones. They were pitch black. “Mate,” he said.

I scooted backward as far as I could as I looked at him through teary eyes. I brought my knees up and hugged them close to my chest.

Looking determined, he stood slowly and began to approach me. I whimpered when he finally came to stand directly over me.

I wasn’t sure what to say as he stared down at me. His eyes searched my face, and a growling sound left his mouth. Then he reached a hand up, seemingly preparing to hit me again.

I immediately brought my arm up in defense and moved away from the imminent blow.

“I’m sorry!” I yelled. “I’m so sorry! I shouldn’t have said anything! I’m sorry! I’m sorry. I-I’m sorry...,” I sobbed.

But the blow never came—nothing did.

I sobbed for a few moments, not even trying to keep my composure. I felt completely broken.

“Mate,” I heard Grayson say in a gentle tone that surprised me. I shook my head, not wanting to meet his gaze or for him to see my pathetic state. “Mate,” he said again with more force.

I looked up at him slowly and was shocked by what I saw. He had tears in his eyes as well, running soundlessly down his cheeks.

I’d never thought I would ever see Grayson cry. And as much as he frightened me right now, I still hated to see him cry. He reached down again, and, this time, I didn’t flinch.

I watched in fascination as he placed his hand gently on my knee that was still pulled up to my chest. “Sorry, mate,” he said with real sorrow lacing his voice.

I realized then as I studied his pitch-black eyes that I wasn’t talking to Grayson. No, I was talking to his wolf. His wolf had somehow taken control of his body and was communicating with me.

I wasn’t sure if his wolf felt any differently toward me than Grayson did, but I found myself hoping that maybe a part of Grayson still wanted me. “Do you still want me?” I asked him quietly.

Sadness shone in his eyes, and his shoulders slumped. Slowly, very slowly—almost as if he was afraid to scare me again—he brought his hand up to cup the uninjured side of my face.

He gently wiped away my tears.

“My mate. Mine,” he said. He brought his forehead down and connected it with mine. “My mate,” he repeated.

That told me all I needed to hear. Grayson might not have wanted me for anything other than sex and power, but his wolf still wanted me for me.

I threw my arms around his neck and hugged him close to me. I desperately needed to be comforted and told that everything was going to be okay.

He returned the hug with full force, wrapping his arms around my middle and then securing my legs around him so that he could pick me up.

He hummed deeply, his body vibrating against mine.

Burying his face deep into my neck, he nipped softly at my bite mark, and my body shuddered.

He continued to hold me for a few minutes as I sobbed and released all of the emotions that I’d been holding in for the last couple of days. After a little while he started to move, and I clutched onto him harder, not wanting him to let go or for his human side to take over once again.

I held on to him so tightly, I forgot about my injured cheek and cried out as it connected with the side of his neck.

Grayson growled when he heard my cry—so loudly I could feel it. It was enough to freak me out and make me loosen my hold on his neck.

He immediately walked us over to his bed and set me down gently, moving back a bit so he could inspect my injured face. I wondered if I looked as broken as I felt.

After a moment, he growled softly, then walked silently into the bathroom. When he came back out, he was holding a wet washcloth.

As Grayson brought the cloth up to my face to clean my wound, I grabbed his wrist gently before he made contact and said, “Be gentle, please. I think my cheekbone may be broken.”

This made Grayson's entire body shake, and I could tell he was trying hard to rein in his emotions. He nodded once, then slowly raised the cloth to my cheek once more. I winced when it connected, and Grayson whimpered.

"Sorry, mate. Sorry, mate. Sorry, mate," he said over and over again as he cleaned my wound. I could tell that this was hard for him and that his apologies were sorrowful and genuine.

Once he seemed satisfied with his care taking, he sat down next to me and pulled me into his lap, wrapping his arms securely around me.

Finally, I built up the courage to ask what was on my mind: "What did I do wrong?"

What did I do to make him hate me so much?"

Grayson whimpered softly and tugged on my waist to bring me closer to him. "I"—

he paused—"I, errr..."

He shook his head, and I could tell that he was struggling to express himself. He was a wolf, after all. He probably had very little experience speaking.

He growled loudly in frustration and tried again: "I... No. Mate."

I frowned. There was no way that he was going to be able to explain anything. He could barely get a few words out.

I sighed sadly. "It's okay," I said, not liking to see him struggle.

"Will you just tell him that I'm sorry? Tell him that I'm so sorry for what I did and that I hope he can forgive me. I don't want him to be mad at me anymore. I want things to go back to how they were before."

Grayson shook his head violently. "No, mate. No."

"What do you mean 'no?' You won't tell him?"

He shook his head again. "No." He put a hand on his chest. "Sorry," he said. He patted his chest again. "Sorry."

"I-I don't understand," I said. "What do you mean? What are you sorry for? It's Grayson who should be sorry."

But suddenly Grayson's wolf growled loudly and clutched his head as his body began to shake again. He snapped upright onto his feet, and I fell off his lap and hit the floor. I groaned in pain.

“Stupid fucking wolf!” Grayson yelled as he grabbed at his hair. Then he bent down and roughly yanked me up by the arm so that I was standing. “Whatever he did or said to you had nothing to do with me.”

My shoulders slumped and I nodded my head to show my understanding.

He grabbed my chin and pulled my face close enough to his that I could feel his breath. “You’re not going anywhere I don’t tell you to, you hear me? You’re my mate.” He shoved me away. “Sleep somewhere else.”

I straightened up, trying to keep my dignity as I reached for the handle of the door behind me.

Chapter 34 –

Filed To Story:

“And Belle?” Grayson said.

I turned to look at him.

“Sleep there tomorrow too.”

I nodded and left through the door, closing it behind me.

Grayson was right about one thing: I wasn’t going anywhere.

As long as his wolf wanted me, I would be here. I knew now that something was wrong.

GRAYSON POV

THE NIGHT OF THE VAMPIRE ATTACK...

Leaving Belle naked and disappointed in my bed was the hardest thing that I had ever done in my life. My wolf was beyond pissed. He wouldn’t stop growling in my head, sending me mental images of Belle’s beautiful, sad face as she lay nearly naked in a sheet, watching us leave.

I growled loudly. She deserves better than this.

I made my way to the edge of my territory, frowning when I saw Kyle and some of my pack warriors standing around doing nothing.

“What the fuck is going on?” I snapped as I approached them. They all turned and immediately fell to their knees and bared their necks to me.

“Kyle,” I said. “Come here.”

Kyle stood and approached me slowly, obviously sensing my touchy mood.

“I thought you said this was an emergency,” I said when he was in front of me.

“What’s going on here? You said there were vampires on the territory.”

Kyle opened his mouth to speak but then paused. He slowly raised his nose to the air and sniffed.

“Whoa!” he said as a knowing smile formed on his lips and he covered his nose.

“Interrupted something, didn’t I?”

I crossed my arms over my chest and growled. I didn’t have time for his games right now—not when my mate was alone in my bed during her first night here.

“What the hell are you talking about, Kyle?”

Kyle chuckled and shook his head in amusement. “I hate to tell you this, Alpha, but you’re giving off some serious alpha-male mating pheromones right now.” He wiggled his eyebrows. “You and Luna were having a little fun, huh?”

My wolf surged forward in my mind, immediately bristling with anger. He tried to take control, wanting to remind Kyle of his place and who Belle was to him.

“Kyle,” I growled as I tried to rein in my wolf. “I suggest you change the subject to why you mind-linked me here. “Otherwise I think you might just find out how angry an alpha male who’s giving off mating pheromones but was just taken away from his mate for seemingly no reason can be.”

Kyle swallowed hard.

“Yes, Alpha,” he said quickly, nodding his head. “Uh, Beta Adalee is scanning the territory to see how many vampires are out there. We don’t think they’re aware that we know about them yet.”

I nodded. I was the fastest in the pack, but Adalee was fast and quiet, making her the best for scouting out sticky situations.

“How long ago did she leave?” I asked.

“I’m right here,” someone called from behind us.

Kyle and I both turned to see Adalee coming out of the woods nearby. She approached us with a serious look on her face. “There are ten vampires scattered across the territory.”

I growled. What the fuck were vampires doing in my territory?

No creatures—not even werewolf rogues—had been foolish enough to break into my pack in years. My pack had too many members for anybody to get through unseen and uninjured.

These vampires were about to learn that. “What are they doing?” I asked.

Adalee shrugged. “I don’t know. They’re just standing around.”

“You mean they’re not doing anything? Do they have any weapons?” Kyle asked.

Adalee shook her head. “No. No weapons... Nothing. They’re seriously just standing there like a bunch of robots.”

“Something is off,” Kyle said. “I don’t like this.”

“Me neither,” I said. “No weapons will make our lives easier, but I don’t want anybody letting their guard down. Something is definitely wrong.”

I looked around at my warriors—around thirty of them, standing proud and strong, all awaiting my orders. “Hopefully, this will go over with no problems.” I looked at Kyle. “You know what to do.”

Kyle nodded and bowed his head slightly. “Yes, Alpha.”

He walked over to the warriors and began giving them orders. I had been through enough battles with Kyle to know that I didn’t even need to tell him what to do.

Kyle was a natural leader. He knew how to give orders but still be personal with my warriors.

There was no one I trusted more in my pack, which was why I’d made him the leader of the pack warriors. I watched as they listened to Kyle intently and then shifted into their wolves, preparing to put all of their training to good use.

I was about to shift and join them and lead the fight when I made eye contact with Adalee. She had an amused look on her face, with her eyebrows raised and her hand covering her nose.

I rolled my eyes and growled softly. “I don’t want to hear it,” I said, knowing she was referring to my smell. “Kyle already told me. Just breathe through your mouth.”

Adalee nodded and laughed. “You got it, Alpha,” she said. Then she turned to me fully and her eyes went a shade darker with the presence of her wolf.

“You know, I’m really, really glad that you’ve met your mate, Alpha.” A strange look passed over her face as her lips formed into a smirk. “It’s going to make things a whole lot easier around here.”

I raised an eyebrow at her. Odd thing to say. “Right...,” I said. “I’m glad too.”

She smiled wider and nodded. “Better get going. The warriors are going to need their big strong alpha to help lead them.”

She winked at me and then, without warning or waiting, shifted into her wolf and ran into the woods without us.

Odd thing to do, I thought dismissively.

We were prepared for an intense battle with the vampires. In fact, my warriors—

who’d been training for years without being able to use their skills—even seemed excited for a fight.

But we didn’t get one.

The vampires allowed us to chase them off the territory without any resistance.

Like some sort of game. We chased them for a while, then they slowed down and let us get really close to catching them before speeding up again.

Zigzagging and changing directions, they had us running in circles like we were playing tag.

We continued like this for longer than I’d like to admit, vampires being naturally faster than werewolves. We could keep up with them, but it would’ve taken the fastest in the pack to catch one.

And usually that wasn’t necessary, as vampires liked getting right to the juicy part and attacking—battling it out until there was a winner.

What was happening now was strange. Vampires weren’t known for being cowards. They didn’t just run away from a fight. What they were doing made no sense at all. And it was pissing me off.

I wanted to get back to Belle. I had told her I’d be back before she fell asleep. All I wanted to do was hold her and watch her cute little face relax as her breathing evened out.

She always did this thing where she would nuzzle into my chest and let out a contented sigh right before she fell asleep. I'd hold her tighter and smile every time.

It was my favorite part of the night. I loved her with everything I had in me. God, I wish I was with her right now.

Thankfully, the vampires eventually seemed to get tired, fleeing the territory all at once as if having decided telepathically that they'd had enough.

Kyle and I stopped next to each other and shifted. We put on the shorts that were tied to our ankles by elastic bands. We looked at each other in confusion.

"What the actual fuck?" Kyle asked, saying exactly what was on my mind.

I shook my head. "I have no idea. Are they all gone?"

Kyle paused and his eyes went gray as he mind-linked with the other warriors who were likely scattered across the rest of the territory. I tuned in, listening to what the other warriors had experienced.

Kyle nodded when his eyes opened a few seconds later. "The same thing happened to all of them. They've all been driven off our territory."

"We're not going to let our guard down," I said. "I want wolves posted around every section of our territory, all night. There's something more going on. It cannot have been that simple."

"I agree," Kyle replied.

I looked back toward the pack house longingly, desperately wishing that I was with Belle. I knew now that I wouldn't be able to spend the night with her. I needed to stay out here and keep my pack safe.

"Why don't you go ahead and go back to the pack house, Alpha?" Kyle said, watching me. "I can take care of this. It's what I was trained for."

I shook my head. "I don't think that's a good idea."

I sighed as I imagined Belle waiting up for me, wondering where I was, worrying about me, alone on her first night here. She was probably wet from just getting out of the shower, her chocolate-brown hair splayed out all over my pillow.

I imagined her wearing only my shirt and my boxers, with—oh God—her beautiful long legs out on display. I knew that the minute I joined her in bed, one of those beautiful legs would be thrown over my waist like always as she snuggled into my chest.

I would pull her closer so that she was basically on top of me, then begin to run my hand up and down her back and play with her gorgeous, silky hair.

I could already feel the sparks dancing along my skin. God, I miss her.

“Okay,” Kyle said, clearing his throat loudly.

“I’m about to suffocate from your mating pheromones. Go back to your mate, Alpha. I promise you that I am more than capable of handling a few vampires who aren’t even in our territory anymore.”

I looked at Kyle, then back at the pack house, then back at Kyle once again.

“You’re sure you can handle it?” I asked.

“Positive,” he confirmed.

I sighed heavily. “Okay,” I ran a hand through my hair and began to walk back to the pack house. “Try not to bug me for the rest of the night,” I joked. “And I mean, if you do, I want multiple people on fire.”

Kyle laughed. “You got it, Alpha. Say hi to Luna for me.”

And then he ran off into the night.

GRAYSON POV

My only thoughts were of Belle and of getting back to her as soon as possible.

“Hello, Grayson,” someone said in the darkness.

For a second I thought it was Belle saying my name, as she was the only person allowed to call me that. But this voice didn’t give me the sparks that hers usually did. It couldn’t be her.

I turned quickly, only to see Adalee emerging slowly from the darkness, an odd smile on her face.

I raised an eyebrow. “What did you just call me?” My wolf came to the surface, growling at the disrespect we’d just received from her.

Chapter 35 –

Filed To Story:

Her smile only grew. She crossed her arms over her chest and leaned against a nearby tree. “Did I ever tell you where I grew up, Grayson?”

So Adalee has a death wish? I crossed my arms and tilted my head.

Okay, I’ll play along. “No, Adalee, I don’t think you did,” I said grimly.

“You know, it’s kind of a coincidence actually,” Adalee said, laughing slightly as she stepped away from the tree and approached me. “I grew up in Paris—right around the area that you just came from.”

I actually hadn’t known that, which was strange. I’d thought I knew everything about her when I asked her to become my beta. “You told me you were from Toronto,” I said.

“Tsk-tsk, Alpha. You really need to get to know your pack members better,” she said, coming to stand right in front of me.

“I moved to Toronto with my mom when I was eighteen. Le reste de ma vie j’ai passé à Paris avec mon père. ”

The rest of my life I spent in Paris with my father, ~I thought quickly.

So she speaks French. I was starting to think I didn’t know my beta half as well as I thought I did.

“You’re right. I didn’t know that,” I said, “because you didn’t tell me.” I stepped closer to her. “Why?”

She laughed softly. “Just you wait. I’m getting to that part.”

She looked me up and down slowly, as if she was sizing me up. “I actually think you met my dad while you were in Paris. He’s the beta of the pack there.”

My brows knit together. “That’s not possible. I barely left the hotel while I was in Paris. I was too busy taking care of your luna.”

“Carl Aude,” Adalee said. “My father’s name is Carl Aude. Ring a bell?”

I sucked in a quick breath. That was the name of Belle’s stepfather—the werewolf I had nearly killed.

“You’re telling me that your father, Carl, is the beta of one of the biggest packs in the world?”

“Was,” Adalee spat out bitterly. “He was the beta of one of the biggest packs in the world. But he’s not anymore. He had one encounter with you and your bitch mate

—”

A growl ripped from my throat and I lunged for Adalee without a second thought, fully intending to remind her of her place. No one got to speak about my mate—

their luna—like that. I was about to grab her throat and slam her into the tree behind her when she held up a hand and said, “Stop.”

Suddenly I was jerked backward and my feet stopped moving as if they’d been glued to the ground. A painful fire tingled up and down my legs.

“What the fuck?” I yelled. I looked at Adalee, who was just watching me with a smile on her face. “What the fuck did you do to me?”

“Quiet,” Adalee said, and my mouth immediately slammed shut as if someone else was controlling it.

How the fuck is she doing this?

“Jeez, you really have anger issues. You need to work on those.”

My wolf clawed at my mind, trying to get free, but it was no use. There was something holding me back from shifting, keeping me in my human form. My wolf growled in frustration.

Adalee cleared her throat. “As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, my father had one encounter with you and...well”—she paused and chuckled menacingly—“my darling stepsister...”

Belle... ~I thought frantically.

“And the next thing you know, he was magically stripped of his position as beta and found beaten to a pulp in an alley.” Her expression darkened deeply, all humor leaving her voice as she spoke her next words: “And now he’s dead.”

I sucked in a breath. Carl was dead? That couldn’t be possible! I had sent some men to teach him a lesson, but I’d never ordered them to kill him. Belle had begged me to spare his life, and I had planned to keep my promise.

Another thought hit me: What about Belle’s mother?

“Didn’t know that, huh?” Adalee said bitterly. “You sent your stupid little minions to beat him nearly to death and then didn’t bother to check up on him afterward. You just left him to die; you didn’t even care. And all for what? Because he hit your precious little mate? He died—was killed for one simple mistake.”

She shook her head. I could see tears forming in her eyes, but she quickly wiped them away.

“And to think that I actually liked you,” she continued quietly. “I respected you. I trusted you as my alpha and wanted to work under you. It’s why I chose to be your beta. But you no longer deserve my respect. I never thought you were capable of doing what you did. You’re going to pay for it now,” she said, her tirade ending abruptly.

She circled me slowly. I was still defenseless, unable to move or open my mouth to speak. And it was pissing me off. She came to stand in front of me once more and grimaced when she looked at my face.

“There’s another thing you don’t know about me, Alpha.”

I raised my eyebrows at her questioningly. My wolf growled.

“Do you remember the day you appointed me as your beta?” she asked.

I thought about it. I should have remembered it. It was a very important decision—

one that I hadn’t made lightly. But the harder I tried to remember that day, the more it seemed to slip from my memory. I opened my mouth to reply, but nothing came out. I was still unable to talk.

Adalee sighed. “You may speak now. Just don’t interrupt me, and promise to listen quietly.”

My jaw slackened painfully.

“I don’t know how you’re fucking doing this, Adalee, but let me move my feet right now before I mind-link all of my pack warriors. You’re skating on extremely thin ice.”

She rolled her eyes. “Add terrible listener to the list of things wrong with you—along with ~murderer~ and ~egotistical asshole~,” she snapped.

I growled loudly.

“You can try mind-linking someone but no one will hear you. Go ahead and try,” she quipped.

It seemed like I had no other option if I wanted to get out of this situation. I reached into my mind and attempted to connect to Kyle, asking him for help. I tried again.

And again. And again. I didn’t get a single answer.

I looked at Adalee. She stood there smirking at me.

“See? I’m right,” she said smugly. “Now, let’s get back to my question: do you remember the day you appointed me as your beta?”

I swallowed a vicious reply, instead opting to say, “No. I don’t remember that day.” I ground my teeth together. “Why can’t I remember that day, Adalee?”

Her smile only grew. “Oh, you’re about to find out just how little you really know about your beta.” She began circling me again. “See, I come from a very powerful line of”—she paused when she came to stand right behind me, and I could feel her breath on my ear—“vampires.”

I almost rolled my eyes. I didn’t know what she was up to, but I knew she was lying.

“I know you’re not a vampire. I’ve seen your wolf. I can smell your werewolf genes,” I said.

She stepped in front of me so that we were facing each other. “You think you know everything, don’t you, Grayson?”

“I’m only one-fourth vampire. The rest of me is all werewolf. You see, my father was half vampire. His mom was a werewolf and his dad was a vampire. And my mom was a werewolf. And they had me. Is this making sense now?”

I stared at her in shock. None of this was making any sense. “You’re telling me you’re a quarter vampire?” I asked.

I clenched my jaw and pushed myself as hard as I could, trying to move my legs forward, but nothing budged.

“Try all you want to move; it’s not going to work—at least not until I tell you you can,” she said, watching me struggle, looking pleased. “Yes, only a quarter of me is a vampire, meaning that my werewolf genes have almost completely taken over. I don’t drink blood; I don’t have a sensitivity to light; I don’t live with other vampires.

“The one thing I got from my father was these pretty pearly whites.” She pulled her top lip up and showed off her sharp white fangs that I’d never noticed before.

“Well, that, and a very special ability that only ~my~ family has.” She smiled and looked down at my legs. “And I think you might already know what the ability is.”

She stepped closer to me so that our noses were almost touching. I growled.

“With just my voice, I can make you do whatever I want,” she said menacingly.

That’s not possible, ~I thought. The only vampire family that had the ability to control people with their voices were the Mortars.

The royal vampire family.

“You’re a Mortar?” I said.

Adalee smiled brightly and took a step back. “Congrats, Alpha,” she said. Then the smile suddenly fell from her face. “You’re not as stupid as you look.”

That was the final straw. No pack member of mine would speak to me like that—vampire or not. I was her alpha!

I lurched the top half of my body forward, planning on latching my jaw onto her neck and not releasing it until she begged for mercy. But ,right as I moved—before I could even touch her—she stopped me with a single word:

“Pain.”

My body immediately fell to the forest floor as an anguishing pain shot through it. I yelled out, clutching at my chest and head, trying to find any sort of relief. It felt as if each bone in my body was breaking while thousands of knives were stabbing into me.

I was sure I was going to die. This was what it had to feel like.

“Stop,” Adalee’s voice said.

The pain suddenly stopped. I gasped and groaned as air finally entered my lungs.

Adalee crouched down next to me and smoothed my hair away from my face. I was too weak to move or stop her. My wolf was pacing and whimpering in my mind. He now truly understood the severity of this situation. He was worried for our pack and mate.

“I’m not a bad person, Grayson,” Adalee said calmly as she studied my face. “The only time I ever used my ability on you was to be appointed as beta. I wanted to be accepted into your pack in a place of power, but I didn’t want to spend months kissing up to you.

“I knew I deserved it and would do a good job, so I used my power to convince you of it as well. That’s why you don’t remember the day,” she laughed bitterly.

A strained gurgle emitted from my throat, interrupting her.

“I never planned on using my power on you again after that. In fact, I never planned on using it ever again. I didn’t like having that control over people. It felt wrong. No one should get to play God.” She paused. “But that all changed when you murdered my father.”

I tried sitting up, fighting against the extreme exhaustion that had suddenly replaced the pain. “I never meant to kill your father, Adalee,” I groaned. “He wasn’t supposed to die.”

“Lie back down. Don’t move,” she snapped. My body immediately followed her orders. “I don’t care about what you meant to happen. What matters is what did happen.” She growled then, her wolf coming to the surface. “You should’ve seen what your men did to him. He wasn’t even recognizable when we buried him,” she said.

“I’m sorry, Adalee,” I whispered. “I’m truly sorry.”

“It doesn’t matter now. The damage is done.” She stood. “And you’re going to pay.”

She whistled as if she was signaling something, then looked back at me. “My father and grandfather had a falling out a few years back and hadn’t spoken since then. I never had the opportunity to meet my grandfather because of that. “See, he’s not the nicest man. A little power-hungry. Some might even call him corrupt. It’s why the throne was taken away from him.”

I felt the blood drain from my face at her words. She couldn’t be talking about who I thought she was...

“But I disagree,” she continued. “Especially not after I had the chance to meet him at my father’s funeral. We got along very well. We felt the same way about some very important topics.”

She grabbed my chin tightly, her nails digging into my skin, and turned my head so that I was looking right at her.

“For instance, we both agreed that you should no longer lead this pack. And if that means vampires taking control and the merging of our two kinds, then”—she shrugged—“so be it.”

The sound of rustling leaves and breaking twigs came from behind us.

Adalee lifted her head. “Ah, right on time.” She looked back at me. “Grayson, I would like you to meet my grandfather.”

A figure emerged from the trees, tall and dark, wearing all black.

Chapter 36 –

Filed To Story:

He had long black hair and blood-red eyes. His sharp fangs were peeking out from beneath his top lip that was pulled into a sinister smirk.

It was Azazel Mortar, the former vampire king.

He approached the two of us slowly, looking at me with a pleased expression on his face. I growled loudly, baring my teeth at him and trying desperately to move my body.

But it was no use. Adalee had me paralyzed on the ground.

“Well done, Adalee,” he said. “I have to say, I almost didn’t think you had it in you. I am very happy that I was wrong.”

Adalee smiled in return and took a step back.

“Stand,” Azazel said to me.

My body moved of its own accord, bringing me to my feet but, other than that, remaining completely frozen. Azazel looked me up and down, and I couldn’t do anything other than watch as his smile grew.

“My God, you are huge. I can see why you are alpha of the strongest pack in America,” he said.

This was strange coming from him, as he was almost as large as me—though leaner, less brawn.

“It will be extremely interesting to take over your body and test your strength,” he said.

“What the fuck did you just say?” I asked.

My wolf was as close to the surface as he could be without us shifting, releasing loud, vicious growls nonstop. They were so loud, they echoed into the night.

“Quiet!” Azazel said.

My jaw snapped shut in an instant, the same way that it had when Adalee had told me to be quiet earlier. The growling in my chest stopped, too, as my wolf was also silenced. My wolf whimpered in my head.

“I don’t have time to deal with your delinquent wolf right now,” Azazel said. “I’m sure I will get enough of that in the near future.” He continued to look at me, circling me slowly. “Adalee, didn’t you say that he wasn’t fully mated yet?”

“Yes,” Adalee said. “He hasn’t mated with his luna yet.”

At the mention of Belle, my wolf began to pound at the inside of my mind, trying to get free.

And with every pound, my body shook. Azazel watched me intently, obviously knowing what was going on.

“If this is how powerful he is when he isn’t even fully mature, I can only imagine how powerful he will be when he’s fully mated,” he said.

My body continued to shake.

“It’ll be fun to get to that full power. Especially if that girl I saw you entering with earlier is your mate.”

That was it. I was going to rip this man’s head clean off his body—after I was finished torturing him until he begged for mercy.

He wasn’t going to touch Belle.

He wasn’t even going to get close.

Azazel chuckled. “Enough messing around. I have a throne to win back. And your little pack is going to help me get it.”

In an instant, he was directly in front of me, moving more quickly than I had thought possible—even for a vampire. Then suddenly his fangs were deep in my throat, and I was groaning in pain. His original commands over my body seemed to fall away, and I collapsed further to the ground as his venom coursed through my veins.

I felt my consciousness begin to drift away, only to be replaced by something else.

Something dark and evil was slowly taking control over my mind and body.

I could no longer move. I could barely even think.

I fought it for as long as I could, but eventually, my body got tired of fighting and everything went black.

“This is going to be fun,” Azazel said from inside my mind.

BELLE POV

THE PRESENT DAY...

Room 101—the one that Grayson had sent me to—was on the bottom floor of the pack house and was absolutely freezing. It was no wonder this room was free. The window was broken and wouldn’t close all the way, allowing the cold Minnesota winter air to come in and drop the room’s temperature below anything livable.

There was even some snow piling up on the floor next to the window.

And to add to that, it seemed that people had started to use the room for storage. It was filled to the brim with boxes and various old, dusty objects. I had to dig out the small creaky bed in the corner just to lie down.

After about an hour of trying to sleep in the cold, I decided that there was no way I could stay in this room and got up to find somewhere else to spend the night. The pack house was much calmer at night with everyone in their beds.

It was the first time I was really able to get a good look at the place without feeling overwhelmed by the number of people constantly surrounding me. After poking around for a while, I eventually came across a living room filled with couches and a huge TV. This would have to do for the night. I lay down on a big leather couch.

With no blanket, no pillow, and tears staining my face, I finally drifted off to sleep.

I awoke to the feeling of someone violently shaking my shoulder.

“Hey, wake up!” a voice said. “You can’t sleep here!”

My eyes flew open; standing above me was an older woman with a vacuum in her hand.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” I said as I quickly sat up.

“You need to leave so that I can clean,” the woman said.

“Yes, of course. Sorry.” I stood up and was out of the room within seconds, feeling my face heat in embarrassment.

I wondered what she thought of me, and if she knew that I had been kicked out of my mate’s room. With my shoulders slumped and hardly any energy in my body from not eating for two days, I made my way to the kitchen, desperately hoping that I would finally be able to snag some food and water.

Once there, I let out a sigh of relief when I saw Kyle and Elijah making breakfast with the rest of the pack.

Elijah was the first to see me, and his face lit up. “Luna!” he yelled.

I approached them slowly, looking warily at the other werewolves, who seemed to be ignoring me instead of glaring at me. Strange.

“Hey,” I said quietly.

I looked longingly at the food they were making, hoping that they would be willing to share with me. Kyle turned from the eggs he was frying, and his jaw dropped when he saw me. He grabbed my shoulder and turned me to look at him.

“What the fuck is that?” he said, gesturing to my beat-up face.

My hand immediately flew up to my chin, and I winced when it connected with the tender bruise that Grayson had left there last night from gripping me too hard. The pain in the left side of my face was still astronomical.

I felt panic rise in my chest as I tried to come up with an explanation that didn’t involve Grayson so that I wouldn’t have to face his wrath again.

“Oh, I slipped on ice last night when I was exploring outside,” I said quickly, hoping that they’d believe me and not ask more questions.

Elijah nodded his head in understanding, obviously believing my story, which I was grateful for, but Kyle’s eyes just narrowed in on my bruises as he studied my face some more.

I shifted nervously.

“Did the alpha lose his shit when he saw you? I can only imagine how upset that must have made him,” Elijah said, shaking his head.

I nodded. “Oh, yeah. He was pretty mad. He made me put ice on it all night,” I lied.

It was easy to come up with a story as I remembered how he’d cared for my bruised face when my mother’s mate had hit me in Paris.

Elijah laughed. “Yeah, I bet he did.” He looked at my bruises again.

“If I didn’t know any better, I would say a hand made those. But I know that no one would dare to hurt an alpha’s mate unless they had a death wish,” Kyle said.

Interestingly, it didn’t seem to occur to him that the alpha himself could’ve done this to me. I wouldn’t have thought that either before seeing Grayson’s true colors.

“Huh, yeah, that’s funny. Definitely not a hand,” I said as I fidgeted.

“So you’re telling me that you fell on your face when you slipped?” Kyle asked.

I nodded quickly. “Yeah, it was a pretty nasty fall,” I said.

Kyle didn’t look convinced. In fact, he looked at me with a worried expression that made me think he wasn’t buying my story.

“I’m surprised Alpha didn’t want to stay with you all day today with that massive bruise on your face. Your face is swollen up like a balloon. “You’d think his wolf would be going insane knowing that you were hurt,” Kyle said suspiciously.

I shrugged and looked down at my hands. I hated lying to them, but knew I had no other choice—unless I wanted Kyle to go and talk to Grayson.

“He said he had a lot of really important work to do today and that he would check on me later,” I said feebly.

Still not seeming convinced, Kyle continued to watch me as Elijah took over at the frying pan.

“Hey, do you think it would be okay if I stole some of your eggs?” I asked Elijah. “I haven’t eaten breakfast yet.”

Elijah smiled widely. “Of course! We have more than enough.”

“Say, Luna, can I talk to you for a second?” Kyle asked.

I nodded my head slowly, nervously. Kyle gently put a hand on my back and ushered me to the side where nobody could hear me.

“You were right,” he said once we were alone.

My brows furrowed. “About what?”

Kyle crossed his arms over his chest and looked around to make sure that no one could hear our conversation. “Alpha is acting strange—really strange.”

My eyes widened. “Really?” I asked in relief. “You’ve noticed it too?”

Kyle nodded. “He’s been making some really...odd decisions.”

“Like what?” I asked.

Kyle hesitated, obviously deciding whether or not he should tell me.

“He’s contemplating letting some very questionable characters into our territory.

I’ve never disagreed with any of his decisions before, but some of the commands he’s been giving have been... Well, absolutely insane.”

“What do you mean, questionable characters?” I asked.

“He...he...” Kyle hesitated. He sighed. “Vampires. He wants to let vampires into our territory to ‘discuss our relationship with them’ or some shit like that.” Kyle shook his head in disgust. He studied my face, a deep scowl twisting his features. “And then you come in here looking like that. There’s no way he would be okay with you being hurt like that.”

“He isn’t!” I said quickly. Our conversation from last night ran through my mind. If Grayson found out that Kyle and I were talking about him behind his back, who knew what he would do?

“He was really mad when he saw me last night,” I continued. Well, at least that’s not a lie.

“He...he, um, held me in his arms all night and gave me pain meds and made me ice my face. He took really good care of me.” I looked down at my hands, wishing it were true.

Kyle watched me with an intense expression, one I couldn’t read.

I panicked. “I’m sure everything is fine with Grayson. Really. I haven’t really noticed anything off since a couple days ago.”

Chapter 37 –

Filed To Story:

Kyle nodded slowly, but I could tell he still wasn’t buying it. “Okay,” he sighed. “Let’s go get some food.”

He walked back to where Elijah was, and I followed behind eagerly.

At the thought of food, my stomach let out the loudest growl, turning my face bright red. Both men looked at me.

“Luna, when was the last time you ate?” Kyle asked.

My eyes widened. “Last night,” I said quickly. “I ate dinner with Grayson.”

Elijah and Kyle exchanged worried glances and then looked at me.

“I know that’s not true, Luna,” Kyle said. “We ate with the alpha last night, and you weren’t there. He said you were asleep.”

My eyes widened further as I realized I’d been caught in a lie. “Oh, um...well...” I didn’t know what else to say.

“Luna, I’m going to ask you again, and don’t you dare lie to me. When was the last time you ate?” Kyle asked.

I looked down at my hands once more, knowing I could no longer hide the truth.

“The night I first got here,” I whispered.

“What?” Elijah snapped.

“What the fuck do you mean, ‘the night you first got here’? That was two days ago!”

Kyle yelled. “You haven’t eaten in two days?”

Tears were starting to form in my eyes. I looked around the kitchen and saw that people were watching us. We were starting to make a scene.

“It’s just that every time I came to one of the kitchens, they would always be so full of people and everyone would snap at me when I tried to grab some food. I didn’t know what to do.”

Kyle growled and ran a hand through his hair.

“Stupid territorial wolves.” He sighed. “You can’t take it personally, Luna.

Werewolves get territorial around their food and don’t like sharing. It’s just the way we are as hunters.”

I nodded in understanding. That made sense.

“And the alpha didn’t feed you? He didn’t know that you were starving yourself?”

Elijah asked.

I shook my head frantically. “No, he’s been super busy. It’s not his fault. I don’t want to bother him,” I said.

“What the fuck do you mean?” Kyle snapped. “This isn’t making any sense. An alpha takes extreme pride in providing for his mate. There’s no way he wouldn’t want to feed you, no matter how busy he is. You’ll always be his number one priority.”

The panic in my chest grew. I was really making a mess of things.

Grayson would be so mad if he knew about any of this. “I’ve been telling him that I’ve been finding my own food,” I lied. “I feel like I’ve been too clingy. I need to be less dependent on him while I’m here. I can’t be distracting him all day with my stupid problems. Too many people are counting on him.”

“That’s it,” Kyle snapped. He grabbed my hand and began to pull me away.

“Elijah, you stay here and make some more food. I want there to be enough here for her to be on the verge of sickness. I’m going to put an end to this nonsense.”

Kyle continued to drag me out of the kitchen and toward Grayson’s office, despite my objections. My mind replayed the conversation with Grayson from the last time I had been in his office—when he’d told me to stay away. I could only imagine how upset he would be if I went back there.

“Kyle, stop!” I yelled. “Really, I’m okay! We don’t need to bother Grayson!” I tried prying his hand loose from my wrist, but he was too strong for me. “Kyle, please!

Please stop!”

It had occurred to me last night that if I didn’t start to get back on Grayson’s good side, then I was going to lose him forever. He already seemed to not want me, and I didn’t know what I would do if he never came back to me.

What I did know was that I’d have to stay out of his way if I wanted to remain in his life—even if that just meant getting a glance of him every once in a while. I decided that would be enough for me.

I loved Grayson. I knew I did. I would do whatever I had to do to stay in his life.

Seeing him right now after he had specifically asked me to stay out of his office would only make him upset. I couldn’t afford to have him hate me any more than he already did.

“Kyle, please stop! I can’t go in there!” I tried saying more forcefully, digging my heels into the ground.

It was getting hard to talk with all the sobs coming out of my mouth. Through my tears I could see people stopping and watching us. They probably thought I was insane.

Suddenly Kyle lifted me up and threw me over his shoulder. I gasped.

“I don’t know what the fuck is wrong with you, but we are fixing it right now. You will not go on thinking like this,” Kyle said as he continued to march toward Grayson’s office.

I pounded on his back and yelled, demanding that he put me down, but he just ignored me. I knew that it was no use anyway.

Damn werewolves and their stupid strength.

When we finally made it to the door of Grayson's office, Kyle knocked twice and then threw it open without waiting for a response. He set me down on the ground in front of him and placed his hands on both my shoulders so that I couldn't run away.

Grayson was sitting behind his desk with a phone held up to his ear, obviously in the middle of a conversation. His eyes snapped up when we entered, and they immediately narrowed at me.

"I'm sorry to disrupt, Alpha, but this is an emergency," Kyle stated.

"I'm going to have to call you back," Grayson said, and quickly hung up the phone.

He was in front of me within seconds, causing me to flinch.

"What the hell is going on? Belle, baby, why are you crying?"

He cupped my face in his two large hands and began to wipe away my tears, careful of the bruising. It confused me that he was acting so kind when all I had done was bother him since I'd gotten here.

"I'm so sorry," I said to him. "I tried to tell Kyle that I didn't want to bother you, but he dragged me here."

"What are you talking about, Belle?" Grayson asked. He turned to Kyle. "What the fuck is she talking about?"

"The luna hasn't eaten in two days," Kyle said.

"She told me that she didn't want to bother you with it, and instead chose to starve herself as she couldn't seem to get food from the kitchens with the other wolves around. I thought you would like to know."

"What?" Grayson snapped. He looked down at me. "You haven't been eating?"

"I—" I tried to explain, but I wasn't sure what to say. So instead I just nodded and looked down in shame.

Without any warning, I was thrown over Grayson's shoulder and marched out of his office. My head spun from all of the sudden movement and no food in my system.

I tried not to move while he carried me, not wanting to upset him any more than I already had. Grayson brought me to the kitchen, where he placed me down on the ground in front of everyone and pulled me in so that one arm was snugly wrapped around my waist.

"Listen up, everybody!" Grayson yelled.

Everyone immediately stopped what they were doing and turned to look at him.

“You will all stay out of Belle’s way when she is in here and allow her to take whatever she wants. “If I hear about anybody keeping her from the food inside any of the kitchens, there will be extreme consequences! Am I clear?”

A chorus of “Yes, Alpha!” rang out through the room.

“I want everybody out of here! Now!” Grayson said.

Everyone immediately filed out of the room, keeping their heads down. It amazed me how much power Grayson seemed to have over his pack. They did exactly what he said the minute he said it. I hadn’t been expecting him to defend me or to put on the show of possessiveness that he just had. I watched in shock as the last person left the room.

Before I could say anything, I was lifted up and placed roughly on the kitchen counter.

A moment later, my head was sent flying backward as Grayson’s hand forcefully connected with my cheek. My eyesight went for a few seconds as complete pain overtook the upper half of my body and I cried out in shock.

“Can you not do anything right, you fucking bitch?” Grayson yelled. “Can’t I just get one day without you messing something up and bringing more conflict into my life?

You can’t even feed yourself!”

I cried some more, completely unable to think through the pain. My whole body was shaking, and I was having a hard time sitting up straight.

“I’m sorry!” I managed to get out, my voice breaking from my sobs. “I’m so sorry!”

“Yeah, whatever,” Grayson growled. “What did I do in my past life to get stuck with you as a mate? I didn’t even realize how pathetic a human could be until I met you.

And you never fucking stop crying!”

More sobs shook my chest at his words.

“You will stay away from Kyle from now on, am I clear? You will avoid him and his mate at all costs, as you seem to only cause problems when you’re near them,” he said.

I sobered up a bit. “What? Kyle and Elijah are my only friends here! Everyone else hates me!”

Grayson grabbed my face with both hands, and I whimpered as he made contact with my very tender skin.

“I don’t give a fuck,” he said. “You will do as I say or face the consequences, got it?”

I nodded quickly, looking deep into his eyes that only seemed to get blacker and blacker with every second. It was hard to remember their true color; I hadn’t seen them as anything but black since the morning after we’d gotten here.

His grip on me tightened. “I want words, Belle. Tell me you understand.”

“I understand,” I said quickly. “I’ll stay away from them.”

“Good,” Grayson said. “I don’t need you messing everything up. Now, you’re going to get yourself cleaned up and cover those ugly bruises on your face.

“I can’t believe that you even came out here with that on display.” He pressed a thumb into the bruise on my cheek.

I whimpered as excruciating pain spread through my system.

“You will not leave your room until you stop crying. Then you will come back here and make sure that everyone sees you eating. And I don’t want to see your face in my office ever again.”

I nodded again. “Okay,” I said quietly.

Grayson looked me up and down with disgust in his eyes. “Who knew having a mate could cause me so many problems?”

Then he left me alone.

BELLE POV

The next few weeks were like my own personal hell.

I spent all of my time in the tiny bedroom at the bottom of the packhouse that Grayson had told me to sleep in, only leaving to use the bathroom and quickly grab food from one of the kitchens.

I didn’t see Grayson. I didn’t see anyone.

I couldn’t sleep. I couldn’t eat.

And to make it worse, there was a terrible pain spreading throughout my body that I knew was because I was away from Grayson.

I thought many times of just leaving, coming up with plans that consisted of sneaking out in the middle of the night and getting as far away from this place as possible.

Chapter 38 –

Filed To Story:

It's not like Grayson would notice if I were gone.

He said that he wanted me here, becoming furious when I threatened to leave but never actually talks to me or checks up on me to make sure that I'm actually here.

It would be beyond easy to sneak out of here, grab a cab with what little money I had left, and go make a new life somewhere else.

But every time I summoned enough courage to finally do it, something would stop me. A tug in my chest would tell me not to give up hope, not to leave Grayson just yet.

One morning, as I tossed and turned after a restless night of no sleep, I heard footsteps outside of my door. I sat up in confusion.

Nobody ever came down here except me.

Especially not this early.

The sun hadn't even risen yet.

The person hesitated outside the door before the doorknob slowly turned.

As the stranger stepped in, I noticed my body instantly releasing all of its tension.

The dull ache that had been in my body seemed to lift from me.

I couldn't see who it was but by my body's reaction to the large figure standing in the doorway, I knew who it was.

"Grayson?" I asked into the dark.

He approached me without saying a word, acting as if I hadn't spoken.

He bent down when he had reached the bed I was sitting on and brought me into his arms, lifting me as if I weighed nothing at all.

He began carrying me out of the room and up the stairs nearby, still not speaking.

"Grayson?" I asked again. I hesitated, not sure how to act in this situation. On the one hand, I didn't want to upset him. But on the other hand, I was a little scared of where this was leading. "What's going on? Where are we going?"

“Shh,” he replied. “Don’t talk.”

My brows knit together. What the hell was going on?

He brought me to his room, where I hadn’t been in days, and kicked it open. Once inside, he unceremoniously dropped me on the bed and walked back over to the door to close and lock it.

I stared at him. “Are you going to tell me what’s going on now?” I asked in a quiet voice.

He switched the lights on and approached me. His eyes were pitch black and his hair was messy. I could tell that he had just woken up. He must have gotten dressed and then gotten me right after.

Once he was standing in front of me, he crossed his arms over his chest and looked me over slowly. It felt like his eyes were criticizing every inch of my body.

“Have you gained weight?” He asked.

My jaw dropped. “Excuse me?” Did he really just bring here me just to tell me that I looked fat? If anything, I had lost weight during my time in his pack.

He scowled as he continued to analyze my body. “You look bigger,” he said.

I rose to my feet. “You know what, Alpha?” I spat. “If your only reason for waking me up and bringing me to your room this early in the morning was to criticize my appearance, there’s no way I’m going to sit here and take it. Fuck you.” I walked past him, trying to keep my composure as I walked to the door.

But before I could leave, a gentle hand wrapped around my arm and pulled me back. I looked back at him. He ran a hand through his hair in frustration. “That’s not why I brought you here. The wolf was getting antsy and wanted to be with you.”

My weary mood lifted a bit. Even though his wolf was still a part of Grayson, I had a soft spot for the wolf that lived inside him. He seemed to want me even when Grayson didn’t. “The wolf? Do you mean your wolf?” I asked.

He scowled at me. “Yes, my wolf. What other wolf would I be talking about?”

I dropped my gaze, suddenly feeling embarrassed. For what, I wasn’t sure. “I don’t know.”

We stayed like that for a few seconds in silence.

I shifted uncomfortably. “Was it only your wolf who wanted to see me?”

I couldn’t bring myself to look at him as I waited for his response.

I didn't truly understand why I cared so much if he wanted to see me or not but it felt like my entire life was riding on his response.

At first, he didn't say anything, but a soft hissing sound came from his chest. I looked at him then. I'd never heard him make that noise before.

"I think it's time we mate, Belle," he stated. "I need the power that you are capable of bringing me through the mate bond if we are to face what's to come."

I wasn't exactly sure what I looked like, but I was sure my eyes were about to pop out of my eye sockets from shock.

"What?" I asked.

He hissed again. "I don't like repeating myself."

In a flash, faster than I had ever seen Grayson move, he lifted me into his arms and harshly dropped me on the bed.

His lips smashed onto mine.

I gasped into the kiss, too shocked to enjoy the fact that the man I loved was touching me for the first time in weeks.

Dull sparks danced across my skin. I frowned as his lips moved down my neck. The sparks weren't nearly as strong as they usually are. In fact, this all felt wrong.

I pushed on his shoulders lightly. "Grayson, stop."

He ignored me.

I pushed on him again, harder this time. "No, I am not doing this again! You do not get to choose when you want to use me! I am not a toy, Grayson!"

I finally grabbed his face and shoved it back with all of my force.

He moved back slightly in shock, lifting his body off mine just enough for me to scramble off the bed. He hissed loudly and made an attempt to grab me and force me back on the bed but I dodged him quickly.

"What the hell is the matter with you?" I screamed. I had finally moved away enough so that he would have to stand if he wanted to get to me. I could feel tears forming in the corners of my eyes but I pushed them down, refusing to cry right now. Grayson only stared at me, seeming surprised by my outbreak.

“You will not speak to me like that,” Grayson spat. “I am your alpha. I demand your respect and cooperation.” He stood and approached me slowly. I knew he was trying to intimidate me.

I stood my ground. “Well, you know what, Alpha? Ever since we’ve come back to your pack, you’ve treated me like an inconvenience, like I didn’t matter to you at all. The only time you ever talk to me is when it’s forced on you or when you’re in the mood to use my body like some plaything! I thought you loved me.” I took a deep breath, just barely getting past the sob that was rising in my throat. “But now I know that I’m only here to bring you power. You don’t love me and you never have.”

Grayson shrugged. “And what if that’s true? The mate bond will force you to stay with me no matter how I treat you.”

I sucked in a deep breath. That was all the confirmation that I needed. This wasn’t the Grayson that I knew back in Paris. This Grayson didn’t want me. And you know what? I didn’t want him.

I shook my head. The tears were flowing freely down my cheeks at this point as I came to my final conclusion. Keeping intense eye contact with my so-called mate, I said, “I’m done letting the mate bond make decisions for me. I’m leaving. I never want to see you again.”

He didn’t respond at first.

It seemed as though he was having an inner battle with his wolf, showing all of the telltale signs that he was about to shift. His arms sprouted with thick, dark hair, his teeth elongated, and his chest grew twice its normal size.

His wolf was fighting to come out.

It broke my heart.

But it was ultimately Grayson’s silence that sealed the deal.

The Grayson that I fell in love with would have fought for me and been heartbroken if I said what I just did. He wouldn’t be fighting his wolf, the only part of him who wanted me for the right reasons.

I nodded in understanding. It was over. “Goodbye, Grayson,” I said through my tears. I turned and walked out the door with my head held high. Grayson was too preoccupied with his inner turmoil to even notice I was leaving.

I left my heart back in that room that day. And I was sure that I would never get it back.

BELLE POV

I sprinted down the stairs of the packhouse after leaving Grayson's room, barely able to see where I was going through the tears streaming down my face.

It didn't matter where I was going.

All I cared about at that moment was getting as far away from Grayson as possible.

My chest was constricting, making it hard for me to breathe. My mind became foggy and I stumbled on the last step of the stairs and tripped.

I couldn't stop myself from falling directly onto my butt, whimpering when my back made painful contact with a step behind me.

I didn't lift myself up.

I didn't move.

I didn't think I could even if I wanted to.

My body felt like it was breaking down bit by bit, almost as if it knew what was happening to me. It knew that I had just lost my mate, the man that I was supposed to love for the rest of my life. Not having the strength to get up, I sat on the bottom step of the stairs and sobbed.

I brought my hands up to my face and cried harder than I ever had in my life.

I never thought anything would hurt more than the day when my dad died but I was so so wrong. This felt like my heart had been ripped out of my chest, leaving me to die a slow and painful death filled with misery and regret.

I was thankful that it was still early in the morning because none of the pack members would be awake. They wouldn't witness how broken I was, sitting here crying over someone who didn't even want me.

But I guess it wouldn't matter if someone saw me. Grayson's pack hated me.

Nothing would change that.

"Luna?" someone suddenly said.

My head snapped up and relief entered my chest when I locked eyes with Kyle's. He was standing in front of me in sweatpants and a T-shirt, looking like he had just woken up.

As his sleepy eyes ran over my broken form, fury and worry entered his expression.

"What the fuck happened to you?" he asked.

I couldn't stop the sob that escaped my throat as I looked at him. I put my hand over my mouth as I pulled my shaking form up to a standing position. I tried to open my mouth to tell him all that happened but nothing came out.

I felt numb.

So instead, I just shook my head and launched myself into his arms.

Kyle, completely shocked, stumbled back a bit when I made contact with him.

He hesitated a second, probably worrying about what Grayson would think if he saw us hugging, but then securely wrapping his arms around me and squeezed me tight.

"Hey, shh," he said as he ran his hand up and down my back in a soothing way. It didn't stop me from sobbing uncontrollably into his neck.

He didn't try to push me to explain which I was extremely grateful for. He just held me as I cried. I had never appreciated Kyle more than in that moment.

After a few seconds like that, Kyle said, "Hey, everything is going to be alright. I'm going to mind-link the alpha and he'll help you. Whoever did this to you is going to face severe consequences. Everything is going to be okay, I promise."

My head snapped up in a panic and I took a step back so I could see his face. "No!

No, you can't mind-link Grayson! I can't see him right now. I can't see him. Please, Kyle. Please don't tell him."

Chapter 39 –

Filed To Story:

Kyle's brows knit together, as his expression grew even more worried. "Okay, I won't tell him but you need to tell me what the fuck is going on, right fucking now."

His voice had gone from comforting to deadly serious in a matter of seconds.

I didn't want to talk.

I didn't want to do anything but crawl into a hole and spend the rest of eternity there.

I was worried that if I even tried to explain what happened between me and Grayson, I would just turn into an uncontrollable sobbing puddle on the floor.

But as Kyle looked at me, sincere worry and panic in his eyes, I knew that I owed it to him.

I couldn't just run away without giving him an explanation.

Something was wrong with Grayson and the pack deserved to know.

I opened my mouth to speak, struggling to get the words out through my tears.

"Grayson," I started. "Grayson, he-" I wasn't able to finish.

An intense and blinding pain took over my body with sudden force.

It was like nothing I had ever felt before, even a million times worse than the pain I had felt when I was away from Grayson in Paris. I doubled over, a scream of agony leaving escaping my mouth.

I was vaguely aware of Kyle yelling my name, wiping my hair from my eyes so he could get a better look at my face but couldn't actually look at him. I knew in that moment that this must be what it felt like to die.

I grasped onto Grayson's mark on my neck, suddenly feeling like it was on fire, like someone was branding it with scalding hot iron. I clawed at it, wanting to rip it from my skin.

The pain was only becoming more and more intense with every passing second.

And then suddenly, an instinct so intense coursed through my body that I wasn't able to ignore it even through all of my pain.

Something was wrong with Grayson.

I wasn't sure how I knew it but something was happening to our bond.

It was breaking.

Panic entered my chest.

I grabbed onto Kyle's arm and looked at him. "Something is wrong with Grayson," I said to him. Without waiting for his response, I stood, fighting through the pain so I could sprint back up the stairs and back to Grayson's room.

At that moment, I didn't care about what Grayson had done to me.

I didn't care that he didn't want me.

All I cared about was making sure he was okay.

Even more importantly, I had to make sure he was alive.

Kyle called after me, hot on my trail as we both flew through the packhouse like wild animals. We ran into a couple of other wolves but I shoved them out of my way, my mind only focused on one thing.

When we finally came to the door of Grayson's room, I didn't hesitate to shove it open and burst into the room.

And I stepped into my worst nightmare.

BELLE POV

It felt like my life ended in that moment.

Sitting on the edge of his bed was Grayson in only a pair of boxer shorts.

And sitting on top of him was a naked girl, pressing herself against him and kissing his lips.

Grayson was cupping her bare breast and moaning, grinding himself erotically against her.

Scalding hot pain coursed through my body, begging me to get out of there, to look away but I was incapable of moving, frozen in my absolute worst nightmare.

I couldn't tear my eyes away from horrific view of my soulmate with someone else.

I could barely comprehend what was happening when Kyle grabbed my waist and harshly pulled me behind him, blocking my view of Grayson and the shewolf.

Kyle was grabbing my face, trying to force me to look at him, screaming my name along with some other things that I didn't comprehend.

I couldn't hear him.

I couldn't hear anything through my shock.

Even as the blinding pain I was feeling intensified tenfold by being in the same room as Grayson, I couldn't move. I was in a daze, stuck in my own hell.

"Luna!" Kyle screamed in my face, still trying to get my attention. "Luna! Look at me!"

Still in a trance, my eyes slowly drifted to his.

“You need to get out of here,” Kyle said, determination and worry clear in his tone.

He was pushing my shoulders back, causing me to stumble backward toward the door.

I could feel the tears rolling down my face. I stared at Kyle, trying to open my mouth to say something. But nothing came out.

He was wiping one of the tears from my cheek but still trying to push me away, saying, “I know. I know, Luna.” He nodded his head frantically. “I know you’re feeling horrible right now. I know you feel like you can’t move but you need to get as far away from here as possible. You need to leave right fucking now. Go. Now.”

He pushed me back again, now shoving me with harsh force into the hall.

Again, I couldn’t say or do anything.

I no longer felt like I had control over my body.

My mind just kept replaying the image of Grayson and that girl in my mind like a bad movie that wouldn’t stop.

So this is what it felt like to lose your mate completely and fully.

I was sure that the only other feeling that could compare was death.

“I’m sorry, Luna,” Kyle said. “Elijah is going to meet you downstairs and get you as far away from here as possible. You need to move.”

He turned my body around and shoved me down the hall with enough force to have me almost falling on my face. I wasn’t completely sure what I was doing, but my feet kept moving. Kyle was right, I needed to get away from here.

I staggered down the stairs in a rush, only stopping when someone grabbed my arm and pulled me to their body.

They lifted me up with ease.

For a second, I panicked, thinking it was Grayson.

But it wasn’t.

It couldn’t be.

I looked up at who was carrying me and saw the worried, sad eyes of Elijah looking down at me. “I’ve got you, Luna,” he said in a soft voice. “Come on, we’re getting you out of here.”

He didn't wait for me to reply when he started moving.

His determined, quick feet ran through the packhouse in a blur, not stopping to acknowledge the confused looks of those we were passing. It didn't take us long to reach the front door of the packhouse.

Elijah flung it open without hesitation and brought us out into the woods.

The freezing cold of winter hit me like a ton of bricks, seemingly snapping me out of my daze with force. It was then, as Elijah carried me through the woods by the packhouse, sprinting at full speed, that the agony of my situation truly began to sink in.

Grayson was mating with someone else. He had chosen some other girl to be his mate. He didn't want me. He didn't want me. He didn't want me.

I tried to remind myself that I shouldn't care. I was already in the process of leaving him when I found him about to sleep with someone else.

But before that, when Kyle had been holding me on the staircase, before the pain of my mate giving me up had started, I'd still had hope. I still believed that everything would work itself out and Grayson would somehow decide that he actually did want me.

But now I knew. It was over. I had lost him for good.

At this agonizing realization, uncontrollable sobs began to wrack through my body.

The sound of my pain frightened even myself, as loud cries left my mouth, echoing through the silence of the forest.

I was grateful that Elijah didn't stop running.

I was grateful that he was carrying me instead of forcing me to run on my own.

I didn't know where we were going and I didn't care.

All I knew was that the further we were from the packhouse, from Grayson, the more numb my pain became. After a few more minutes like this, my stomach began to churn, feeling like acid was rising in my throat. I grabbed Elijah's shoulder.

"Elijah, put me down. Put me down please. I'm going to be sick," I said frantically.

Elijah immediately stopped, dropping to his knees in the snow.

He placed me down in front of him and pulled my hair away from my face as burning liquid immediately came spewing from my mouth, landing on the forest floor.

It went on like that for a while. I alternated between vomiting, hyperventilating, and just sobbing uncontrollably nonstop. Elijah stayed with me through it all, never leaving my side.

I finally stopped puking when all the contents of my stomach were emptied and only bile was left. I tried my best to calm my breathing but it felt like my throat was closing in on itself, like my entire body was breaking down.

I was vaguely aware of Elijah doing his best to calm me. He had one hand rubbing up and down my back while the other was squeezing my hand tightly.

"I'm so sorry," he kept whispering. "I'm so sorry this is happening to you."

It felt like ages before I was finally able to form a coherent thought that wasn't immediately taken over by pain or sickness.

I allowed Elijah to pull me into his arms, laying my head down on his chest while I cried.

There was a very subtle burning sensation that came from touching Elijah that I knew was there because he wasn't my mate.

That's what my body needed right now to calm it down. It needed Grayson. But I didn't care.

I needed the comfort more than I cared about the pain.

After a few minutes, or maybe it was hours, I wasn't sure, I whispered, "Why does it hurt so much?"

Elijah's hand paused its movement on my back. He looked down at me. I was shocked to see that he had tears in his eyes as well. "Your bond with the alpha was the strongest I ever witnessed," he said. "I could feel it the moment I met you. Your souls were interlocked as one, meant to be together forever. But because he has..."

he hesitated, whispering his next word, "rejected you, you're losing part of your soul right now. The fact that he had already marked you is only worse. Your body is breaking down."

I sucked in a breath. "Am-am I going to die?"

Elijah's sad expression deepened. He shook his head in defeat. "I don't know," he whispered.

More tears fell from my eyes at this revelation. So this was what it felt like to die.

Chapter 40 –

Filed To Story:

And yet, I couldn't bring myself to be scared of my death.

It already felt like I was dead.

Maybe if that were truly dead, the pain would stop.

Elijah suddenly grabbed my chin and forced my teary gaze back on his. "I don't know what the hell you are thinking right now but whatever it is, it needs to stop.

It's not true. You are strong. You will not let the mate bond defeat you and tear you apart. You will get through this. And you will do it with your head held high like the powerful luna you are."

I stared at him.

I didn't feel powerful or strong.

I felt broken.

Defeated.

Used and forgotten.

But I knew he was right.

This couldn't be my end.

I couldn't let Grayson win.

Not after all that he had done to me.

I nodded my head. "Okay," I said.

Elijah nodded back. "Okay," he repeated.

BELLE POV

Elijah moved gently, removing his arms from around me. I whimpered quietly as even the slightest movement caused searing pain in my body. He stood and took off the sweatshirt he was wearing so now he was only in his pajama bottoms, a shirt, and soaking wet slippers. He handed the sweatshirt to me. "Here. Put this on."

I moved slowly but with determination and, with the help of Elijah, was able to get the piece of clothing over my shaking form.

“Thank you,” I said to him. I hadn’t even realized how cold I was until his sweatshirt, still warm from his body heat, was wrapped around me like a comforting hug.

Elijah nodded. He crouched down next to me. “Okay, so here’s what’s going to happen now,” he said in a calming voice. “You’re going to stay right here and try to get control over your body and emotions. It’s going to be hard but you need to do it in order to face what comes next. Take deep calming breaths and try to think not about you-know-who,” he said, obviously referring to Grayson. Well, at least I knew that he wasn’t talking about Voldemort.

He reached over and pushed my hair out of my face in a comforting manner. I smiled weakly at him and nodded my head. I could do that. Right?

“I’m going to go back to the packhouse and get your stuff,” Elijah continued. “And then we’re going to get you on a bus and as far away from here as possible. Where does your family live?”

“I don’t have any family,” I said quietly, dropping my gaze in embarrassment. “At least not any that would want me around.”

Elijah swore quietly under his breath, running a hand through his hair in frustration. “You’ve got to be shitting me,” he sighed. “Okay. That’s fine. We’ll figure something else out then.”

I didn’t respond.

It was embarrassing how much of a mess my life was.

I had thought I had it all figured out when I fell in love with Grayson and made the decision to stay with him when we came back from Paris. Boy, was I wrong.

I had given everything up for him. My apartment, my job, even the chance to make amends with my mother. I’d gotten nothing in return.

It just went to show how destructive I truly was, destroying and hurting anyone that came to know me. Even my own parents.

Even myself.

“Luna, look at me,” Elijah suddenly said.

I raised my head to look at him, wishing he wouldn’t call me that anymore. I wasn’t his Luna. I was just Belle. Poor, broken Belle.

“You’re going to get through this,” Elijah said. His voice held no hesitation. “It’s going to take a while but the pain will lessen. All of this will become a horrible memory. What the alpha has done to you is going to haunt you for the rest of your life. There is nothing we can do about that and for that, I apologize. But I can promise you that your life will not always revolve around this day. You will move on. Things will get better. I promise.”

As I stared into Elijah’s eyes that held much more confidence than my own, I couldn’t stop myself from doubting his words. The pain that I was feeling right now, both physically and emotionally, was so overwhelming that it felt like it would never end.

How could I possibly move on from this?

How could I possibly go on living my life knowing that Grayson, the person that I cared about more than anybody else in the world, hated me?

But the determination and sincerity in Elijah’s words gave me hope. And hope was all I could ask for at that moment. Hope would give me the strength to go on living another day.

Elijah stood when I didn’t reply to his lofty claims. I was grateful that he seemed to be dropping the subject for the time being. “Okay, I have to go get your stuff now.

We need to get you out of here. The further you are from the alpha, the less pain you will feel. And the sooner you can heal.”

I wanted to trust that what he was saying was true but my pain only seemed to increase at even the thought of being away from Grayson.

“Shit,” Elijah suddenly said. He was looking back in the direction of the packhouse with a worried expression. “I’m going to have to get past the alpha to get your stuff from his room, aren’t I?” He let out a quiet growl of frustration. “Maybe—”

“My stuff isn’t in his room,” I interrupted. “I haven’t stayed there for a while.”

Elijah’s knit together. “Then where have you been sleeping?”

I thought seriously about just saying screw it and leaving town without any of my things.

I didn’t want to have to explain what really happened between Grayson and me, explain that I hadn’t slept in the same bed as Grayson for weeks.

But the things in my suitcase and backpack were all that I had in the world. I would be left with only the clothes on my back if I didn’t get them before I left.

“Room 101,” I finally whispered.

“In the basement?” Elijah asked. The tenseness in his tone told me he knew exactly what room I was talking about.

I nodded. “Yeah.”

Elijah growled but didn’t ask any more questions, thank God. I wasn’t ready to rehash things and he seemed to understand that. “Okay. Okay, fine. Then that’s where I’m going.” His eyes softened when they fell back on me. “Are you going to be okay here on your own for a little while? No one knows you’re here but me so no one is going to find you. I’ll go as fast as I can.”

I wanted to say no.

I wanted him to stay with me.

I was terrified of what would happen if I came in contact with Grayson again.

The pain would surely be immeasurable. But I reminded myself that there was no way that he would come looking for me. He didn’t want me.

He was busy sleeping with some other woman at that exact moment, right as Elijah and I spoke. The intense pain coursing through my body confirmed that fact.

“I’ll be okay,” I said.

Elijah didn’t hide his grimace, probably put off by how broken my voice sounded.

He bent down and left a soft kiss on my forehead. I smiled weakly up at him when he straightened, my heart warming at how sweet and caring he was.

“I’ll be quick,” he said. “All of this will be over soon.”

He smiled at me once more and turned, ready to start off in the direction from which we came.

“Elijah?” I asked quickly, stopping him before he could go.

He turned and looked at me. He raised a brow in question.

“Thank you,” I whispered. “Really. Thank you.”

He smiled again. “Of course, Luna. You have nothing to thank me for.”

And with that, he turned and sprinted off into the woods.

I watched him run away from me until I couldn't see him anymore. He was like a blur in the wind, beautiful and strong, his werewolf genes making him faster than I could even comprehend. When he was finally out of my sight, I allowed myself to lie down on my side, hoping that the cold snow would cool down my feverish body.

I was relieved that the waves of pain coursing through me had finally lessened.

They were unpleasant but not nearly as bad as when they had first started. This could only mean one thing.

Grayson was finished mating with someone else. I couldn't decide which was worse, the agonizing torture that I had felt just moments ago or simply knowing that Grayson had sex with someone else, officially choosing them as his mate instead of me.

Probably the latter.

All of this had made me doubt all of my decisions.

First, my decision to stay with Grayson in the first place.

And second, my decision to not allow him to use me in order to gain power.

If I had, I would still be in that horrible house now, lonely and heartbroken, knowing he only wanted me for his own selfish reasons. But what if things would have changed if I had slept with him? What if that is what Grayson needed to come to the realization that he still loved me? I shook my head violently, trying to erase the thought from my head. But even as I was able to rid it from my mind, I knew that it would be a question that would haunt me forever.

I sighed deeply and reached for the mark that Grayson had left on my neck what felt like an eternity ago. It flared up at my touch, angry and throbbing, shooting agonizing pain throughout every part of my body.

I gasped loudly when my body tensed up and dropped my hand in a flash.

Well, I won't be doing that again, I thought bitterly as I stuffed my face in the snow to seek some comfort from the hot pain. I wondered if the bite mark would heal now or if I would have to live with the constant reminder of Grayson's betrayal prominently displayed on my neck. Happy thoughts, Belle, I reminded myself, thinking about what Elijah had said to me before he left. Think about something else. Anything else.

It didn't work.

It was as if that was the only thought that my mind could conjure up.

And with the image of Grayson kissing a naked woman on his lap, not even stopping when I walked into the room, replaying over and over again in my head, I allowed myself to cry.

It felt good to cry. It felt good to let myself feel my emotions for a second before I had to jump back into the real world. I had learned this when my father died and I was left on my own. Once Elijah was back, I would wipe my tears and force myself to stand up with my head held high.

But for now... I just cried.

Elijah was right when he said he would be quick.

It couldn't have been more than an hour before he came sprinting back into my view with my backpack on his back and my suitcase securely in his arms. He was wearing a different outfit as well, now in jeans, a coat, and big boots.

I stood to meet him, quickly wiping the tears from my eyes and pushing my shoulders back in the way that I promised myself I would do.

I wished I'd put on shoes before I'd left the packhouse in such a hurry.

My sock covered feet were freezing. Thankfully, I had shoes in my backpack that I put on when Elijah finally reached me. And then I put on the coat that he handed me as well.

When I straightened and looked at Elijah, he said, "You ready?"

I nodded stiffly. "Yes. I'm ready."

He quickly shrugged off my backpack and handed it to me. "Put this on," he said.

I didn't question him, grabbing the backpack from his hand and putting its straps over my shoulders. Then, he turned from me and squatted down, motioning for me to get on his back. "Hop on."