

Chapter One

Luna Ayla

The past few days have been hell for me. After my wolf decided to claim Xander, she hasn't spoken to me. No matter how much I plead with her to explain what she did. I haven't been able to speak to Xander and I'm barely speaking with Nate. I can feel all of his emotions and the guilt it's causing is crippling. I haven't been able to eat and I've barely been able to sleep.

Now, I'm standing on a beach inside the western Kingdom watching my mother's body burn. The mermaid kingdoms cremate their dead. She was laid to rest upon a pyre, covered in treasures from the sea. Flames consumed the pyre that was anchored just outside the swell, where the waves were calm.

There were only a few of us on the beach, watching and mourning the loss of my mother. Most believed Melody died years ago. And now I will have to tell my father that she was dead. Again. He may not love her anymore, but he did at one point. I think anyway. They created me.

Fuck, my life is such a s**t show. Everything I feel guilty about is nothing I can control, but knowing that doesn't ease any of the guilt. Nate doesn't deserve any of this. We should be enjoying each other and our fully formed bond. But all I feel is guilt when I look at him. And I can't give him any answers because I don't have any. I have no idea why my wolf claimed Xander. Wolves have one mate. And now she isn't talking to me.

I walked out further into the waves. I could hear Nate and Xander calling out behind me, but I ignored them. As soon as I was far enough out, I dove under the waves.

I swam under the water until I was right below the pyre. I could feel the heat from the flames, as the water heated around me. I surfaced behind the pyre. I didn't want the people on the beach to see me. I shifted back into my dress. I pulled it up my body and as soon as I pulled it over my head, I threw it as high as I could above me.

The black and purple owers came down like rain, the wind carrying them over my mother. The flames quickly consumed the ones that landed on the pyre. But it gave me a sense of peace as the owers fell to the water around her.

I watched from my spot, completely naked. I didn't want to shift back yet. So much has happened over the last few weeks, I just wanted to feel normal again. When the only thing I had to worry about was money and a boyfriend who I didn't even want. And Bluey. My life was so simple and now I feel like a huge disappointment. And I have no one. Even my wolf doesn't want to talk to me. My mother is gone. My father wouldn't understand. My mate is hurting and I lost my best friend. All for reasons unknown.

This bigger picture I can't see. And that stupid book is still blank. It was the first thing I checked after we arrived yesterday. Why tell me to read it, when it was blank? I was furious with the goddesses. I wonder if this was how my mom felt having to leave King Samuel for my dad. I understand her anger. I talked with Lorelei yesterday and she explained the risks of childbirth for mermaids.

The first birth is usually fine. That would have been mine. The second is high risk. And without medical intervention, it will most likely result in the mother's death. And if the mother does risk more pregnancies, and even with medical intervention, the mother will most likely bleed out. And doctors have no idea why.

So not only did my mother give up a man she loved but she also gave up her one safe pregnancy. And now she is gone.

I get to add that to my list of fears. The fear of dying while bringing my child into this world. I know Nate will be a great dad. I'm not sure if he still wants to be with me. But I know if we were to have a child, he would be the best. But how can I risk it? What if me and our baby die? How could I do that to him?

Tears fell from my eyes for the first time in three days. The weight of the world was crushing me and there isn't anything I can do about it. I believed after Dante was dead and the hunters were killed, I could live my life in peace with Nate. Stepping up if there was ever a new threat. But now I don't think my life will ever be at peace.

I didn't even get a chance to breathe and now I'm faced with yet another unknown threat. There's no way Noah was working alone. And he's the first one on my kill list. Never thought I'd become a killer. But it would seem that is my destiny. My life was never about what I wanted. I'm just a pawn in this game played by the goddesses.

"Baby, can you come back?" Nate mind-linked me. My stomach twisted with guilt. None of this is his fault. But I was selfish. I should have let him go before the bond became unbreakable and now he is stuck in this mess. His life was good before I f****d it all up.

Now, I'm afraid of becoming his resentment. He's perfect and I'm a f****g mess. My life is a mess. I wiped my cheeks before shifting. My life is out of control and I need to find a way to fix it before I lose everything and everyone. But most importantly, Nate. I may not deserve him, but I love him more than I ever knew was possible.