

Chapter Thirteen

Alpha Nate

I was sitting on the couch in the living room when Ayla came in. I watched as she walked across the apartment to where I was seated. She climbed into my lap, straddling me. My hands found her hips as she rubbed her nose against mine.

"Nate, I, um, I'm scared," she stammered.

"Baby, why are you scared?" I asked her, brushing some hair behind her ear.

"You deserve so much more. So much better than me. I'm not a Luna or even mate material. I feel like I trapped you," she whispered the last part.

"Do you regret marking me?" I asked the question, hoping that she didn't. I don't feel trapped. Overwhelmed, but never trapped. She makes me feel complete, ever since I found her up on the mountain.

"Nate, of course, I don't. I love you, with everything. But I don't know if I can do those things for you. I don't know how my future will play out and you deserve to have all your dreams come true." Ayla exclaimed.

"And how do you know that you aren't my dream? That this right here, right now, isn't what I've always wanted?" She looked at me and scoffed.

"I know this isn't the life you dreamed of. You thought you would become a beta, and your mate, and have babies. And live happily ever after. Nate, you don't have to lie to me."

"And things change, Ayla. Maybe that was everything I thought I wanted before I met you, but now it's different. We have a pack and a lot of complicated s**t. But that doesn't mean I would do any of this with anyone else. That I would want to do any of this with anyone else. I don't feel trapped. But I do feel inadequate. My goddess told me I wouldn't be enough and gifted you another." I retorted.

"Nate, I," Ayla sighed, taking hold of my cheeks, leaving tingles in the wake of her touch.

"It's not your fault, baby. I know this is out of your control. But I feel like I'm at a crossroads. I can't share you, but I can't live without you. And the thought of Xander touching you like that, makes me want to murder him." I growled the last part, my jaw ached as I held back the anger I felt about all of this.

It makes sense for Ayla to have both, she is both. But wolves don't share. Our mates are ours. I know some would be okay with it. Hell, my kind still cheats and I'm sure mermaids do as well. But this is something different. I can't watch her have someone else's child. To be happy with someone else. What if she loves him more than me? My heart twisted painfully at my thoughts.

"You're worried I would love him more than I love you?" She murmured, reading my thoughts. Ayla ran her fingers through my hair before kissing my forehead.

"Yeah," I closed my eyes and mumbled the one word that expressed so much. My hands that were resting on her hips, slid up her back and I squeezed her tighter against me. I wasn't prepared to share my mate and I still didn't know how I was going to. But at least for right now, I don't have to share. Ayla is all mine.

"I love you so much more than I ever thought I could love another human being or wolf," she giggled.

"I couldn't imagine not having you by my side, Nate. And the thought alone makes me want to rip my heart out of my chest. I can't lose you. I need this to work. Not because I've marked you or because a goddess says you are my mate, but because I love you. Even with all of this s**t, you make it all bearable." She chuckled through her sobs and I held her close.

"We have to make this work, Ayla because I can't live without you. There is so much we can't control but there is still some we can. And I will do whatever I have to do to protect you." I reassured her.

"Maybe I'm the one that's supposed to protect you," she shrugged.

"An alpha always protects his Luna. No matter the cost," I told her.

"And female wolves protect their mates. I may not have a clue what I'm doing when it comes to being a queen or a Luna, but I do know I need to protect you, Nate. You are just as important as me in all of this. You are my everything." She took hold of my cheeks, forcing me to look at her. It clicked when her red, puffy eyes met mine. I was her weakness. She would do anything to keep me safe, even if it meant putting my safety above everyone else's.

"And we would do the same for her," Duke growled. I let out a sigh before pecking her lips.

"It's been a long day. Let's get some sleep, we have babies to meet in the morning." She stood up before taking my hand in hers. I stood up, my chest pressed against hers. She smirked up at me, desire in her stormy greys.

"Or you can take me to your room and I can show you how much I want you," she purred, biting her lower lip. My d**k pushed painfully against the zipper of my jeans. I grabbed her firm ass before lifting her. She giggled as she wrapped her legs around my waist. Her lips crushed against mine before I started to walk us through the apartment to my old room. Our lives may be a mess, but at least we can do is tackle this mess together. Be the team we were always meant to be.