

Chapter Two

Alpha Nate

Ayla completely shut down after her wolf claimed Xander. I can feel her overwhelming guilt. She's barely spoken to me over the last few days and she has been avoiding Xander altogether. Only being in the same area on the plane and the chopper on our way to the Western Kingdom.

"Is she coming back?" Xander asked. He was standing next to me on the beach as we watched the pyre burn.

"She didn't answer," I sighed.

"If she's not back in ve minutes, I'll go get her," he told me.

I already knew that wouldn't be a good idea. Her guilt is overwhelming enough. She doesn't want to give in to her claim over Xander. And she doesn't want to give me a reason to doubt her claim to me. If it was anyone else, I would have ripped them apart. But Xander is her best friend, and he's supposed to be one of my second-in-command. He told me himself, he didn't want to come between Ayla and me. But since he doesn't feel the bond, he can't reject it.

Ayla waded toward the beach a few minutes later. Her eyes were red and puffy. My heart twisted painfully. Her guilt over this situation is pushing me away when she so desperately needs me. And I need her.

Ayla walked over to her grandmother and hugged her. She kissed her cheek before walking toward the palace.

The weight of everything that happened is crushing her and all I want to do is hold her tight. I want to x this mess for her so we can go back to being perfect.

"Do I even want to ask how she's feeling?" Xander sighed, watching her walk away.

"Guilt. Sadness. Anger. But mostly guilt." I told him. Her being close but yet so far away was taking a toll on me. I need her just as much as she needs me.

"I'm going to make her talk to me," I said. Xander grabbed my arm before I could move, stopping me.

"I don't have to tell you to be gentle. Her guilt is because of me. She believes she betrayed you and your bond." Xander told me. I gave him a nod before following my mate.

I understand what Xander is saying but I need answers. I can't keep going like this. Things between us were perfect a few days ago. And even though she has fully claimed me, I've never felt so far from her. Even when our bond was broken. I needed to do something, anything to ease her guilt and get us back to perfection.

I walked into our room and found her sitting on the edge of the bed with her back toward the door. She was staring out toward the balcony.

"Baby, I need you to talk to me," I said, closing the door behind me.

"I don't have any answers for you, Nate. My wolf hasn't spoken to me since.." she whispered.

"Ayla, I don't care about your wolf claiming Xander. We can deal with that later. But I need you to talk to me. I can feel everything you are feeling. I can't take you pushing me away. Now, talk to me," I demanded, getting frustrated. I took a deep breath to calm down my hurt and anger.

"Nate, do you think I want to push you away? To have to deal with all of this alone?" She yelled, standing up from the bed. She whipped around, now facing me. I slowly walked toward her. Her grey eyes were glossy with unshed tears. She truly believes she is alone in this.

"Then talk to me. Stop shutting me out. I'm not going anywhere." I pleaded with her.

"You deserve so much better than me. Someone who can give you a family," she said in despair. My heart twisted painfully upon hearing her confession. This isn't just about Xander. There's guilt from her claiming me.

"Baby," I grabbed her wrist before she could move away. She tried to pull away but I pulled her hard against my chest, wrapping my arms around her.

"I don't care about kids or anything else but you right now. If we can't have kids, then it's ne. I would rather just have you." I mumbled into her hair. She buried her face in my chest and broke down into sobs.

"I'm such a useless mate," she cried. I sat on the edge of the bed and pulled her into my lap.

"Baby, you aren't useless. And I hate that you even think that. Those decisions don't have to be made today. We have lots of time to decide what is best for us. I'm not risking your life for anything. And if that means we don't have kids, then we adopt." I told her, holding her tightly.

"But, I didn't give you a choice. I claimed you and now there is no going back," she cried.

"And even with this new information, I would still let you claim me, without hesitation. I need you, Ayla. You are my heart and soul. My life is better because you are in it. We will gure this out together. You are never alone." I told her.

"Nate, I am such a mess and you deserve someone who can give you everything you need and want. I was selsh when I claimed you and now you are trapped. I trapped you," she whispered the last words. I gripped her chin and forced her to look at me.

"Being with you isn't a trap, Ayla. It's a dream come true. There is only us. So if you're a mess, then I'm a mess. And we can be a mess together because I'm never letting you go. Even if the claim wasn't forever. I would never let you go. I love you."