

Mate

Chapter 14 - The Beastly Alpha's Mute Omega

Alpha Jaxon POV

The merge was going smoothly, despite a few hiccups. I could feel myself tensing as I headed back to the hospital with my Gamma Cody in tow. "What is it about this girl that I can't get her out of my head" I muttered, my hands in the pockets of my sweatpants and my shoulders hunched over.

Cody frowned "Is it possible that she's your mate?" he asked slowly and I looked at him incredulously.

"If we were mates wouldn't my wolf have said something before now? Shouldn't I have felt the mate bond?" I asked tersely "no I'm merely curious about this girl and whether she is indeed the Alpha's daughter."

"You know that the mate bond can take some time to develop when the other mate doesn't have a wolf," Cody said reasonably as I scowled at him "and your wolf doesn't tell you everything does he?" he pointed out.

"My wolf is a pain in the ass" I muttered, "he's keeping silent on the matter."

"There you go, so it could be a possibility."

"I hope not," I said exhaling as we entered the hospital "for both our sakes. It would be far kinder for the girl if we weren't."

Cody looked pained "You're still spouting that nonsense about not wanting a mate," he said as we rounded a corner "even now? Jaxon, having a mate doesn't make you weak or vulnerable it makes you stronger" he tried to argue with me.

"It gives the enemy something to weaken you with and another target to focus on" I parroted grimly "and all it does is hurt when your mate leaves you for another," I said bitterly.

"Jaxon" Cody tried to reason with me once more, but my eyes narrowed and I shook my head, indicating he should give the subject a rest.

He fell silent, a gloomy expression on his face.

We reached the girl's room. I had a name for her at least, supplied by one of the pack members who had merged and pledged their allegiance. The girl's name was Riley.

She lay there, on the hospital bed, still hooked up to the various machines, but I was pleased to note there appeared to be some color in her cheeks as the doctor took her vitals.

"Is there any change?" I asked gruffly, as we stepped into the room, Cody looking at the girl with curiosity, while I glared at him, feeling protective for some unnamed reason.

"She continues to remain steady. Perhaps more of your blood might revive her but it's uncertain" the doctor said.

Cody looked astounded "You've given this girl your blood?" he asked sharply as I pointedly ignored him.

"Jaxon, since when do you..." he trailed off as I interrupted him.

"It's no big deal. She saved my life, it seemed fair to try and save hers."

I rolled up my sleeve and Cody's eyes almost bulged out of his head, sitting on the armchair and nodding towards the doctor. "Take my blood, if it wakes her it will be worth it."

Cody gave a low whistle "Wow, either you've turned soft or you don't want to face the truth that's right in front of your face" he said as the doctor began to set up the needle.

"Cody you're making it out to be more than it is."

He looked unconvinced, before glancing at the girl. "I've not seen that hair color before. Is it natural?" he asked.

I frowned "I don't know. It's unique and it's pretty" I said without thinking, causing Cody to glance at me with a grin.

The doctor smiled as she began to take my blood. I felt a sharp prick and settled against the chair.

"Jaxon, what are you going to do about Liandra? By all rights she should be considered a traitor alongside her father" Cody asked, leaning against the doorway and crossing his arms as he regarded me steadily.

I frowned. "It doesn't seem right to take her to task over her father's actions. By all accounts she's guilty of being naive and stupid" I allowed with a grimace "but she couldn't prevent Alpha Rowan from going to Alpha Maxwell no matter what. She was his daughter and loyal to him. I do not blame her for wanting to protect her father the only way she knew how. I will not punish her, I think her father being dead is punishment enough" I said drily.

"Hmmpf, I think she still has visions of being this pack's luna" Cody murmured, raising a brow.

I gave a scornful laugh "I think you must be joking. The last thing she should have is delusions of grandeur. She's probably just seeking comfort in a pack she's not used to. Give her time to adjust Cody. Give all the new pack members time to adjust."

He scowled. "I don't like her" he muttered, taking me aback.

It was not like Cody not to like a woman. It was not in his nature to be so guarded or unfriendly towards one.

"Well then, keep your distance from her" I drawled, as the doctor took the needle out of my arm and began to organize the transfer to Riley "that shouldn't be hard in a pack this big."

We watched the blood being transfused into Riley. Unlike with humans, the blood was transfused a lot more quickly. "Here's hoping this works," the doctor said cheerfully "two doses of Alpha blood is incredible and should have remarkable healing qualities."

"I find it strange she hasn't woken yet" I said frowning "the poison was that strong?"

"Actually it might not just be the poison but the state of mind of the girl. With all her injuries and the abuse she must have suffered, she might not be fighting to live" the doctor said reluctantly "not that anyone could blame her, the poor girl" she added, looking down at Riley.

"Her existence was that bad huh" Cody said sympathetically, lowering his arms and bowing his head as he studied the prone Riley "What a miserable excuse of a pack for not standing up for her."

"I think they were in on it" I said heavily, standing up and joining him "I don't think it was just the Alpha and his son that abused her."

"Is it any wonder she might not want to live then?" Cody asked me skeptically "how are you going to guarantee her safety if she does survive Jaxon? You can't be expecting to just turf this poor girl right back into their clutches again?"

He sounded disgusted at the mere thought I might do that.

"I'm not that ruthless," I said heatedly as he gave me a sidelong glance "and I'm well aware that she can't just be taken back out there. I planned on having her live in the pack house where a close eye can be kept on her."

He still looked doubtful. "Who's going to keep watch on her?" he demanded "All of us are busy with work. Are you going to entrust her safety to the omegas?"

I hesitated. I had thought exactly that. I let out a low growl of frustration "Don't push me, Cody, I've already passed the invisible line between Alpha and omega volunteering my blood and visiting her. She'll be perfectly safe with our omegas" I insisted lowly.

He met my eyes "This girl is wolfless and you said she has no voice?"

I nodded "I'm well aware. But she survived in her old pack just as well, she can survive this one. The hair fascinates me" I said studying it "sometimes I swear it almost looks like it's shimmering in the light."

"It reminds me a little of the ocean" Cody commented, reaching down to finger it and jumping when a growl came out of me, without warning.

Why had I done that? He wasn't about to harm her. But the growl had come without my knowledge and a feeling of protectiveness had washed over me. Or was it jealousy? Why would I be jealous of Cody touching Riley? It made no sense.

Cody met my eyes, a wary expression on his face. The doctor glanced between us. "Her hair is natural," she said softly "I don't know if that helps, but it hasn't come out of a bottle. As for not being able to speak, we plan on doing some tests to see why that's the case when she wakes. There's damage to her vocal cords but we worry there is emotional trauma as well" she advised us.

Emotional trauma? From all the beatings and abuse? I wanted to ask more, the questions hovering on my lips when I happened to look down and see the slightest twitch of Riley's fingers.

"Doctor" I said, pointing as she glanced down "she just moved."

Riley's fingers twitched again. Without thinking about it, I grabbed her hand, feeling how cold they were. Tingles ran down my hand and I felt the sparks that flew between us. My wolf began to growl and an overwhelming desire to claim her, to make her mine and mine alone swept over me. As her eyelids fluttered open, the words came bursting out of my mouth before I could prevent them, causing a look of triumph to sweep over Cody's face.

"MATE."

Heartbroken

Chapter 15 - The Beastly Alpha's Mute Omega

Riley POV

It felt like there was a leaden weight on my eyelids as I forced them open, my mouth parting open in shock as I felt tingles spreading through my hand where it was being held, a word spoken out loud by the Alpha as he stared down at me, a word I never expected anybody to say in regards to me "MATE."

He had to be mistaken. I was nobody's mate. There was no way this was the mate bond. Wouldn't he have known with our first meeting that we were mates? I stared at him in disbelief and saw the same expression mirrored on his face. Even if we were, I realized quite quickly that he had no intention of remaining mates. He looked as though he had been doused with a bucket of cold water and the person with him, looked shocked but happy for his friend.

He yanked his hand away from mine. The tingles faded. I sat upright as the Alpha took deep breaths attempting to calm himself. The doctor came forward.

"How are you feeling?" she asked me kindly and I frowned.

Had she forgotten I could not speak? I made a motion and she gasped, realization dawning.

"Just nod if you feel any pain or shake your head if you don't" she compromised.

I took a moment. Now that I was awake, there was no pain, and nothing felt wrong, in fact, I felt quite healthy. I slowly shook my head, keeping my eyes fixed on her. The doctor looked pleased, but then, I noted, so did Alpha Jaxon.

"The second lot of blood you gave her seems to have done the trick," the doctor said excitedly to Alpha Jaxon who glanced away from me.

Second lot? He had donated a second lot of blood to me? I was stunned. It was unheard of for Alpha to help omegas so much but perhaps this mate bond had already influenced him more than he realized. I stared at the doctor.

"Your vitals are good, you appear to have healed nicely," she told me, beginning to pull out my cannula and unhook the machines "but I want to keep you under observation for one more day to ensure there are no sudden complications."

"That seems like a good idea" Alpha Jaxon's friend spoke from the doorway "It's better to ensure that she's completely healthy while we come up with a suitable plan for her accommodation, isn't that right Alpha Jaxon" he said pointedly.

Alpha Jaxon glared at his friend even though I was confused and a little frightened. Was I to remain in this pack or was I going to be made a rogue? No doubt the pack members had made stories up about me while I had been unconscious. I stared at Alpha Jaxon with pleading eyes and he hesitated before he softened slightly.

Why didn't he just reject me and get it over with? Was it because I couldn't speak the words to accept? "I intend on having you live in the pack house and help the other omegas with their work," he told me quietly.

I nodded, not surprised in the slightest. So I was not to be treated as his mate. I looked at him meaningfully and he stared at me as I mouthed 'rejection.'

"I am not rejecting you just yet" he snarled as I cringed and cowered slightly away from him, his eyes darkening as he glared at me.

What use was I to him? I was not Luna material, not as the mute I was. I had no wolf which could be useful to defend the pack. But the mere mention of the word rejection had him so angry that all I could do was look down at my hands. Alpha Jaxon's friend had a small smile on his face.

"When is she to be officially discharged?" the friend enquired smoothly.

"I believe tomorrow morning, so long as nothing happens, should be an appropriate length of time to determine there are no other health problems," the doctor said calmly, glancing between Alpha Jaxon and me with curiosity.

"But she's out of danger?" this time it was Alpha Jaxon who spoke, his voice low, and was that concern I heard in his tone of voice? Concern for me?

"Yes. It's a very good sign she's awake and well pardon me for saying this" the doctor hesitated "but the mere fact that you are mates might be explanation enough for why she survived while others might not have. Your blood mixing with hers, and the bond you two share, worked in conjunction to keep her alive."

Alpha Jaxon said nothing, coolly observing me as I blushed.

He really was handsome I thought miserably and clearly wanted nothing much to do with me. I had my suspicions that the only thing preventing him from rejecting me at the moment was that he was worried I was too weak to survive it. Either that or he just wanted the strength that came from the mate bond, without having the actual mate that came with it. "Your name's Riley isn't it?" he asked me abruptly and I looked up surprised and then eagerly nodded.

"Are you the Alpha's daughter?" he asked bluntly.

What did I say to that? Did I confirm that I was and experience the shame and the horror or sympathy that was bound to follow the declaration? I didn't need him to feel sorry for me. But he was clenching his jaw and waiting for the answer. It was only a matter of time until he found out and if I lied, he would not be forgiving about it. It was the wrong way to go about navigating this mate bond as much as I wanted to deny being that bastard's daughter at all. I met his eyes and then nodded carefully. He exhaled.

"So you're the daughter that's been missing and nobody's really laid eyes on" he murmured "I had my suspicions but you've just confirmed. No doubt he made you an omega because you didn't have a wolf, but for any father to abuse his daughter, the way he's abused you" he sounded disgusted, his expression one of disdain as I ducked my head and stared at the ground, feeling close to tears.

So now he knew. Even my own father despised my existence and now my mate did not want me either. I played with the sheet on the bed with my fingers, while the doctor continued to scribble away in her chart and Alpha Jaxon remained silent.

"What are you?" he asked and I looked up bewildered.

What was I? I was a shifter with no wolf, what else would I be? But Alpha Jaxon's eyes were narrowed and he was focussing on my hair as I touched it absent-mindedly.

"That hair, the doctor said it's natural" he growled.

I nodded still confused.

"So what are you?" he growled.

I stared at him not comprehending what he was getting at. I was a shifter, minus a wolf. What else could I possibly be? But a small voice inside of me whispered, you know that's not true, don't you? I blinked at him. "There's something about you, I don't know what it is, but" he sounded frustrated as he glanced at his friend who raised an eyebrow and shrugged, looking equally perplexed "you're not just a damn shifter" he snapped.

The doctor coughed "I'm afraid that the blood tests have confirmed that she's of shifter DNA but nothing more" she advised Alpha Jaxon, looking at me sympathetically "perhaps she just has a really unique hair color" she finished, looking as though she didn't believe her own words.

I couldn't help it. He sounded so frustrated and so angry. Despite myself and the continual urge to keep it locked inside, my eyes welled with tears and one trailed down my cheek. Alpha Jaxon looked stricken for a moment and his hand reached out, his finger wiping the tear tenderly away, before his expression turned just as hard as before. "Perform the tests you want to perform" he said gravely as I clenched my hands into fists and tried not let anymore tears fall "make sure they are done before tomorrow morning. I will send somebody to collect Riley when she's discharged."

The doctor nodded. His friend frowned. "Wouldn't it be safer if you picked her up Jaxon?" he said quietly "you don't know what reactions the pack members are going to have and..."

"I'll send Callum" Alpha Jaxon interrupted, glowering at his friend "nobody is going to attack the Beta, unless they are stupid. He can escort Riley to the pack house. I have responsibilities and they don't include babysitting some damn wolfless mutt who can't even speak" he snapped icily.

That hurt. My chest tightened and it was all I could do to breathe in that moment. For a minute Alpha Jaxon looked pained at what he had just spoken but then he let out a low growl and stomped from the room. His friend looked at me sadly "Give it time" was all he would say, before he turned and walked away.

I wanted to scoff. Time? Time would change nothing. Time would still not allow me to speak. Time would not change this man's opinion of me. All time would grant me was the chance to think of a way to leave this pack, while I still retained some of my dignity. I stared at the doorway while the doctor began to speak, advising me of the tests she wanted to perform now that the Alpha and his friend were finally gone.

Tension

Chapter 16 - The Beastly Alpha's Mute Omega

Alpha Jaxon POV

"What the hell are you thinking man" Cody exploded the second we made it out of the hospital and onto the grounds "how can you even be thinking about not accepting that girl as your mate?"

I glared at him "May I remind you that I have always said I didn't want a mate because they are a weakness that makes you vulnerable?"

He scowled "I thought you would change your mind when you felt the mate bond. Having a mate does make your wolf stronger" he pointed out "and that girl looks like a rejection is likely to kill her in the state she's in, regardless of how much blood she's been given."

My wolf was also growling in my mind at the notion of rejecting our mate.

The mate bond is sacred. How dare you suggest that we don't accept her. Riley is perfect for us you stupid fool!

"She can't speak, she can't shift, what use is she?" I said glancing at Cody as we walked, trying not to feel like a bastard as I spoke the words as callously and intentionally as I could "she's hardly Luna material" I added pointedly.

"Being a Luna involves more than being able to talk" Cody growled "or are you more worried about the fact that the pack members won't accept her?"

Now that he mentioned it that was also an excellent point. Hadn't her own pack been at the very least complicit in her abuse? "Her own pack didn't help when she was being abused," I said gravely, halting in my tracks to talk "so it's inconceivable that she would be accepted as my mate or Luna. We need a strong Luna, to go with our pack's strength. We're one of the strongest in the country, Riley would only drag us down" I explained tersely, trying not to dwell on the image of the beautiful blue-haired girl in my mind. Damn it, it was hard to say these words, feeling like I was betraying her at the same time I was trying to be rational and logical for the sake of my pack.

"So you make them accept her," Cody said in disbelief "You're the Alpha Jaxon, what you say goes, not what they want."

We started to walk back towards the pack house "It's far easier if it's somebody the pack already likes or admires" I said in a low voice "not somebody they classify as weak. She can't even defend herself, Cody."

He exhaled "I feel sorry for her. She didn't ask to be wolfless or to be abused by her own father and pack. I don't like the idea that we're doing exactly the same."

I interrupted him with a scathing glance "Nobody in my pack is going to be permitted to abuse her" I growled.

"No, but all the same we're practically abandoning her, which is the same as her own pack" Cody argued "that girl needs to be shown some care and affection. If you can't claim her" he paused as I stiffened "then you need to show some decency and reject her, no matter how much it hurts you Jaxon. She deserves the chance to find a second chance mate who loves her."

"Since when do you care so much about other pack members" I snarled "and for your information, I'm not about to reject the one woman whose lending strength to my wolf. It would be like cutting off my nose to spite my face."

His jaw dropped. "So you would keep her, against her will, without loving her? Without caring about her?"

He sounded disbelieving. His tone was pained. I knew that he couldn't bring himself to believe that his friend could be so ruthless but I hadn't earned my reputation for nothing. My wolf was angry at me, so angry that he put up a block after flinging some vile insults my way.

"I would keep the mate bond alive" I corrected him icily as we entered the pack house, Cody holding the door open for me automatically as I slid past him "for the sake of my wolf and myself."

The front door of the pack house shut. "Why not just take a chosen mate then" Cody asked faintly, sounding almost desperate as we headed to the study "it might not be the same as a fated mate, but it would give you some strength."

"A mate bond is stronger. Besides, taking a chosen mate is a risk. I have no desire to entertain a variety of women all vying for the position of Luna."

"Jaxon, you know the bond is only going to get stronger between the two of you, the longer that she's here. How are you going to be able to resist it?" he demanded, as we turned a corner and then headed inside the study, where Callum was already waiting.

"I am going to put her in the dungeon," I said slowly, causing both men's jaws to gape open as they stared at me incredulously "she can sleep there. It's far enough away that I won't go seeking her out and she can be made comfortable..." I trailed off, seeing the angry glint in both men's eyes.

"So you plan to make her an omega and plan to make her sleep in the dungeon where we keep prisoners. Are you insane?" Callum blurted out "by all accounts you're giving her the same life she had at her old pack. Minus the beatings or do you plan on doing that too if she disobeys you?"

"Of course I'm not going to beat her" I hissed, a lump in my throat at the thought "but the dungeon is the furthest room away from my own and should keep me from seeking her out. It's unfortunate, but it's what I need to do. She can still be in the pack house during the day performing her duties."

"How magnanimous of you," Callum said cuttingly "putting your mate to work and then sleeping with the prisoners. Well done Jaxon, I never thought I could be so ashamed as I am right now to have you as a friend."

I glared at him "What would you do? If I mate or mark her, the game is over and she becomes Luna. I'm trying to prevent that from happening. For all of our sakes. I won't have our reputation or our position as the strongest in the country be compromised. I won't let us be weakened. Not to mention her safety is paramount. How do you think she would be treated by anyone of her old pack if she was to suddenly become Luna? Do you think they would blindly accept it or do you think they might try to hurt her?"

Silence. Cody looked disappointed in me. "I always thought that finding a mate was one of the most special things that could happen to you. I thought that maybe, you would take one look and fall hard for the girl but I can see that's not the case. But she deserves better than this Jaxon. You're putting her in limbo. She'll die. Not from being rejected, because you're not necessarily saying the words, but nonetheless she'll wither away, from the lack of love and care you give her, while she works her fingers to the bone and waits ever night for the chance that you might change your mind and come to her."

I winced. Callum looked at me with condemnation in his eyes. "That girl saved your life at a cost to her own and she didn't even know you were mates. That speaks highly of her character. She was willing to die for you" he thundered as I sat there stony faced "and you're willing to let her slowly die while you take advantage of the bond between you two" he shook his head, a look of

grief and disgust on his face "I don't even know who I'm looking at right now. It's like you're a complete stranger" he spat out.

"Enough" I shouted, letting some of my Alpha aura out, causing them both to stiffen and their eyes to widen in shock.

I didn't do this to them often, but I was growing angry and feeling slightly ashamed at what they were telling me. "I have made my decision and you have no right to tell me, the Alpha of your pack, what to do. Both of you will prepare part of the dungeon as her room" I said, ignoring the hatred on their faces "and ensure its secure. If we have prisoners she will use a guest room on the bottom floor until they are gone" I allowed, but they didn't look any happier "and there will be no more arguments about this" I growled, as they stared at me with looks of disdain "Now go and do this. She's to be discharged tomorrow morning and she will need a bed, clothes and many more things if she's to remain here in relative comfort, as you so desire" I snapped.

They got up without a word and stormed out of the room as I watched regretfully. Perhaps I had gone too far, using my aura on them, but I was done feeling guilty for my decision. I couldn't let myself be persuaded to take a different action in regards to my mate. This was the best thing for us all, or at least, that's what I wanted to believe. My wolf remained silent, the block remaining firmly up, leading me to believe he was still furious with me.

Resigned

Chapter 17 - The Beastly Alpha's Mute Omega

Riley POV

I'm cleaner than I've ever been. The nurses have given me fresh clothing and I even had the accessories to wash my hair in the small bathroom adjoining my hospital room. They've performed all their tests and now I sit here waiting for somebody to pick me up and take me to the pack house. I'm not naive enough to believe that my mate is going to bother to come and get me. Some instinct tells me that he's going to be keeping his distance and it hurts, so bad, but I keep my face expressionless, not surprised in the slightest when none other than the Beta Callum walks into the room with an apologetic expression on his face.

"Riley," he said quietly, a smile spreading across his face as I coolly observed him "are you ready to go? I've been tasked with taking you back to the pack house and" he paused, anger flashing in his eyes "taking you to your room for further rest."

Why had that made him so angry? I nodded slowly and hopped off the bed, stumbling slightly and Callum quickly grabbed my arm, steadying me. He let me go as soon as I was balanced.

"She's fine to go, but I will want to be informed if she suddenly gains a fever or becomes sick" the doctor advised the Beta who nodded grimly.

"I'll let Alpha Jaxon know" he murmured.

I stood there and expectantly waited. The beta hesitated and then turned with a sigh, leading me out of the hospital. I saw curious glances from the various nurses, doctors and hospital personnel as I struggled to keep stride with him, the sunlight temporarily blinding me as we stepped outside and onto the grounds. I breathed in the fresh air, my eyes closing as I felt the warmth of the sun shining down on me.

"Sorry I didn't realize I was walking so fast" Callum apologized as he slowed down and allowed me to keep pace with him, both of us side by side.

"Are you glad to be out of the hospital?" he asked with interest.

I nodded and then fidgeted with my hands. It was difficult to have a conversation without being able to speak. He sighed.

"Can you fight? In human form I mean?" he asked.

I shook my head. I had never been allowed to train, not properly so my fighting skills would be dismal at best. A child could probably kick my ass and that was putting it mildly.

"I suspected as much" he murmured regretfully.

Several pack members were outside and I noticed some from my old pack, my shoulders hunching instinctively out of reflex as I waited for the insults and degradation to start. Callum noticed my change in stance instantly, glowering at the pack members staring at me, who immediately began to scurry off.

"Don't worry, nobody here is allowed to harm you" he said reassuringly, putting his hand on my shoulder as I looked up at him wide-eyed.

Not allowed to harm me? Who had given them that order? It had never stopped them before unless Alpha Jaxon had cared enough to intervene and order the pack to leave me alone.

I smiled at Callum as we began walking again. He put his hands in his pockets and walked with an easygoing air. He was not arrogant, or rude. I wanted to know about my father and brother but didn't know how to ask since I didn't have a pencil or paper to write on. I tugged on his arm impatiently and he turned, raising a questioning brow.

I tapped on my chest and then gestured. He frowned. I did it again, a little more emphasis on the gesture.

"Are you asking about your father and brother?" he asked confused.

I nodded, dreading the answer.

He glanced away. He rubbed the back of his head and debated how to answer. I waited expectantly. "They were in the dungeon," he said quietly "and they still are. Our dungeon is composed of two areas or two dungeons if we're honest. I didn't want to have to tell you this," he said looking downcast "but the Alpha has requested that you be put in the dungeon as well."

My eyes widened and I began to breathe shallowly, panicked. I hadn't done anything wrong. How could they put me with my father and brother?

"Not in the same area as your brother and father" he was quick to say as I relaxed slightly, "but the other smaller part of the dungeon. Alpha Jaxon has ordered that we make your room down there" he growled sounding displeased "and as much as I'm loathed to take you down there, I have no choice" he explained as I stared at him blankly.

My room was in the dungeon? Or at least part of it? Why? Was this a form of punishment? I knew that my mate might not want me but to go to this extreme? Tears of frustration filled my eyes.

"I'm sorry Riley, but I can't disobey my Alpha, no matter how much I disagree with his actions" Callum apologized.

I knew he couldn't. I wouldn't want him to. He would be punished and I didn't want him punished on my behalf. I swallowed hard, feeling sick. He looked hesitant as he took my arm, his touch gentle, despite the tugging I felt as he began to lead me back to the pack house.

"I tried to make it as nice as I could considering the circumstances, Cody too," he said gruffly.

Like that would make a difference in a room that was prominently bars and steel I thought forlornly. I appreciated he'd made the effort to do it, but it would still look like a dungeon.

We reached the pack house. I barely looked at it. What was the point when I would not be allowed to enter it and exit it at will? Nothing had changed, I thought bitterly, I was still to be treated as an omega who was worthless, only this time it was in Alpha Jaxon's pack. Callum gently led me inside and then down a long corridor, opening a door and down some long stairs. Naturally, the dungeon was in the basement.

As my feet reached the base of the stairs, I saw what Callum had meant by the dungeon being split in two. There was a large divider wall and another reinforced door, down what was arguably the middle of the dungeon, leading into more cells from the appearance of it. Callum pointed at it

"Your father and brother are in there" he explained gruffly "those are" a hesitation "the torture cells."

My stomach revolted. I looked away from the door, not wishing to see inside of it.

"The door is soundproof, you won't hear anything from behind it" Callum sought to reassure me, but it didn't make me feel any better.

I still knew they were there. I still knew what was being done to them.

He quietly took me to the back far right corner of the dungeon. There was a large cell but the door was open. They had placed a shaggy rug on the floor to make it warmer. There was a single bed with a mattress, neatly made up with blankets piled at the end. A dresser was opposite it and I walked slowly in, opening the drawers to find that there were all manner of clothes inside it. A hamper beside it for dirty clothes. A small bookshelf with books. Fairy lights on the top of the cell twinkled brightly which made me smile to myself.

"We didn't want you feeling like you were alone in the dark" Callum whispered.

I looked at him. He turned and pointed to another door, a basic one. "Bathroom and toilet through there. We won't lock you in your cell because the door to the basement will be locked. You will sleep in a guest room if there are prisoners down here with you, that aren't being tortured and using this part of the dungeon. Unfortunatley, the Alpha feels that having prisoners in the torture cells doesn't warrant having you in the pack house. I'm sorry Riley" he said apologetically.

I began to gesture, making the motion of writing and he paused. "You need some writing materials" he said wide eyed "of course" he groaned.

I nodded eagerly. It was difficult to have a conversation or ask any questions without it.

He grimaced "I'm an idiot. Of course you need things to write on. I'll organize that straight away and have an omega bring that down to you. You'll also have food brought down on a tray three times a day" he explained "eventually the Alpha wants you to work with the omegas during the day and sleep here at night but for the first few days you are to be down here alone."

I glanced around sighing and then sat obediently on the bed. Callum looked remorseful as he began to make his way towards the stairs. "An omega will be along shortly. Try and get some rest" he called out over his shoulder "the best thing you can possibly do down here to pass the time is sleep" he added.

Sleep, I thought with a bitterness. The same thing I had already been doing in the hospital. I glanced uneasily towards the large door in the centre of the room with the wall separating each side, fearful it wasn't as reinforced as I believed and then lay down. There wasn't anything I could do but hope that my father and brother could not escape and as I closed my eyes, my body

tensed, my ears continuing to listen for the merest sound that didn't belong in the dungeon with me.

Pushed to Breaking Point

Chapter 18 - The Beastly Alpha's Mute Omega

Alpha Jaxon POV

Callum comes back up to the study and slams the door open, causing me to raise an eyebrow and glower at him, Cody is silent as he turns his head.

"I take it that she's settled into her room," I say and he looks at me with such disgust that I almost flinch.

"Your mate," he says with great emphasis "has just been put in the dungeon as you requested" he snarled "I hope you're happy" he added, folding his arms across his chest, "because the look on her face was devastating to see."

I looked away. I didn't want to hear how she had looked, I didn't want to feel guilty over my decision, but the feeling was there regardless. Callum's eyes are piercing and he looks as though he wishes he could tear me limb from limb. Neither my Beta nor my Gamma agree with the decision I have made and they are making it perfectly clear with both their words and their actions. If they aren't careful, I'll be using my Alpha tone on them to make them stop. If they weren't such close friends of mine, I would have already done so.

"Not only that, but have you forgotten that her father and brother are in the other part of the dungeon?" he asked and I winced.

I had forgotten about that. "Are you just going to keep them down there or are you going to do something with them?" Cody finally spoke.

I would be a bastard to go down there and torture them while my mate was in the other section of the dungeon, but nobody had ever accused me of being nice. I stood up. "I guess we should go and teach them a lesson before we execute them," I said blandly and both men's jaws dropped open in shock.

"Your mate is down there," Callum said as I began to make my way out of the room "and while the room is soundproof, you don't think it's going to be emotionally hard for her knowing what you are doing to her family?"

"Enough Callum" I growled, looking over my shoulder "your concern for my mate needs to stop. I am your Alpha and what I say goes."

He looked mutinous. Cody had the good sense to remain quiet but there was a look of disapproval on his face. I tried to gather myself, knowing I would have to walk past my mate in order to get to the other section of the dungeon. I opened the door and began to walk downstairs, only to stop as I was met with the most delicious scent of coconut and something else I couldn't put my finger on but reminded me of the ocean. My wolf gave a long whine, and it was all I could do to stop myself from going to her as I saw her sit up on her bed, eyeing me curiously as we stepped onto the ground.

Her eyes were hopeful. There was a small gleam in them. Despite my willpower and self-restraint, I could not help myself as I looked at her. Her long blue hair cascaded loosely down her shoulder in soft waves, her slim figure clad in fresh clothes, the pale blue dress suiting her pale complexion as she sat on the bed. Her pale pink lips were parted, begging to be kissed and her eyes were like gemstones, sparkling and bright. I swallowed hard. She was beautiful. Gorgeous. My hands itched to touch her, to kiss those lips, and to have her moaning for more. I had an overwhelming desire to take her in my arms and never let her go. My wolf continued to whimper and whine in my head, wanting to go to our mate, while she looked hesitant, standing up and regarding us warily while Callum smiled at her reassuringly and Cody waved.

She went to take a step forward and I snapped "Stay back" causing her eyes to widen and a hurt expression to come on her face.

I didn't apologize, exhaling deeply. Just being in her presence was more difficult than I had imagined. I had done the right thing in putting her down here, well away from me while I slept upstairs in the pack house. My wolf was beginning to go berserk and I gritted my teeth, forcing away the pain I felt at the confusion and hurt on her face.

She made a gesture towards Callum who understood. "We're here to go in there" he explained, pointing to the other door as she widened her eyes.

I growled at him. How dare he speak to my mate. Callum looked at me with a smirk. I grimaced. Now my wolf was showing jealousy over the mere fact somebody was speaking to her. Riley looked concerned and was that worry on her face? Did she still care for her father and brother? If that was the case, I thought grimly, then my torturing them was going to make her hate me even more. The notion did not sit well with me. It should have. I wanted her to hate me. I wanted her to despise me. Instead, the thought of forcing her to hate me was almost unbearable to my wolf and me.

She stepped closer, making a beseeching gesture. "I think she's asking us not to" Callum whispered.

Riley looked irritated, grabbing a small whiteboard from behind her and a marker. She began to scribble on it. "Please spare them from torture" I read from a distance.

Who was she to ask such a thing from her Alpha? Even if she was my mate she was still an omega, nobody important. She had no say in what went on in the pack. I had not made her Luna and I had no intentions of doing so. What Alpha Maxwell had attempted to do and his son was punishable by death. The fact she was asking them to be spared from torture spoke a lot about her character, considering she could have died from the poison she had ingested in order to save my life.

Did I owe her? Was that why I felt hesitant? Her eyes were shiny now, as though she was blinking back tears and Callum glanced at me uncertainly. I had paid my debt, I thought, giving my blood to save her, so we were in a sense, even. Then she made a mistake. She wrote something down that had my blood boiling. My rage increased to massive proportions.

Please we are mates. If that means anything to you, please don't torture them.

I let out a massive growl. The look of shock on Cody and Callum's faces expressed that they knew Riley had gone too far. Reminding me we were mates for the sake of helping her family was her undoing. I glared at her and saw her cower back slightly, the whiteboard dropping from her hand and falling with a soft thud to the floor.

"You think because we are mates you can order me to do things for you" I thundered as she flinched and looked down at the ground "you think that will make me soften towards you?" I demanded, moving closer to her and seeing her body trembling in the face of my wrath.

"You stupid girl," I said, even as my wolf tried desperately to take over, to stop what he sensed I was about to do. "I keep you only so that you strengthen my wolf, not because I want you" I shouted, causing her to blanch and a tear to trail down her cheek.

I looked at Callum. "Open the door" I growled, nodding to the other part of the dungeon.

He hesitated. "Open it" I roared.

He scurried over, looking unnerved and uncertain, reaching into his pocket and withdrawing the key as he obeyed my command while Cody looked wretched.

I stormed over to Riley, taking a rough hold of her arm.

"You just earned yourself a front row seat to their torture, congratulations" I said between my clenched jaw as she looked at me stunned, trying to pull away without success "this will remind you of who you are dealing with in future" I added, as she looked up at me hopelessly. I ignored the tears on her face, the looks on my friend's faces as I began to drag her over towards the open door. I could not afford for her to think that I was weak or that I was vulnerable when it came to her. I shoved her through the doorway and watched impassively as she fell to her knees, her eyes slowly rising as she looked upwards and saw her father and brother, her pallor turning so white she was practically resembling a ghost. I gave her a sickening smile "Cody get a chair for Riley" I said without turning around "I have a feeling she won't be able to stand for long."

Forced

Chapter 19 - The Beastly Alpha's Mute Omega

Riley POV

My body was shaking. I felt somebody gently help me up onto a chair as I stared at my mate who resembled nothing but a monster, even as my eyes glanced towards my father and brother, both hanging from hooks in the ceiling, their arms suspended above their heads, restrained with silver chains and cuffs, their ankles also tied together. My mouth was dry. Both of them were awake, their mouths gagged with dirty fabric wrapped around their heads. They were still wearing the same clothes I had seen them in before I chose to drink the poison. They glared at me, their eyes filled with hatred and condemnation as I fought the urge to shrink back.

Why was he doing this to me? How could he be so cruel as to make me watch him do this to my family? I might not like them, I might hate them, but I had no desire to watch them be tortured right in front of me. Alpha Jaxon had a sickening smile on his face as he glanced towards me, while his Beta and Gamma looked revolted. He strode over to a trolley clad with various torture implements, deliberately picking up a pair of gloves and putting them on with a dramatic flair as I watched, my heart beating loudly in my chest, my eyes wide with horror.

"Jaxon, you're going too far" Callum spoke evenly, glancing at the paleness of my face "she didn't mean to upset you. Let me take her back to her room" he suggested.

"No" Alpha Jaxon snarled "let her see exactly what a monster her mate is" he growled, picking up a whip with silver strands and gently whipping it through the air. He nodded to Cody who reluctantly opened the cell and strode in, tearing the shirt off of Damien first as he struggled in mid-air, kicking his legs uselessly, his ankles bound together.

"Take his gag off" Alpha Jaxon spoke casually, glancing at me as I stiffened "Let her hear their screams."

I shuddered, wishing I had the nerve to get off the chair. My breathing was shallow. Cody reached up and yanked the fabric down and Damien immediately started to yell.

"You little bitch, this is all your fault, you whore, you aarrgh" he broke off as Alpha Jaxon hit him hard with the whip, causing large gashes across the bare skin of his back, Damien's mouth opened in a silent scream of agony.

"Brave words coming from a man who tried to kill me" commented Alpha Jaxon casually, bringing the whip back and sending it forward, the muscles in his arms rippling as he used all of his strength to strike my brother who gave a howl of pain "I wouldn't be using such words to describe my mate" he snarled and Damien's eyes widened as he looked at me, his body violently shaking from the pain he was experiencing.

I glanced away but Alpha Jaxon wasn't having it. "Look," he said icily and I forced my head to turn back and my eyes to look at where he stood "if you look away, I will add another strike to the amount I'm giving him."

Tears pricked my eyes. I didn't understand how he could be so cruel or so callous. My father was trying to wriggle free and kick out but he was too far away to help and his eyes were glacial as he glared at me, blaming me for Damien's pain and suffering. My lip quivered as once more Alpha Jaxon brought the whip back and then let it fly forward.

Damien's scream was chilling. I could see the whip marks across his back as his body moved slightly back and forth on the hook, swaying, his flesh burned from the silver, blood trickling down from his wounds. His face was devoid of color. Alpha Jaxon was expressionless, as though he had tortured many men before this and this was just a typical day for him. Another strike had Damien howling and cursing. Tears began to trail down my cheeks. Callum closed his eyes, looking sympathetic towards me. Cody looked grim.

"Why do you cry?" Alpha Jaxon taunted, turning to look at me, his eyes dark and wild "do you cry because you feel sorry for him? I know that he abused you, as did your father and yet you feel sorry for him?" he sounded disbelieving and furious as I tried to shake my head in denial, a smirk appearing on his face.

He moved and struck Damien across the front of his chest, a bloodcurdling scream emitting from my brother as I flinched. "This is nothing" Alpha Jaxon spoke, staring hard at me "this is basic torture. How many times did they beat you?" he growled as I stared at him, too frightened to look away, knowing he would only torture Damien more if I did and wondering why that mattered "how many times were you whipped Riley?"

I couldn't speak. I couldn't answer. My hand unconsciously went to the dog collar that still rested against my neck. I hadn't been able to bring myself to take it off. Alpha Jaxon's eyes narrowed as he saw my gesture. It infuriated him for some reason because he paused what he was doing and strode over to me, dropping the whip and reaching behind my neck, tearing the collar in two and dropping it to the floor.

"You're not an animal" he snarled as I looked up blinking and he grabbed the whip again as though he had merely paused to take a break.

The collar was gone. It felt odd. I had gotten used to the feel of it around my throat and now it was disquieting to have it gone. Damien's eyes were cold as he glared at me. But his face was also contorted in pain. "Riley" he wheezed looking at me pitifully "Riley please stop him" he pleaded.

He wanted me to stop Alpha Jaxon? I looked at him incredulously. I did not possess that kind of power. I was only here because Alpha Jaxon was punishing me. Not because he cared for me. But Damien seemed to believe otherwise and at those words, Alpha Jaxon let out a chuckle.

"You think your sister has some sort of power over me?" he asked cruelly.

Damien's eyes widened as he saw Alpha Jaxon put down the whip and survey the trolley.

"Mates or not, I will not be dictated to by another shifter" Alpha Jaxon commented, picking up a dagger and examining it closely.

I wasn't sure how much more of this I could take. He had only tortured Damien a little and still had to get to Father and already my body was beginning to feel dizzy and faint. I put a hand up to my head, feeling lightheaded and Callum noticed.

"Jaxon, you've proved your point," he said sharply and Alpha Jaxon turned on him.

"I will say when I've done enough" he thundered and we all felt his aura pushing out.

It was powerful, forcing us to bend to his will, causing even the strongest amongst us, besides Jaxon, to respectfully bend our heads and submit our necks. Alpha Jaxon looked satisfied as he lightly touched the blade of the dagger. I swallowed hard. My stomach was churning. I couldn't bear to watch. Not any longer. I didn't care what he did to me. I couldn't watch another shift suffer, even if they deserved it. I wasn't made that way. I wanted my revenge against my father and my pack, but I didn't have the stomach to torture them before killing them. I wasn't that type of person. Did that make me weak?

I heard the agonizing scream as the dagger was plunged into Damien's thigh and smelt the scent of burning flesh which caused me to gag. My father was silently watching, no doubt anticipating his turn. I got to my feet, my hand going over my mouth as I fought back the urge to vomit, my body stumbling slightly.

"Sit down" Alpha Jaxon was quiet, but his voice echoed in the room nonetheless and there was no doubt it was intended for me.

I ignored him. He could punish me, I didn't care. Not anymore. I could not sit by and be forced to watch a minute longer. It was all I could do to keep breathing. Tiny spots were appearing in front of my eyes and I could barely make out anything in the dungeon.

"I said sit down" his voice was sharper.

I fell, hearing the heavy thud my body made as it hit the ground, felt the blinding pain in the back of my head and closed my eyes as I let the darkness surround me. I wanted to be anywhere but here and it seemed for now, I had finally got my wish, even as I heard the sounds of Callum and Cody exclaiming loudly in the background and felt somebody pick me up in their arms, tingles running down my spine.

Chapter 20 - The Beastly Alpha's Mute Omega

Alpha Jaxon POV

"What do you mean Damien managed to escape? How is that possible? He was practically near death" I roared as Cody and Callum shot each other uneasy glances.

"The guard that was left behind while you um" Callum paused trying to find a delicate way to put it "While you took Riley upstairs after she fainted dead away, got a little too close and Damien managed to overpower him."

I narrowed my eyes, trying not to think about Riley who had been in my arms unconscious, the guilt I'd felt extreme. What kind of man forces a woman to watch her own brother being tortured?

"Where is the guard now?" I asked tersely, glaring at them both.

Cody sighed. "He's dead Jaxon. The poor bastard was only young and too innocent for his own good. Callum and I take full responsibility for assuming he was up to the task of observing the two prisoners."

I thumped the table in anger "Goddamnit. Whose out there searching for him?"

Cody shot a glance at Callum "We have our best trackers and warriors searching the grounds and surrounding territory for him, but we weren't alerted to his escape straight away" he said grimly "so there's no way of telling how far he's gotten or how much of a headstart he had."

I exhaled. Pinched the bridge of my nose and closed my eyes, barely keeping my composure. "He had to have had help. Somebody had to have helped him get past patrol."

"That's what we think as well but everybody declared their loyalty to you" Callum said evenly "and we can't figure out who would take such a risk, knowing that they would be forfeiting their life for the bastard."

"What about the father?"

"He's still there. Damien left him behind, saved his own skin and left his father for dead" Cody said disgustedly.

"No surprise there, we know that both men are cowards" I growled.

"This might not have happened if you hadn't insisted on dragging that poor girl inside the dungeon and forcing her to watch you" Callum snarled "was your pride worth the expense of this? That girl will be scarred for life by what you forced her to watch and endure" he spat out, looking furious with me "and now we have a prisoner on the loose."

I glared at him "Watch your words" I told him quietly, even as I acknowledged the truth of his words.

I had gone too far and all for the sake of my pride. The look on Riley's face as she was forced to watch me whip her brother would haunt me. My anger had consumed me and I had become irrational, desperate to make her hate me.

"What was the point?" Callum said a little quieter, cocking his head "because after all that, you put her in a guest room on the ground floor and walked away. Do you intend to put her back down here?" he asked, angry now.

"No" I said sighing "I don't want her down here with the prisoners. She stays in the guest room, on the ground floor. Far enough away that the mate bond..."

"Will still take affect. You're fighting a losing battle" Cody argued, looking exasperated "this girl has been through enough Jaxon, you're just torturing her more. She deserves better than this. It's not fair."

"I can't reject her" I thundered causing both of them to stiffen "she makes my wolf stronger. Without that bond, he'll weaken and I can't have that."

"You've survived this long without a mate" Cody countered "and what about what she might want? Have you even bothered to ask her? Or do you think it won't matter because she can't speak?"

I shifted uncomfortably on my chair. To be honest I hadn't considered what Riley's feelings might be or maybe I was too selfish to care. I wanted the strength I would receive from the mate bond, but none of the obligations that came with it.

"She won't have much choice" I said, knowing what a bastard I sounded like "she can't reject me without being able to speak the words or having me accept and I don't intend on doing either" I growled.

"What if she has hopes of getting married and having children? You're denying her what most girls want" Callum pointed out.

I looked down at the table. "Eventually I'll need an heir" I said dismissively as their jaws dropped open "when that time comes Riley will come in useful for that purpose. Until then, I don't need to be in contact with her."

"You son of a bitch" breathed Callum indignantly "I never thought I would accuse you of being ruthless, despite the reputation you have, but you're talking about using the girl primarily as a breeder and nothing more."

I looked him in the eyes. "Correct."

Even Cody looked stunned. "Jaxon you should rethink your stance on this" he said quietly.

"I won't. She'll birth strong Alpha children when the time is right but she won't ever be Luna of this pack" I said as they went slack jawed "and while Alpha Rowan went about it the wrong way, maybe I need to rethink my stance about having a luna. I should find one that is of strong lineage and able to help defend this pack as it grows stronger. I don't need to love them" I mused "they just need to be able to fulfill the role."

"That sounds lonely" Callum said gravely "and why would any woman agree to that?"

I gave a chuckle "money of course. The thrill of being the Luna of the strongest pack in the country. Why else?" I said blandly.

I stood up "Callum extend invitations to the nearby packs, advising that I'm on the hunt for a future Luna of the pack. Let the Alpha's know I intend on having a party next month in order to meet eligible single ladies and possibly choose a mate."

"This is a mistake" warned Callum.

"It is my mistake to make" I snarled "and my decision. You are my Beta and you abide by my rules, whether you like them or not. There is no room for love in my life, and the pack will benefit with the guidance of a Luna by its side. This way everybody wins" I growled.

I wouldn't need to lose my heart in the process and I wouldn't have to worry about becoming vulnerable. If I lost my chosen mate, I would not be weakened. Not like if I lost my real mate after marking them.

"Make sure Damien is found" I added, creasing my brow " I don't like loose ends. As it is, I want an announcement made. Alpha Maxwell will be executed in front of the pack at sundown tomorrow, with his daughter in attendance."

Perhaps that might be enough to have Damien come slinking back, although if he had left his father to die, I suspected it would not be.

"You would make her watch this, after what you did to her before?" Cody said, looking sick.

"Everybody attends the execution, no exceptions" I said sharply "and it might bring her some closure to know the man who has abused her for so long is finally gone from her life. She can stand at the back" I proposed, not liking the idea of her being too close to me "and leave the instant he's dead."

I pushed off and headed towards the door, while Callum and Cody remained tight-lipped. "I'm about to go and check on patrol and then go tracking on my own. With luck I'll pick up this bastard Damien's trail" I drawled, glancing over my shoulder "and we can have two executions tomorrow. If he's not found" I paused "then it appears that we have another problem to worry about and the real possibility that somebody in this pack has turned traitor, although what their motive would be, I cannot ascertain" I said musing it over.

"I'll come with you" Cody growled, glancing apologetically at Callum.

"No" my voice was dismissive "since you seem to be so concerned about my mate, go and check on her. Inform me if she's conscious and then introduce her to the head Omega, I want her to get started on her new duties as soon as possible. It will help her to transition smoothly, if she gets started on her new life and doesn't expect to be treated as anything special, simply because of who she happens to be."

Cody looked like he wanted to protest, but a quick glance at me and he fell silent and moved in the opposite direction, a glum expression on his face.

"Get that information out to the nearby packs that are within five days journey of here" I told Callum without turning my back "and choose a date next month. Preferably one towards the end. The choice is yours, but make sure the omegas know to expect to cater for it."

I strode out of the room and headed towards the front of the pack house, intending to shift on the grounds and join the hunt for the elusive Damien.