

Chapter 171 Stage Fright

Moana

I went home after work that day with an odd feeling in my stomach after my conversation with Ethan.

All of it felt so... contrived. At first, I thought that he was just trying to make amends for what happened at the family party. But when the strange questions began, it became obvious to me that he was either fishing for information or he was trying to drive another wedge between Edrick and I. Maybe it was both of those things, or maybe it was neither. Either way, I didn't know what to do.

I didn't know if I should tell Edrick about it or if I should just pretend it didn't happen. Part of me felt as though the right thing to do would be to tell Edrick that Ethan had suddenly shown up in my classroom, but at the same time I was worried that he would tell me that I shouldn't be teaching there anymore. Even though it had only been a week since I had begun my new job, I loved every moment of it and it felt as though my dreams were finally becoming a reality. I couldn't let anyone get in the way of that, and so that evening I decided not to tell Edrick after all. I just told myself that Ethan wouldn't come back again after that, and that I didn't need to worry. Everything would settle down soon.

That evening, I helped Ella with her homework before dinner. She seemed to be doing well in school and was enjoying her new learning environment. Thanks to her excellent tutors, she wasn't behind in her

education at all. However, she still seemed to be adjusting to being in a learning environment with other children. I expected that, of course, and so I wasn't surprised when she came to me with gripes about other students.

"Lucy always takes too long to answer the teacher's questions, and the teacher reprimanded me when I said the answer today," Ella growled, sounding annoyed.

I frowned. "She reprimanded you?" I asked. "How come?"

Ella shrugged. "She says that everyone needs to raise their hand if they want to answer a question, but I don't see why. I knew the answer, and Lucy was taking forever, so I just said it."

I had to stifle a bit of a laugh. "Ella, you have to give other kids a chance to answer," I said gently. "Maybe some kids need to take a little longer to think before they can answer, and that's okay."

Ella furrowed her brow. "But it was an easy question. Is there something wrong with Lucy?"

I shook my head. "No, love," I replied. "Just because someone takes a little longer doesn't mean that there's anything wrong with them. And besides, there's nothing really 'wrong' with anyone. Everyone is just different."

"Oh." Ella scrunched up her nose, just like she always did when she was a little annoyed. I ruffled her hair and sent her off to her room after that to get ready for dinner.

Edrick didn't come home until after dinner that evening. In fact, I was a bit surprised to hear him come home so late. I was sitting up in bed in Edrick's room, sketching in my sketchbook while I waited for him. The sun had just gone down, and the city lights had come on. I sort of missed the mountain estate, when it was actually dark out after the sun went

down. Even though I loved the city, it was never really dark here. I wanted to see the stars.

I didn't realize that Edrick came home, actually. I assumed that he would be out even later; with everything going on recently, I supposed that he would be working later in the day for a little while. I just hoped that he would be home before I fell asleep. I liked having him beside me when I laid down to go to bed.

However, just as I was giving up hope and was coming to the conclusion that I would need to go to sleep without him, the sound of soft piano music suddenly came to my ears.

I perked up in bed, my eyes widening as I looked around and realized that the piano music was coming from the living room.

Edrick had played the piano only once since I had moved in. I only got a chance to listen from afar for a few minutes before he noticed my presence and he stopped playing, and I hadn't heard him play since then. But as I slowly got up and crept out of the room, I was determined to listen to him play for a little longer tonight.

I wasn't sure why the Alpha billionaire chose to play the piano tonight. Lately, he had seemed happier than usual; maybe that was it. I quietly closed the bedroom door behind me and made my way toward the dark living room. As I did, the piano music became louder. It was even more beautiful now, and made me smile.

When I walked out into the living room, I saw Edrick sitting at the piano. He had tossed his suit jacket down over the back of the couch and had rolled up his sleeves, and was hunched over the piano as the cool blue moonlight streamed in through the open window. I didn't know the name of what he was playing, but it was ethereal. The way that his fingers gently brushed each key made it look almost as though he was lightly petting the piano, and not actually playing it. He looked so peaceful during that moment.

Maybe I got a little too close, though, because Edrick suddenly stopped and looked up at me. Even in the darkness, I could see that his face went red.

“S-Sorry,” he stuttered. “Did I wake you up?”

I shook my head and smiled. “No,” I replied. “I like hearing you play. Please don’t stop.”

Edrick looked at me for a few moments before taking in a sharp breath and starting to play again. Only this time, he started making mistakes. There was an odd chord here, an out of tune note there, and at one point he hit more than one key at once.

I could tell that he was getting frustrated. He suddenly stopped again, and let out a sigh.

But I had an idea; I could tell that he was nervous with an audience, but I still wanted to listen. So, with a smile, I walked over to the window and looked out with my back turned to him.

“I won’t look, if that helps,” I said gently. “But I really do like to hear you play. I’ll just listen, if you don’t mind.”

Edrick didn’t say anything for a bit. I heard him shifting uncomfortably on the piano bench, and I felt a pang in my chest as I wondered if I should have just left him alone and listened from his bedroom. But then, a smile spread across my face as I heard the first notes being played again.

Now that I was only listening, he didn’t mess up any of the notes. In fact, he only played even more beautifully. The melody was almost haunting, but only in the best way. And the entire time he played for me, even though I couldn’t see him, the smile never left my face.

During those moments, I was happier than I had ever felt before.

Chapter 172 Control

Moana

As I listened to Edrick playing the piano, I couldn't wipe the smile off of my face. I wished that I could see him, but if it made him too nervous, then I was happy to just listen. He played beautifully, and I hoped that I could always hear his music from then on.

The song that he was playing came to an end, and was followed by silence. I didn't realize it, but I had shut my eyes as I lost myself listening to the music. I opened them again and turned, expecting him to still be sitting at the piano, but he wasn't.

He was standing right behind me, looking down at me with those glowing silver eyes.

Edrick was so close to me that I could smell his cologne coming off of his shirt and could feel his warm breath on my face. Being this close to him made me tremble, but only in a good way.

"Edrick..." I whispered, looking up to meet his gaze.

He stared down at me silently, with only his glowing silver eyes conveying his emotion. There was something harsh and dominant about them, but something soft, too.

Suddenly, Edrick bent down to kiss me. His kiss was deep and passionate, and his tongue began to work its way in between my parted lips as our breaths intertwined. I felt his arm wrap firmly around my waist, and he

pulled me close. It was almost a little too rough, but at the same time it sent an excited shiver down my spine. My entire body bristled with titillation; finally, after seemingly becoming closer to me after the most recent weeks, I could be intimate with Edrick again. Everything felt as though it was falling into place, and I couldn't have been happier.

As he kissed me deeply and sensually, Edrick's hands slid up my back, through my hair and around the nape of my neck. He tilted my chin up further with his hands as he cupped my face. I felt a soft, involuntary moan escape my lips, and I pressed my hands up against his chest and began to work at his shirt buttons while his lips traveled down to my throat.

While I worked at his buttons, he suddenly pulled my hands away and picked me up as though I weighed nothing. I wrapped my legs around him as he carried me to his bedroom, and he laid me down on the bed.

He pressed his body against mine, running his hand up my leg and pushing up my nightgown as he kissed my lips. I could feel his erection through his pants, pressing against me and reminding me of the night that we first had our fated one night stand. I remembered how big he was, and it made me want to feel that sensation of fullness inside of me again.

His kisses traveled across my jaw, then down my neck and down to my chest, only stopping where the lace of my nightgown covered my skin. Once he reached that point, he looked up at me, as though silently asking permission to remove my nightgown. I bit my lip and nodded slowly, watching as he slid a finger under the strap and slid it off of my shoulder. The fabric fell down and exposed my round, milky white breast in the moonlight. Goosebumps were already raised on my skin, and my n****e was hard. I wanted him to kiss my breasts. I wanted him to kiss my entire body.

And he was about to.

But then, he just... stopped. The silver light in his eyes faded back to gray, and he quickly covered my breast again before sitting up and putting

distance between us. His face looked red with embarrassment, and he avoided my gaze. I sat up abruptly, my eyebrows knit together with worry.

“What’s wrong?” I asked, feeling a pang in my chest as I looked at him.

Edrick shook his head and stood. “You have to stop releasing your scent,” he said, his voice low and stern. “It’s not fair. It makes me... It makes me lose control.”

My eyes widened. I didn’t know that Mina had released her scent yet again, and I would have to reprimand her for it later as we had agreed that she would ask for permission first. But at the same time, I didn’t fully understand why we had to keep doing this.

“What does it matter?” I asked, standing and letting my thin nightgown fall back down around my legs. “We want each other. Why can’t we just be intimate for once?”

“I just can’t,” Edrick replied, sounding almost annoyed. “It’s not right.”

I furrowed my brow. “I’m carrying your baby,” I said. My voice was beginning to raise slightly. “We’ve announced ourselves publicly as a couple. We sleep in the same bed, for goodness’ sake. Why do we need to keep doing this? What makes it not right?”

Edrick’s face darkened. Instead of answering, he turned and walked over to the door to leave, but I ran after him. I wasn’t going to let him just storm off, just like he always did when we got too close and he felt the need to distance himself from me for no apparent reason. I grabbed his arm, maybe a little harder than I meant to, causing him to freeze and stare down at me with wide eyes.

“Just talk to me, Edrick,” I said. “This has gone on for too long. I want to know the real reason behind why you find it so abhorrent to be intimate with me.”

“Because!” Edrick said, almost shouting now. He whirled around to face me fully, and his face was twisted with an expression that I couldn’t read.

“I will never marry you! Not you, and not anyone, and I don’t want to give you the wrong idea! I don’t care that you’re my mate. The mate bond means nothing.”

My jaw dropped at Edrick’s words. I clapped my hand over my mouth and shook my head, my eyes widening as I took a step backwards.

He knew all along that he was my mate? So my wolf’s intuition was true after all?

Edrick’s eyes were just as wide as mine as we stared at each other in complete silence. I could tell that he didn’t mean to reveal it, but there was no taking it back now.

I didn’t know what to say; I didn’t even know where to begin. The fact alone that Edrick knew that I was his mate all along and never said anything hurt enough, but now to know that he still planned on not being with me despite knowing that I was supposed to be his mate just made me sick to my stomach.

I couldn’t be here anymore; tonight, I would sleep in my own room, away from him. I needed space to think. Without another word, I quickly brushed past Edrick. As I ran across the penthouse to my room, Edrick didn’t seem to be following me, either.

Once the door was locked behind me, I threw myself down on my bed that night, and stared listlessly up at the moonlight-speckled ceiling.

Never before had I heard of a mate refusing the mate bond. And now, it was happening to me.

Why did it seem as though I was cursed when it came to love?

Chapter 173 Said Too Much

Edrick

“I want to know the real reason behind why you find it so abhorrent to be intimate with me,” Moana said, chasing after me and grabbing my arm as I tried to storm out.

What I said next was a mistake. I knew that as soon as the cruel words came out of my mouth, and I wished that I could take them back when I saw the look on Moana’s soft face.

“Because!” I said, whirling around to face Moana. “I will never marry you! Not you, and not anyone, and I don’t want to give you the wrong idea! I don’t care that you’re my mate. The mate bond means nothing.”

Moana’s eyes widened. She released her grip on my arm and covered her mouth with her hand, taking a step back. We stared at each other in shocked silence for several long moments before she suddenly brushed past me and ran out of the room.

“God dammit, Edrick,” I whispered to myself once she was gone. I slapped my hand on the wall and cursed under my breath. I felt like such a fool for saying too much; not only had I revealed that Moana was my mate too early, but I had completely misconstrued what I wanted to say and I had hurt her feelings because of it.

“You’re too harsh with her,” Eddy, my wolf, said. He was normally silent, and only offered advice when I specifically asked for it. Every wolf had its own personality, and Eddy was definitely the stoic type. But even he realized that I messed up just now and had to tell me about it.

“I’m aware of that, Eddy,” I responded out loud as I paced restlessly around my bedroom. I sighed and flung the balcony doors open to let in the fresh air, and stepped out into the cool night. As I leaned on the railing and looked out over the city, I felt myself beginning to be able to think more clearly.

Truthfully, I did want to mate with Moana. I knew how I felt about her; I knew that, eventually, I would no longer be able to resist her, no matter how hard I tried. But at the same time, I was terrified.

I had spent my entire life hating the entire idea of the mate bond. I hated everything it stood for. I hated the lies that it spread, how people were so blinded by the idea of it that they just assumed that nothing could ever break the mate bond. My father and my mother were both living proof of the fact that the mate bond was complete and utter bullshit. They were supposed to be fated mates, and he still cheated on her. He still treated her poorly, and yet she continued to love him unconditionally. It made me sick.

But deep down, I knew that Moana would never betray me. I knew that I could never betray her, either. I knew that I couldn’t bring myself to hurt her, which was why I had been coming around to the idea.

It wasn’t that simple, though. If she marked me now, then she would shift too early. I had done my research over the past few weeks and discovered that “late bloomers” like Moana — rare cases where people’s wolves wouldn’t appear until later in life — would often shift upon marking their mate. It was rare, but it could happen. Not only that, but it could be dangerous for both her and the baby, and I especially didn’t need to worry about her being hunted. I was only trying to keep her safe.

And yet, I still hurt her because I couldn't keep control of my stupid tongue. Why was I cursed with always saying the wrong things at the wrong times?

Finally, with a sigh I pushed myself away from the balcony railing and headed back inside. The bed looked empty without Moana; I needed to make things right with her. I decided to go over to her room and apologize, and explain what I really meant earlier. At the very least, I thought that I should check on her.

However, when I walked over to her bedroom and tried to open the door, I couldn't bring myself to do it. My hand froze just before I touched the doorknob.

I heard what sounded like a sniffle inside, followed by a quiet sob. Had I made her cry?

I stood frozen there for a few moments, battling with myself about whether I should go in there and talk to her or leave her alone.

"Go," Eddy urged me. "Don't just ignore her."

But I couldn't. She was crying because of me; I didn't want to show my face and make it even worse. Ultimately, I would only hurt her feelings again.

And finally, despite my wolf's wishes, I chose to leave her alone.

Eddy wasn't happy about that decision. Neither was I, admittedly. But I couldn't bring myself to look her in the face — not after I had made her cry with my words. I would have never admitted it to anyone, not even to myself, but I was embarrassed by my own actions.

I decided that I would talk to her in the morning, after we had both had a good night of sleep. Everything was always better in the morning.

But I couldn't sleep without her. I quickly realized that when I laid down; after almost an hour of tossing and turning, I finally cursed to myself and

threw the blankets off. I got out of bed and walked over to the bathroom to retrieve my sleeping pills from the medicine cabinet.

“Just one,” I said to myself under my breath with a sigh before popping the pill in my mouth and swallowing it without even any water. I frowned as I looked at myself in the mirror; I had been doing so well without the sleeping pills, and I hated the way that they made me feel. I hadn’t even really been drinking lately, and I probably had Moana to thank for that. Moana and her strange abilities. Now, I had pushed her away and had to resort to the old methods of getting sleep.

I went back to bed, but another hour passed and sleep still didn’t come. I popped another couple of pills; within half an hour after that, I was beginning to feel fuzzy.

But I still couldn’t sleep.

I got out of bed and stumbled back to the medicine cabinet, dumping two more pills out into my hand. How many had I taken at this point? I furrowed my brow as I counted in my head, but I quickly lost count, and I lost my sense of logic along with it. I popped two more pills...

What happened that night after that was a blur. I wasn’t sure how many times I got up and stumbled over to the medicine cabinet, but soon it got to the point where I lost count entirely, and forgot that I had even gotten up before. Each time I got up, I felt like a broken record, and each time I popped a pill, I felt as though I hadn’t taken any medicine yet.

I didn’t know what happened exactly after the fifth or sixth time that I stumbled over to the medicine cabinet. Reality was fading in and out in flashes, and then...

Before I even made it back to the bed, everything went completely dark and all I felt was the sensation of my knees buckling under me, and my head hitting the floor.

Chapter 174 Emergency Care

Moana

That night, I tried to fight the tears. But no matter how hard I fought and tried to keep my head up, I couldn't entirely stop myself from crying just a little bit.

After all, I had just discovered that Edrick not only knew all along that I was his mate, but that he also still didn't plan on ever being with me despite this. The thought of it made me feel incredibly sick, and I felt helpless. All I ever wanted was to give my baby the happy home life with two loving parents that I never got to have, and yet I had somehow managed to be the fated mate of someone who simply couldn't even bear the thought of being with me. Was there something wrong with me? Was that why I had such bad luck in love?

My wolf, however, was surprisingly quiet throughout all of this. Even though she supposedly released her scent and that was what made Edrick "lose control" and kiss me passionately, I didn't feel much from her. In fact, when I reached out and tried to talk to her for some guidance, she seemed different than usual.

"Mina?" I called out in my mind. Even though it had only been a short few months since I had discovered that I even had a wolf, talking to her telepathically was becoming more and more natural. I rarely ever accidentally spoke out loud, and it felt much less awkward now to talk to her in my mind. In fact, on occasion I even felt as though I could picture her whenever we talked.

“Hmm... Yes?” she responded. Her voice sounded like a distant echo. There was a sleepy, almost giddy quality to it. It almost sounded as though she had too much to drink, although that was just a silly thought.

“Are you alright?” I asked. “Were you sleeping?” Even though it didn’t make sense that she could have been sleeping with everything going on, I supposed that I still didn’t quite know everything about how werewolves worked.

Mina took a long time to respond. When she did, her voice sounded a little closer, but it still had that sleepy quality to it.

“I’m okay. I’ve just been a little... Tired...”

I furrowed my brow and rolled onto my back, wiping the leftover tears off of my face with the back of my hand as I stared up at the ceiling. It was a bit worrying to hear my wolf sounding like this, and I had noticed that she seemed to be acting a bit off lately. But I decided that it was likely just from the pregnancy, or maybe the stress of the incident with the Rogues. Either way, I thought for sure that it couldn’t be anything serious. I decided to let her rest that night; besides, I was getting tired as well. Even though I wanted Edrick by my side, I was still angry with him, and so I decided to finally crawl under my covers and try to sleep.

Somehow, I did manage to sleep that night. There was a bit of tossing and turning, but it did finally happen. And when I woke up, I felt a little bit better about what had happened the night before.

Maybe it was from a good night of sleep, or maybe it was from the sun shining in through my open window. Maybe it was both. Either way, as I got out of bed, I decided that I was going to go over to Edrick’s room to talk to him. It was Saturday, so Ella would have training later, but there was still time. Maybe I could even convince Edrick to go to the orphanage with me, and seeing the children would make both of us feel better.

I threw on my robe and pulled my hair into a bun before heading over to Edrick's room. When I arrived, I almost hesitated for a moment before biting my lip and knocking anyway.

There was no response.

I wanted to see if he was even home, so I quietly cracked open the door and peered in. I furrowed my brow, however, when I saw that the bedsheets were unkempt but the bed was empty, as though he had gotten out of bed and left without making the bed. He always made his side of the bed as soon as he woke up, so it was out of character. Was he really so upset last night that he couldn't even follow his own routine in the morning?

"Edrick?" I called out quietly. I noticed that the bathroom door was open and the light was on, which was only more confusing, so I slowly stepped into the room.

And when I did, my jaw dropped.

"Edrick!" I shouted, running over to where he was lying on the floor. He was lying face down on the floor with his arms outstretched, as though he had fallen in the middle of the night. I struggled to roll him over, but I finally managed to get him onto his back. His lips were a slight shade of blue. "How did this happen?" I whispered.

But then, I saw it: the empty bottle of pills laying on the bathroom floor.

I couldn't believe it; I didn't want to believe it. Had Edrick really tried to... kill himself last night? My eyes filled with tears, and I began to shake him roughly. "Wake up!" I shouted. "Wake up! Selina! Help!"

A few moments later, I heard the sound of footsteps approaching. The door swung open, and Selina came into the room. She clapped her hand over her mouth and let out a sharp yell of surprise at the scene in front of her.

"What happened?" she said, her voice shaking.

I couldn't speak. I could only point at the empty bottle of pills as my hand shook violently, and I continued to shake Edrick in an attempt to take him up to no avail.

"I'll call the doctor," Selina said before running away.

I continued to shake Edrick. My tears dripped down my cheek and onto his shirt. "Please, Edrick, wake up," I whimpered as I continued to shake him. "Please..."

I bent down over him as a choked sob came out of my mouth, and put my ear to his chest. His heart was beating, at least. When I placed my finger under his nose, I could feel his breath coming out. A wave of relief washed over me as I realized that he was still alive at the very least, but I didn't know for how long.

"Please be okay," I whispered. I took his hand and rubbed it gently, watching his face for any sign of movement while I heard Selina frantically calling the doctor in the other room. By now, I could hear the maids causing a commotion. Ella's tiny voice was mixed in, but I heard one of the maids make up a lie and take her away before she saw anything.

"I called the doctor," Selina said as she burst back into the room. "He'll be here in ten minutes."

I nodded, but I felt too numb now to respond. All I could do was keep holding Edrick's hand, and keep watching his face.

Chapter 175 Homeopathic Methods

Edrick

“Oh, good. He’s waking up.”

The first thing I noticed when I came back to consciousness was a splitting headache pounding in my skull. When I finally cracked open my eyes, squinting against even the dim light of my bedside table, I saw three figures bent over me. And, judging from the hardness under my back and the position I was lying in, I quickly realized that I was laid out on the floor rather than my bed.

“Wh...What happened?” I muttered, noticing the distinct feeling of nausea rolling around in my stomach as though I had had too many drinks the night before and was now hungover.

“Shh. You’re alright,” a male voice said. My eyes slowly came into focus, and the blurriness in my vision faded enough for me to see that my doctor was standing over me with a concerned look on his face and his stethoscope in his ears. Behind him, I could see Selina standing there with her arms folded across her chest and disappointment in her eyes. On my other side, Moana was staring intently at me and was holding my hand so tightly that it seemed as though her life depended on it.

“Well, you’re lucky you’re a werewolf,” the doctor said with an exasperated sigh as he finished listening to my heartbeat and put his

stethoscope back around his neck. “That many pills could have killed a human, but you won’t have any lasting damage.”

I furrowed my brow, feeling a bit confused. Last I remembered, I went to bed the night before after taking some sleeping pills. But oddly, everything felt much fuzzier than normal. I had never felt this way from taking my sleeping medicine before, unless...

“Did I take too much?” I asked, blinking rapidly to refocus my eyes.

Selina scoffed. “Too much? Too much!” she reprimanded. “You took the entire bottle! What on earth possessed you to do something so horrible? If it weren’t for Moana finding you this morning, you would have left two children without a father—”

“Now, now,” the doctor intervened, noticing the baffled expression on my face. “Let’s not jump to conclusions. Edrick... Do you remember how many pills you took last night?”

I shook my head. It was starting to come back to me, but it was still fuzzy. “I think I might have gotten up a few more times than I meant to,” I said. “I don’t remember, though.”

The doctor let out another sigh and nodded slowly. “So it wasn’t intentional?” he asked. I shook my head again, and everyone in the room let out a sigh of relief. The doctor pursed his lips thoughtfully before answering. “It’s not uncommon. If you take too many at first, you can forget how much you took before. It can be quite dangerous, and it does lead to accidental overdoses. Like I said, you’re lucky that you’re a werewolf and not a human. I’m guessing that your wolf had to put you into a bit of a dormant state in order to stop the poison from getting through your bloodstream.”

“It’s true,” my wolf said in my mind. “I kept trying to stop you, but the pills made it so you couldn’t hear me.”

So that was what happened. I was relieved and thankful that my wolf was there to stop it.

“Thank you, doctor,” I said, sitting up with ease. “I promise it won’t happen again.”

The doctor looked at me for a moment, then laughed and shook his head. “Of course it won’t happen again. I’m discontinuing your prescription.”

My eyes widened. “You’re what?” I asked, feeling anger already beginning to bubble up inside of me. “I need my medicine. You don’t understa—”

“Edrick, I’ve already given him your stockpile of pills,” Selina interrupted. When I looked over at her, she was frowning deeply at me. She looked both exhausted and angry. “You’re not taking them anymore.”

I passed my hand over my face and shook my head incredulously. This couldn’t be happening; I needed my medication. I paid the doctor out of my own pocket, and he couldn’t take my medication away.

“I’m not a child,” I said angrily. “You can’t just confiscate my own medication that I paid for.”

Suddenly, Moana, who had been silent this entire time, spoke. “Edrick...” Her voice was weak and shook a little bit. When I looked over at her, she was looking up at me with tears in her eyes. I realized then from the look on her face and the way that she was gripping my hand that she must have been so terrified when she found me lying on the floor that morning, and it made me feel like a major jerk for allowing that to happen. “Please listen to the doctor. That medication is dangerous.”

I stared silently at Moana’s soft face for a few moments. She looked haggard and terrified, and the longer I looked at her, the more I became angry with myself for letting her see me like that. Maybe she was right; if that medication was dangerous, maybe I shouldn’t take it. I didn’t want to scare her like that ever again.

Finally, I let out an exasperated sigh and turned back to face the doctor.

“Fine,” I murmured. “I won’t take the medication anymore. But, doctor, I need something for my sleeping problems. Isn’t there anything you can do?”

The doctor simply shrugged. “I’m afraid not,” he said gently. “I’m sorry, Edrick. I wish I could do something for you, but I think that you’re just going to have to find alternative methods for sleep. There are all sorts of homeopathic herbs and teas. You could try yoga or meditation before bed; I’ll give you some recommendations, if you’d like.”

I shook my head. “That won’t be necessary,” I replied, feeling myself go a bit numb at the prospect of being without my medication.

Suddenly, I felt Moana’s hand tighten even more around mine. When I looked over at her, I felt myself soften once more at the sight of her. She seemed to give me a knowing look, as though she knew that her presence was the only thing other than medication that could make me sleep. And she was right. Thanks to her, I knew that I wouldn’t need medication or any other homeopathic methods to sleep.

But as my memories of the previous night flooded back into my brain, I remembered the awful things that I had said to her. I had told her that I would never marry her or anyone, and I had revealed that I knew that she was my mate and yet I still didn’t plan on marrying her, despite the baby in her belly. It wasn’t really what I meant, but I had still said it because I was frustrated and angry that I had lost control around her, and because I was scared of committing when the thought of a mate bond made me sick.

All of this happened because of me — because I took her for granted and pushed her away. I was a real jerk for that, and I didn’t know how I could ever make it up to her.

Moana was my only true sleeping pill, and I had hurt her badly with my horrible words. I only hoped that she could forgive me.