

Chapter 191 Bullet in the Chamber

Edrick

We finally located the place where Kelly called us from. It was a run-down abandoned warehouse nestled deeply into the Rogue district, where it was so dark that even the lights of the city from afar couldn't brighten the place. Behind the warehouse were hundreds of stacked storage containers where the shipping boats came up the river and picked up shipments, but other than that there was nothing else; no people, no houses, no cars. Nothing. Long story short, it was the perfect place for a crime like this to be carried out.

The police quietly surrounded the warehouse and got out, drawing their guns. I wanted to feel relieved, but I couldn't yet until we were certain that Moana and my daughter were safe.

When we burst in through the door, however, my heart sank. What I saw inside of that warehouse was my worst nightmare.

Ethan, my evil half brother, was holding a gun to Moana's head.

"Put the gun down!" the police yelled, pointing their guns at Ethan as we burst in. "Get down on the ground!"

But Ethan didn't waver. In a swift motion, he swung around and stood behind Moana with his arm around her neck and the gun to her head. I could see the fear in her wide eyes, and I wanted so badly to run to her. That sick f**k had her tied up in a chair, and beside her my daughter was also tied up. Ella appeared to be sleeping. My eyes moved back to Moana,

who shook her head ever so slightly; she was indicating that Ella wasn't dead. Not yet, at least. I let out a small sigh of relief, but I couldn't be fully relieved until they were both in my arms.

"If anyone takes one more step, I'll shoot her," Ethan snarled, putting his finger on the trigger and causing the cops to freeze. "I've already got a bullet in the chamber. Just one wrong move, and I'll blast her brains out."

I felt as though my chest was going to explode. Inside of me, Eddy began to rage at the sight of Ethan holding a gun to my mate's head. I wanted to rip him to shreds, but I knew that I couldn't. I needed to be tactful about this if I wanted to bring Moana and Ella home that night.

"Ethan," I said, holding my hands up in surrender and trying not to show my intense and unwavering fury. "Why? Why are you doing this?"

Beside me, I heard a police officer click the safety off on his gun. I held my arm out to stop him and shook my head.

"Don't shoot," I said. "No one shoot."

Suddenly, a low and menacing laugh began to rumble in my half brother's throat. His eyes, which were usually masked by the fake charm that he used to manipulate people, revealed his true self now. Cold, calculating, and twisted. I always wanted to believe that he wasn't born like that, that it wasn't entirely his fault that he was so messed up, but I couldn't help but think that he was just pure evil from the start; like he was sent here with the sole purpose of destroying my entire family, from my parents to Moana and Ella now.

"You're too good," he said through his laughter. "You work fast. I'll give you that."

"Ethan, why are you doing this?" I asked. "What do you want? What's your goal here?"

Ethan's laugh faded. His gun was pressed so hard up against Moana's head that I could see her wincing, and his arm was wrapped too tightly around

her neck. “You know, I wanted to get this over with before you got here so you could just face the pain of losing them,” he said grimly. “But now that you’re here, and now that I’m looking at your stupid f*****g face, I do want to tell you exactly why this is going to happen to you... Why you’ll be miserable and alone forever until the day you die.”

“Please,” I said, “enlighten me.”

“I’m not sure if you remember, or if you even care, but I was the one who found my mother’s body,” Ethan began to explain. Of course I remembered that; no matter how much I always hated Ethan, I knew how horrific it was for him to find his mother after she had killed herself. I never thought that anyone should ever have to go through that. “Either way, it doesn’t matter. Because that day, I decided that I would make you and your family suffer the same pain that I felt when I lost the only person who ever truly loved me.”

“Why?” I asked, furrowing my brow. I took a step forward, but then Ethan pushed the gun harder into Moana’s temple. I watched in horror as she shut her eyes and a tear rolled down her cheek while she trembled, and I held my hands up in surrender again. “Why, Ethan? I’m sorry about your mother. I really am. But what does her death have to do with Moana, or any of us for that matter?”

Ethan laughed again. Behind him, in the shadows created by the spotlight, I could see Kelly’s body lying motionless on the concrete floor. I tried not to show any indication that I saw her, but it made my stomach drop. Had he killed her? Was that what I heard at the end of her phone call?

“I know that you and your father weren’t innocent in that matter,” Ethan growled. “The coroner covered it up because your son of a b***h father paid him off, but I can still see my mother’s body, clear as day... she didn’t kill herself. Those cuts on her arms weren’t self-inflicted.”

Now, I was even more confused. “What are you talking about, Ethan?” I asked. “How would you even have known? You were a child.”

“Because!” Ethan shouted, clearly becoming agitated as he tightened his grip around Moana’s neck, causing her to gasp for air. “There was no knife! Your father was smart enough to pay the coroner off, but he took the knife with him when he was finished killing my mother!”

My eyes widened. I didn’t know what to say; I wouldn’t have been terribly surprised if my father had orchestrated that. When the papers came out about her death, they had only ever said that she died from suicide. Only one paper ever claimed that my father may have had something to do with it, as the news of Ethan’s existence as my father’s son had only begun to circulate a few months prior. Ethan’s mother was a prostitute, so it was easy to cover up her death as well as to claim that Ethan was not my father’s child. But now, it made sense.

Either way, though, only my father was to blame for this. No one else.

“Why punish Moana and Ella for something that my father did?” I asked, taking another tentative step forward. “Your gripe should be with him, not them. Just let them go, Ethan.”

But Ethan just stared back at me with a maniacal look on his face, and pressed the gun harder into my mate’s temple.

Chapter 192

Edrick

Ethan continued to hold the gun firmly up against Moana's head. In the white blow of the bright spotlight that was trained on us, I could see the way that Moana's red hair was stuck to her neck from sweating as her adrenaline surged through her. The ropes that held her to the hard metal chair in the middle of the floor crossed over her belly, restricting the little life inside of her. Seeing her like this made me feel physically sick, and if Ethan didn't have a gun in his hand, then I would have ripped him to shreds as soon as I saw what he had done to her.

"Just let them go, Ethan," I pleaded as I took another tentative step forward.

However, Ethan just pushed the gun harder into Moana's temple.

"You're a liar," he said through his teeth. "I know that you and your mother had something to do with it, too. Don't take me for a fool, Edrick. Your family has done nothing but brought me pain, and now I'll make you feel the same pain."

"Ethan, I seriously have no idea what you're talking about," I said. "My mother loved you like you were her own son. Sure, you and I never got along, but I would have never wanted your mother to die. I would never wish that sort of pain upon you."

Ethan stared at me for a few moments with the gun still pressed up against Moana's head and his arm wrapped firmly around her neck. Thankfully,

as I spoke his grip seemed to loosen, allowing Moana to finally draw in a deep breath. Beside her, Ella continued to sleep. I could see now that Ella's chest was rising and falling gently, which filled me with immense relief; Ethan must have put her under a spell to make her sleep. I was glad that she wouldn't have to see any of this, and I hoped that she wouldn't remember anything from this horrible night if I got her out of here.

In the corner, though, Kelly still laid motionless on the floor. I couldn't tell if she was alive or dead.

"Did you kill Kelly?" I asked, nodding my head toward her.

Ethan chuckled. "Not yet," he replied.

Good, I thought to myself. As much as I despised Kelly for what she did to Moana in the Rogue district and for how nasty she was, I didn't want her to die. I knew now that Ethan probably played a rather large role in that whole ordeal, too. For all I knew, he had been whispering bullshit into her ear since the beginning, molding her into this horrible person who hated Moana's very existence. There was no doubt in my mind that Ethan had orchestrated this entire kidnapping as well, and has probably used Kelly as a pawn.

"Listen," I said, "Moana and Ella don't need to be involved in this. They're both innocent, and I know that you care about both of them, although you won't admit it right now. So why don't you put the gun down, and we'll settle this like men?"

For a few moments, Ethan just stared at me. He seemed to loosen his grip on Moana a little more, but he didn't seem to fully believe me. He nodded at the cops with his head. "What about them? They'll just shoot me if I put the gun down."

I shook my head, then turned back to look at the cops. "Why don't we all put the guns down at once?" I asked. "Everyone. No one is getting shot

tonight. You and I can handle this the old fashioned way: with our fists. No weapons, no interference.”

There was a long silence. I stared intently at the cops, who looked back at me with disbelief while their guns were still trained on Ethan. Of course it was risky, but it was the only way to get the gun off of Moana’s head.

Finally, the police chief nodded grimly and slowly laid his gun down on the ground. After a few moments of hesitation, the other police followed suit; what Ethan didn’t know was that there was a sniper trained on him from outside, ready to shoot just in case he tried anything. But, surprisingly, he didn’t try anything. Not yet, at least. Much to my surprise, he set his gun down and released his grip from around Moana’s neck. Moana let out a huge sigh of relief. I could see that her face was streaked with tears, but they had all dried by now. Later, I would have to make sure she knew just how brave I thought she was for holding it together; it was clear that she had been distracting Ethan and stalling for time when we came in. If she hadn’t done that, then both Moana and Ella very well might have been dead by the time we found the warehouse.

“Untie her,” I said, nodding my head toward Moana. “Ella, too. Untie both of them and let them go over to the police.”

Ethan hesitated for a few moments. I could tell that he didn’t believe me. He looked at Moana then.

“Ethan, please,” she begged, her voice shaking. “Please. I know you care about us. Please let us go.”

Something about Moana made Ethan do it. Solemnly, he untied both of them; first Ella, then Moana. Ella immediately jumped up and rushed over to Ella, who she scooped up and carried over to me. I pulled them both into my arms, feeling Moana sob quietly into my chest.

Realistically, I could have had the police shoot Ethan while he was still standing there. But that night, I was overtaken with rage at what he had

done; I needed to feel his flesh beneath my fists. I wanted to beat him to a pulp. He had put my fated mate, my daughter, and my unborn child in serious danger. If he thought that he felt pain when his own mother died, then that pain would feel miniscule in comparison to the pain I was about to inflict on him. Inside of me, my wolf raged nonstop. He couldn't wait to sink his teeth into Ethan's flesh.

"Go and stand with the cops," I whispered, cupping Moana's face in my hands and kissing her forehead. "You're safe now."

"You're not really going to fight him, are you?" Moana asked. "It's too dangerous—"

"I'll be fine." I kissed her forehead again, and reached over to touch Ella's face. After all of this was over, I decided then and there that I was going to give both of them the best day in their lives. I didn't care how much it cost; I just wanted to show them how grateful I was to have them in my life. I should have made sure that Moana knew that all along instead of pushing her away.

Hesitantly, Moana carried Ella over to the police. I watched as the police surrounded her, barricading her within their circle. One of them took Ella, and another wrapped a blanket around Moana to comfort her while she continued to stare at me with wide, terrified eyes.

"Well?" Ethan said. "Are you gonna fight me or not?"

Chapter 193

Moana

I wanted to beg Edrick not to fight and to just let the police take Ethan away, but it seemed as though Edrick had his sights set on a fist fight with Ethan. As I watched them roll up their sleeves and prepare to fight, I just hoped that Edrick was a good fighter and that Ethan wouldn't pull any dirty tricks.

One of the cops took Ella, who was thankfully still asleep. He took her to one of the police cars and asked if I wanted to come to safety, but I couldn't rip my eyes away from Edrick.

I felt so stupid for not trusting Edrick. Of course the conversations with Olivia were all fake, completely fabricated to make me lose trust in him. They wanted to separate me from the one person who would do whatever it would take to keep me safe.

Ethan and Edrick stood on opposite sides of the open room and got into fighting stances. I watched with bated breath as Edrick put his fists up, prepared to fight. Everything felt still and silent, like the calm in the air right before a huge thunderstorm. The air felt static, like there was electricity floating through it.

And then Edrick charged at Ethan. The two brothers flew into a flurry of punches and kicks. Ethan got one punch in on Edrick's cheek, causing him to hesitate for a moment as he shook the pain out of his head, but Edrick

managed to dodge the next punch. Edrick then swiped his leg under Ethan's feet. Ethan tumbled to the ground, but he was incredibly agile thanks to his werewolf blood and bounced right back up a moment later with his fists still raised. He made a hook at Edrick's head, which Edrick ducked to dodge again. Edrick's fist jabbed into Ethan's stomach, causing Ethan to stagger backwards against the wall to catch his breath.

While Ethan was up against the wall, Edrick flew at him and punched at him furiously. They moved so fast that they were almost a blur because of their werewolf abilities; Edrick's fists flew over and over again, and Ethan repeatedly dodged until he managed to uppercut Edrick in the jaw and send Edrick flying backwards.

I gasped loudly as Edrick skidded across the floor. His shirt tore from scraping against the cement.

"Edrick!" I called, but he wasn't listening. With a growl, Edrick climbed back to his feet. I could see bits of blood beginning to bead up on his skin where his shirt had torn, but the cuts didn't seem to bother him in the slightest. Ethan charged at him again and fainted to the right, but Edrick was on his toes and caught Ethan. He picked Ethan up by the neck with one hand, then slammed Ethan into the ground. He was going to kill Ethan.

I didn't want anyone to die, but Edrick was too furious to be stopped despite the fact that both I and the police were begging him not to take it too far. Edrick wasn't listening, though, and instead punched Ethan in the face repeatedly until Ethan's face was covered in blood. Edrick paused then, his chest heaving as he straddled Ethan and stared down at him. Edrick's eyes were wide and glowing brighter than I had ever seen them before.

Ethan spit out a bloody tooth on the ground and laughed.

“You never played nice, Edrick,” he growled, his voice muddled by the blood. “Every time we roughoused as kids, you always left me bleeding... But this time, you’ll be the one who bleeds.”

Suddenly, Ethan grabbed Edrick with an unexpected amount of force for someone whose face had practically just been beaten to a pulp. He grabbed him around the neck and yanked him closer, growling as he did, and then head butted Edrick hard. Edrick reeled at this, and I cried out with fear. I tried to rush out to him, but one of the cops stopped me and held me back, shaking his head.

“It’s best you stay out of it, miss,” he said quietly. “Once two Alphas start fighting, no one can break them up.”

I could only watch in abject horror as Ethan then threw Edrick’s body to the ground, causing Edrick to slide across the floor once more. Groaning, Ethan slowly climbed to his feet and limped over to Edrick. He put his foot on Edrick’s head, turning it this way and that as though inspecting it, before grabbing a fistful of Edrick’s shirt and pulling him up a bit. He punched Edrick square in the face. Edrick’s head snapped back and his eyes rolled into the back of his head for a moment.

“Let me go,” I begged, wrenching myself free from the cop. “He’s going to die!”

Ethan, hearing my struggle, turned to face me. He shot me a bloody, menacing grin and then stepped out of the way, gesturing to Edrick.

“Go ahead,” he said. “Say your goodbyes. He’ll die soon.”

The cops flew into action then, scrambling to pick up their guns while Ethan just laughed and stood there. I shoved my way through them and ran over to Edrick’s side; his forehead was cracked open from Ethan head butting him and he was losing a lot of blood. When I ran up to him and fell to my knees, cupping his face in my hands, his glazed over eyes flickered open.

“Edrick,” I whispered, blinking back the tears that were in my eyes, “it’s okay. I’m here.”

Edrick slowly shook his head. “I’m not gonna make it,” he replied. “I’m losing too much blood. I can’t heal like this.”

Behind me, I could hear Ethan fighting the police. Somehow, he was managing to take all of them down. He was too fast and agile, and his strength was unparalleled. There was chaos behind me, but I only cared about Edrick.

“I can heal him,” Mina said suddenly. “If you mark him, then I’ll be able to heal his wounds, no matter how bad they are.”

My eyes widened. Mina was a genius; it was bound to work. I didn’t know much about werewolves, but I knew that mates had superior abilities when they were together. If I could just mark Edrick, then he would heal faster. He’d be stronger, too.

“Let me mark you,” I whispered. “I can do it.”

Edrick shook his head again, but more adamantly this time. “You can’t,” he said. “I won’t let you.”

“Why?” I asked. “It’ll save your life—”

“You’re the Golden Wolf,” Edrick replied. “If you mark me, your wolf will emerge, and you might shift. It’ll be dangerous for both you and the baby. Besides, I...” He paused for a moment, coughing. A bit of blood trickled out of the corner of his mouth.

“Besides what?” I whimpered, cupping his face. “What is it?”

“Besides,” Edrick continued, his voice barely a croak as the puddle of blood on the floor grew in size, “I’ve been... Putting a serum in your coffee to keep your wolf from emerging. I didn’t want you to be in danger.”

I felt a new wave of tears burst forth where the others had dried. I shook my head, clamping Edrick's hand tightly in mine. "No," I whispered, ignoring the chaos of gunfire and snarling behind me as Ethan fought the police. I glanced over my shoulder to discover that several Rogues had joined the fight, no doubt hired by Ethan. If I didn't save Edrick, then the Rogues were going to kill all of us anyway.

"I won't let you die," I said firmly.

Chapter 194 The Mark of a Mate

Moana

Edrick was bleeding out below me. I needed to mark him if I wanted him to survive, but he didn't want me to. He said that it would be bad for the baby; he even admitted that the drops he was putting in my coffee were to specifically prevent this. But he didn't know that I hadn't been drinking my coffee, and I could mark him then and there.

"I won't let you die," I said firmly as I held Edrick's hand in mine.

Behind us, Ethan and several Rogues were fighting with the police. It was a flurry of chaos in that abandoned warehouse, and I wasn't sure what would happen if Edrick died. Ethan and the Rogues, who were likely hired by him, were certain to kill us. I couldn't stop thinking about little Ella, who was still asleep in the cop car. Even Kelly was lying hopelessly in the corner, still unconscious. The cops were struggling with Ethan and the Rogues, and I knew that they needed Edrick's help. If I marked him and healed him, then he would have the strength to fight better than anyone else there because his mate was at his side.

But Edrick's eyes widened and he shook his head, despite the fact that blood was pooling up around him.

"No," he said. "It's too dangerous for you to mark me. Not with the baby inside of you. Just run, and one of the police will get you somewhere safe."

I shook my head. “I already said that I won’t let you die,” I whispered. “I love you, Edrick.”

The Alpha billionaire’s eyes widened even further. Before he could respond, I suddenly bent down and pressed my lips against his, kissing him deeply.

Inside of me, I could feel my wolf’s power surge. She was searching for Edrick’s wolf so that they could mark each other. Due to Edrick’s injuries, however, his wolf was weak and Mina struggled to find him.

All around me, I could hear the sounds of fighting. Gunshots, raised voices, and animalistic snarling echoed throughout the empty warehouse in a deafening cacophony of noise. I heard the sound of one of the police screaming.

“My leg!” the female officer screamed. “The Rogue got my leg!”

I pressed my lips harder against Edrick’s. I could taste the metallic flavor of his blood on my tongue, but I didn’t care. I just kept kissing him, praying that Mina could find his wolf and mark him.

A few moments later, I felt Mina’s reaction to Edrick’s wolf. “He’s weak,” she said, “but I found him.”

What happened next was a strange sensation that I couldn’t even begin to fathom. I suddenly felt as though my soul found a missing piece that I had been without for my entire life. For years, up until this very moment, I hadn’t realized it — but I had only been half of a soul. Edrick was the other half, and I knew that now. All of the times that I didn’t trust him, all of the times that I thought that he was going to hurt me... When I thought that the serum he was putting in my coffee was meant to harm me, but in actuality he was only trying to protect me, to keep me from shifting too early so that the baby wouldn’t be in danger... All of that felt so small now. I felt as though our souls clicked together like two pieces of a puzzle.

Everything else around me faded, leaving just Edrick and I in a dark space together. I felt an overwhelming sense of peace. Below me, I could feel Edrick's body relax. I quickly pulled away, my eyes searching his face with worry. He was limp.

The peace that I felt before dissipated, and I felt my heart catch in my throat as the fighting around me continued. Edrick wasn't moving.

"Edrick?" I said, shaking him gently as my eyes filled with tears. "Edrick, are you alive? Please don't be dead..."

Behind me, I heard the unmistakable sound of laughter. I jerked my head up to see none other than Ethan standing there, grinning maniacally.

"I told you he would die," he said. "Did you get to say your goodbyes?"

Ethan stormed up to me and suddenly grabbed me by my arm. He hauled me to my feet, wrenching me away from Edrick's limp body. I screamed and kicked, bit and clawed, but it was no use; no matter how hard I struggled against Ethan, he was too strong. He was an Alpha, and my wolf hadn't fully emerged yet.

"Now it's your turn," Ethan said, wrapping his fingers around my neck. His grip tightened around me. I began to gasp for air and choke, flailing my arms. Ethan just stared into my face with a calculated coldness that made me sick to my stomach.

"Fuck... You..." I croaked as I tried to claw at his face. My words only caused Ethan to laugh, and he just choked me even harder. I felt my vision begin to fade, but all I felt inside of me was my wolf's pain, her wild keening over our mate's fate.

But then, something strange happened. Mina's wailing stopped.

"Look!" she said. "He's healing!"

I couldn't turn my head, though. Ethan was holding me too tightly. My vision was fading so much that his image was becoming a dark blob despite the fact that he was just mere inches from my face. I begged Mina to help me, to give me strength.

And she did.

I suddenly felt an immense amount of strength surge through me. I didn't know what happened exactly; all I knew was that one moment Ethan was strangling me to death, and the next moment he was on the ground, groaning and holding his head, while I had fallen to my knees. I coughed and sputtered as I regained my vision.

All of a sudden, I felt a warm pair of arms wrap around me.

"Don't worry," a familiar voice said softly in my ear. "Your Alpha is here."

I looked up then to see Edrick crouching beside me, holding me tightly in his arms. My wolf was right; he had healed after all. I had thought that he was dead, but he was just healing the whole time, and now he exuded a strength that I had never seen anyone possess before. As I looked at him, my hand clapped over my mouth and a sob caught in my throat. He cupped my face in his hands and pulled me toward him. For a moment that felt like an eternity, we kissed each other and I felt whole again.

But the fight wasn't over; Ethan was getting up. I heard his maniacal laugh again.

"Well, well," he teased, finally climbing to his feet. "Looks like we're gonna have a round two, huh?"

Edrick gave me one last look. His eyes glowed silver, and from this close I could see that they were sparkling with so much love that it was dazzlingly bright. He gently kissed my forehead, then stood and rolled up his sleeves.

With a low, thunderous growl, Edrick stepped in front of me and faced Ethan. From where I kneeled on the floor, he looked like a god standing there in the bright light from the spotlight.

“Yeah,” he said, pushing his sleeves up to his elbows. “I guess we are gonna have a round two.”

Chapter 195 Finishing Move

Moana

Edrick stood, pushing his sleeves up to his elbows. “I guess we are gonna have a round two,” he said.

Ethan’s bloodied face flashed with what looked like fear. Around us, the Rogues seemed to notice Edrick’s surge in strength. In a flurry of frightened yips and snarls, the Rogues took off in their wolf forms, leaving only Ethan to deal with.

“I got this,” Edrick said, holding his hand out to the cops before they could jump in and restrain Ethan. I continued to kneel on the floor, completely in awe of Edrick’s strength. He looked bigger, even physically, since I marked him.

Suddenly, Edrick rushed at Ethan with a speed that I had never seen before. Ethan didn’t even have time to react before Edrick slammed him to the ground so hard that the floor around him cracked. I gasped, jumping to my feet as I clamped my hand over my mouth. Had he killed him?

I heard Ethan groan, and saw him move. Thankfully, he wasn’t dead. Edrick picked him up by a fistful of his shirt and growled something in his ear before dropping him back to the floor. He stepped away from Ethan and allowed the cops to restrain him, and as they did he came back to me and pulled me tightly into his arms.

“I told you not to mark me,” Edrick whispered, stroking my hair as I buried my face in his chest.

“I had to,” I replied. I looked up to see that the silver glow in Edrick’s eyes had faded back to his natural icy blue color, but there was something else there now. I could sense immense love coming from Edrick’s gaze. He kissed my forehead gently, then cupped my face in his hands.

“Are you okay?”

I nodded. “I’m fine,” I said. “Kelly knocked me out earlier by hitting me in the head, but I feel fine.”

Edrick looked concerned, and checked my head. Thanks to my wolf growing in strength from marking him, though, my head was healed. There wasn’t even a bump or a bruise, whereas before I had felt a splitting headache when I woke up.

Behind us, the cops put handcuffs on Ethan and hauled him to his feet. Edrick and I watched as they led him out of the warehouse, reading him his Miranda Rights. “You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in the court of law...”

Edrick and I followed. Ethan went silently with the cops, and didn’t protest as they led him over to one of their cars. He seemed defeated; he knew what his fate was now. He would go to prison for what he did. As Edrick and I stood in the flashing blue and red lights of the police cars, we saw an ambulance pull up. Several EMT’s got out and rushed up to us and began to ask us a million questions while a few more ran inside with a stretcher. By the time they came out with Kelly on the stretcher, she was waking up and groaning and saying nonsense. I was glad that she was alive and that no one had died that night, but at the same time I knew that she, too, would go to prison along with Ethan for what they did.

Ahead of us, the cops opened their car door and began to push Ethan inside. That was the only time he struggled, just for a moment: “Moana!” he shouted, yanking against the cops that were holding him. “I’ll always love you! I’m sorry!”

I shuddered as I watched him disappear into the cop car. Edrick's arm tightened around me protectively, and although the scene was a cacophony of noise as everyone rushed around, I swore that I could hear him growl slightly under his breath.

When the EMT's finally gave us some space, I couldn't keep it in anymore. I turned toward Edrick and opened my mouth to begin telling him everything about how I tried to run away — but Edrick, seeing this, shook his head and put his finger to his lips.

“It's okay,” he said gently. “I know you have a lot to tell me, but it can wait. Let's just get home.”

I closed my mouth and nodded slowly, feeling my face go red. One of the police then waved us over to his car, and as we approached, I let out a massive sigh of relief to see Ella still sleeping peacefully in the back seat.

“She should come around soon,” the EMT who was checking on her said. “It looks like someone put her under a simple sleeping spell. When she wakes up, she probably won't remember anything from the last twenty-four hours.”

I couldn't help but feel relieved by this, and I knew that Edrick felt relieved, too. Not only did I of course not want Ella to remember anything about being kidnapped and held at gunpoint, but I also didn't want her to remember that I had taken her out of her bed and told her about her biological mother. I never should have done any of it, and I felt awful. From now on, I decided that I wouldn't bring up her mother until Edrick was ready; but it did need to happen eventually. That was one thing that I was sure of. Ella couldn't go on for her entire life thinking that her mother was dead. She needed to know what her mother was really like.

Of course, I still didn't know Olivia's full story. But from what I observed that night, it seemed to me that she was a liar who took Ethan's money to make me hate Edrick. I decided that I would have to get Edrick's side of the story, just as I should have done from the beginning. From now on,

things would be different. Edrick was my mate now; I would never accuse him of trying to hurt me again. I knew now that he only ever wanted to protect me and Ella.

Finally, Edrick and I climbed into the back of the police car with Ella. Edrick wrapped his arms around her sleeping body and held her tightly, rocking her back and forth. I thought that I heard him whisper something to her under his breath, but I didn't pry. The terror he must have felt when he suddenly discovered her missing must have been unparalleled, and now they were reunited. I felt like the worst person alive for doing that to him.

The cops pulled away from the empty warehouse. I turned in my seat and watched the big brick building fade into the distance as more police covered the door with crime scene tape. Even as we made our way back through the Rogue district, things seemed more peaceful; no Rogues bothered us, and it actually seemed as though word of Edrick's Alpha strength had spread, causing the Rogues to cower as the cop car drove past.

That night, I couldn't wait to get home. I just hoped that Edrick would forgive me when I told him the true story of what had happened.