

Chapter 196 The Way Home

Moana

As the police officer drove us home that night, I felt immense relief wash over me. We made our way out of the dangerous Rogue district and the city began to grow brighter and cleaner as we headed back to the penthouse. The city lights illuminated the inside of the car, and beside me I could see Edrick still cradling the sleeping Ella in his arms.

Seemingly without thinking much about it, Edrick saw me looking and reached his arm out for me. I hesitated for a moment, still feeling bad about the trouble I had caused, but I finally relented and scooted over to nuzzle down into the crook of his arm. How that I had marked him and my wolf had emerged, his scent overwhelmed me; it was so sweet and tantalizing, and filled me with a profuse feeling of peace.

But Edrick's concerns about my wolf emerging too early weren't unwarranted. I understood that now that Olivia, Ethan, and now Edrick had confirmed that I was the Golden Wolf. Although I didn't know much about the story, I did know that people wanted to hunt the Golden Wolf. If I shifted, there was a good chance that people would come after me because of my scent; for all I knew, my scent had already permeated the city and poachers or bounty hunters were looking for me at that very moment.

I also knew that, once someone's wolf emerged, they could shift fully at any point. There wasn't much to be done to control it. Most people shifted

immediately upon their wolf emerging, but I hadn't shifted yet for some reason. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that I was a late bloomer already, or maybe it was because of the serum that Edrick had been giving me. Either way, even though I was still a bit hurt that Edrick secretly slipped the serum into my coffee and didn't tell me that he found out that I was the Golden Wolf, I was glad that I hadn't shifted yet. I only hoped that I could somehow manage to not shift until my baby was safely born.

"What will we do if I shift too early?" I whispered to Edrick, too curious to stay quiet any longer.

He was silent for a few moments before speaking. "We'll take you to the Mother Witch first thing in the morning," he responded. "She'll know what to do."

As Edrick spoke, I felt my heart catch in my throat. He didn't know that Ethan had killed the Mother Witch.

"Edrick..." I swallowed nervously and rubbed my hand over my protruding belly, hoping that the baby inside of me was still safe and healthy after the whole ordeal. "The Mother Witch is dead. Ethan killed her. He told me so earlier, before you came."

Edrick froze when I told him that the Mother Witch was dead. In the darkness, illuminated only by the city lights, I could see that his jaw was set hard as though he was clenching his teeth. His eyes flashed with anger, and his grip around my shoulders tightened slightly.

"Fine, then," he said, his voice almost a growl. "I guess we'll have to figure it out ourselves."

I opened my mouth then to tell Edrick that there had to be someone else who could help us, but before I could, Ella suddenly began to wake up. She groaned lightly and yawned, rubbing her eyes. Edrick and I both sat

up abruptly and watched her intently. Both of us let out an audible sigh of relief when her blue eyes popped open and she looked around confusedly.

“Daddy? Moana?” she croaked, her voice small from sleepiness. “Where are we?”

Edrick just shook his head and smiled. “Don’t worry about it, Princess,” he said gently. “Just go back to sleep.”

Ella gave both of us a somewhat skeptical look, but she seemed too exhausted to care. Within moments, her eyelids had fluttered shut again and she was fast asleep once more. I was glad to see her sleep so soundly, and hoped that she would sleep like that through the night. Just for that night, I hoped that we could all sleep soundly. But I knew that that likely wouldn’t be the case; my nerves were too frayed from the whole ordeal to be able to sleep.

The remainder of the car ride was silent. Eventually, the police officer pulled up to the curb outside of the penthouse and let us out. Now that my adrenaline had worn off, my body felt stiff from everything that had happened, and I needed to take Edrick’s hand to get out of the back of the cop car. Once we were out, the officer quietly shut the door in order to not wake Ella up and looked at both of us.

“I’m going to stay stationed out here for the rest of the night,” the officer said, keeping his voice low. “If you need anything, here’s my number.” He pulled out a business card and handed it to me, since Edrick’s hands were full while he held Ella.

I didn’t think that there would be any risk of anything else happening that night, but I still felt grateful that the officer promised to stay. If anything went south with my situation as the Golden Wolf, then at least we would have the police close by. But, if I was being honest, I felt plenty safe with Edrick.

“Thank you,” Edrick said with a polite nod. “Thanks for everything you’ve done tonight. I hope the rest of your men and women are okay after that fight.”

The officer nodded. “They’re fine,” he said. “A few bites and scratches here and there, but nothing serious.” He then looked at me, and his eyes subtly flickered down to my belly. “Are you sure you don’t need to go to the hospital? I can take you right now and I’ll make sure that you can skip the waiting time.”

I put my hand over my belly and shook my head. That night, I just wanted to be home.

“I’ll take her to the doctor first thing in the morning,” Edrick said, his voice firm as he looked at me as though he was secretly telling me that there would be no way that I could get out of it. “For now, I think it’s best if we’re all home for the night.”

As Edrick spoke, he looked at me with a calm sternness in his eyes. Something in me made me think that he secretly knew that I had left with Ella earlier that night, but he didn’t seem terribly angry about it — more concerned than anything. I knew that when we got upstairs, we would be having a long discussion about everything.

“Alright,” the officer said. “Well... Like I said, I’ll be here if you need anything. Oh, and miss—” He stopped us just as we were turning to head inside, and gave me a gentle look. “You did well tonight. Your poise, calm demeanor, and stalling for time saved both of your lives tonight.”

I smiled weakly, thanked the officer, and then headed inside with Edrick.

Little did the officer know that I had essentially caused the entire debacle to begin with.

Chapter 197 Straight from the Heart

Moana

We headed upstairs after the police officer dropped us off. When we arrived, Selina and the maids were sitting on the couch and immediately jumped up when they heard us coming.

“Oh, thank goodness!” Selina cried, rushing toward me and pulling me into her arms. “Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

I shook my head, then put my finger over my lips and pointed at Ella, who was still sleeping on Edrick’s shoulder. Selina nodded and wiped her tears away. Edrick took Ella back to her room without a word, leaving me alone with Selina and the maids.

“Moana, what happened?” Amy asked, keeping her voice low. “We were worried sick.”

“I’ll explain everything tomorrow,” I said. “But we’re okay. We’re safe.”

This didn’t seem to fully satisfy the maids. Lily opened her mouth to ask me more questions, but Selina hushed her and sent them both off to her room. Selina left, too, but not before giving me another tight hug that took me just as much by surprise as the first one. As she hugged me, I couldn’t help but relax a bit into her arms, feeling comforted by the old housekeeper’s touch. When we pulled away, there were tears in both of our eyes. Selina looked like she was about to say something, but she

seemed to decide against it and instead simply patted my hand gently before leaving.

A few minutes later, Edrick returned to the living room. He looked exhausted, and his clothes were torn and filthy. Mine were just as dirty, no doubt from being dragged at some point while I was unconscious.

Neither of us spoke as we cleaned ourselves off and changed into clean pajamas. We climbed into bed and laid there motionless in the darkness for a long time, but I knew that neither of us would be able to sleep — and I couldn't keep my story in any longer. I felt as though it was best to get it out now, before it was too late.

“I ran away,” I admitted, feeling a lump form in my throat as I stared up at the ceiling. “This is all my fault. For weeks, I've been talking to Olivia; she convinced me that you were going to take my baby from me, and that you're just using me to get another Alpha heir. I found out that you were putting those drops in my coffee, and then I decided to run away with Ella.”

Edrick was silent for a long time. The entire time I felt as though my heart would burst out of my chest, wondering what he was going to say. I wondered if he would yell at me or kick me out. Was it possible to denounce a mate?

But he didn't do any of those things. In fact, he did quite the opposite.

In the darkness, Edrick reached out for me. I felt his arms wrap around me and he pulled me close to him, so close that all I could feel was his warmth and his scent enveloping me. He stayed silent for a long time after that before he finally spoke.

“I'm sorry that I made you feel like you needed to run,” he whispered. “I should have been honest with you from the beginning. About everything; Olivia, your lineage, the serum. I thought that I was protecting you by

keeping the truth from you, but it turned out to put you in more danger in the long run.”

As Edrick spoke, I shook my head and looked up at him.

“I know you’re going to tell me that it’s not my fault,” he said before I could say anything. He sat up then and swung his legs over the bed, standing and walking over to the closet. “But it is. All along, I’ve been hiding so much from both you and Ella. It’s time that the truth comes out.”

Edrick began to rifle through his closet as he spoke. I sat up and turned on the bedside lamp to see him coming back with a shoebox in his hands.

“Let me tell you what really happened with Olivia,” he said. He set the box down, then sighed and passed his hand over his tired face. “She’s a liar. I’m sorry that she manipulated you; there was a point in time when she manipulated me, too. She had me convinced that we would live a happy life together and that she loved me. I knew that she wasn’t my fated mate, but I didn’t care. When she got pregnant, I was overjoyed. And when Ella was born, and I held my little girl for the first time, I knew that Olivia was brought into my life specifically to bring Ella into the world. But things got bad after that.” He opened the shoebox to reveal what looked like a bundle of letters folded up, and started to pull them out. There weren’t just letters inside, I realized; there were photos, too. Photos of Olivia with other men, photos of her passed out on the floor, photos taken through windows of her screaming at Edrick and pointing her finger in his face.

“What is all of this?” I whispered.

Edrick shook his head grimly and swallowed. “As soon as Ella was born, Olivia changed. The doctors told me that it was postpartum depression, but it never got better. Months went by, and she just got worse; she started drinking and taking drugs, and I found her with other men on multiple occasions. I finally hired a private investigator to get all of this evidence so that I could win the custody battle for Ella, because I realized that

Olivia was dangerous. But the thing is, during the custody battle she didn't even try to keep Ella. She only ever wanted the money; Ella was just a means to an end for her. So I gave her the money that she wanted, under the sole condition that she stay out of Ella's life forever. I told Ella that her mother died because I couldn't bring myself to tell her the truth."

My eyes widened as Edrick told me his story. What Olivia had told me was so different... How she had fought so hard for her baby, and Edrick stole her. But now, Edrick's side of the story painted Olivia out to be a horrible mother, and he had evidence to prove it.

"Every year, Olivia starts up with trying to get more money out of me," Edrick continued. "That's why she calls nonstop around Ella's birthday. She uses it as an excuse and tries to pretend like she's just calling to check on Ella or send gifts, but that's not the case. She's just begging for more money to fuel her lavish lifestyle, and I stupidly give it to her so she won't tell anyone the truth about Ella."

I didn't realize it at first, but as Edrick spoke I was slowly standing, and now I was standing in front of him. Without a word, I put my arms around him and hugged him tightly. He stiffened for a moment before relaxing and wrapping his arms around me, and I felt his chin rest on top of my head. We held each other like that for a long time, neither of us speaking.

I felt like such a jerk for listening to Olivia over him... I should have just talked to him. But now, I knew that I wouldn't do anything like that ever again. Edrick was a good father who cared about Ella... Who cared about our baby... Who cared about me.

Finally, when we pulled away, I looked up to meet Edrick's gaze.

"I think you should tell Ella the truth," I whispered. "I think it's time."

Chapter 198 Hideaway

Edrick

Moana was right about the fact that I needed to tell Ella the truth about her mother. It was time that Ella knew what her mother was really like, especially after that whole ordeal. But at that moment, although I promised Moana that I would tell Ella about Olivia soon, I had more pressing matters to deal with.

First thing in the morning, I took Moana to the doctor's office for a full checkup to make sure that both she and the baby were healthy. Thankfully, they were. The baby was as healthy as an ox; in fact, when Moana was being strangled by Ethan, I remembered seeing her suddenly overcome with a burst of light that launched Ethan backwards. I didn't know if it was the baby or Moana's own abilities that protected her at that moment, but it didn't matter. All I knew was that that burst of light saved Moana from being strangled to death by Ethan when I was still too weak to move.

However, as the day went on, it quickly came to my attention that the whole ordeal had already made its way to the news. Somehow, those damn paparazzi got footage of Ethan being escorted into the cop car and Moana's terrified face. Those clips were already circulating various news outlets with all sorts of speculations on what happened. I didn't know if I would bother having a press conference about it, though. At that moment, I just wanted to get Moana and Ella away from the city.

The last time we had gone to the mountain estate, it had gone poorly. My father had sent a hired rogue to intimidate us and we had left abruptly as we no longer felt safe there. And I supposed that we could easily run into trouble again if we went back, but the city was just too dangerous right now. There was a good chance that Moana could shift at any moment now that her wolf had emerged, and I wanted her to be out of the city for two reasons: for starters, a wolf shifting for the first time would be dangerous in an enclosed space like the penthouse, especially since she didn't know how to control it yet. And secondly, if Moana shifted her scent would permeate throughout the entire city, which would no doubt draw all sorts of sick people to us. If I wanted to keep her safe, I needed to get her somewhere where it would be unlikely for others to be close enough to pick up her scent.

And so, that weekend I worked tirelessly to hire an entire team of security guards. I hired over twenty new guards, all of whom were the best of the best. They were all Alphas with extensive combat experience, and I vetted them thoroughly to make sure that they wouldn't turn on us if Moana turned. I paid them well, too; I didn't care how much it cost so long as Moana and Ella were safe.

On Sunday evening, I finally finished my preparations. All that was left was to tell Moana that we would be leaving first thing in the morning. I knew that she wouldn't take it well.

"We're what?" Moana asked, standing up suddenly from the armchair by the window. "Tomorrow?"

I nodded grimly, trying not to pay any attention to the incredulous look on her face. "I'm sorry," I said. "We'll be staying until the baby is born. Potentially longer than that if I still think it's unsafe for you in the city."

Moana shook her head vigorously and frowned deeply. "We can't leave!" she pleaded as she stormed up to me and grabbed my arm. "What about

my teaching job? What about Ella's new school? You can't take that from her!"

Seeing the look on her face made me feel sad. I knew how much she loved that job, but it just wasn't safe in the city. Until she shifted and until the baby was born, I wouldn't feel comfortable bringing them back here. And besides, my father was still a threat. He would find out about Moana's true nature eventually, and I wouldn't have been surprised if he was the very first person to try to hunt her down. He had too much at stake as one of the wealthiest and most corrupt men in the world to let the Golden Wolf bring a new era in which humans and werewolves could live in harmony. He had built his entire empire off of the backs of underpaid and overworked humans.

"Moana, I'm really sorry," I finally said. "I promise we'll come back. I know you love your job, and we'll find a substitute to fill in for you until we come back. You can claim it as maternity leave; you can tell them that you're having complications with the pregnancy. The headmistress will understand and will certainly give you the job back once we return."

Moana's eyes were full of pain. She looked as though she was about to say something, but apparently decided against it and just walked away. She walked over to the window and looked out, folding her arms across her chest.

"I think we're safer here." Her voice was low, so low it was almost a whisper. "This is our home."

Her words created a pang in my heart, but the preparations had already been made. The mountain estate would be the safest option during that time. I not only needed to make sure that Moana was safe until she had the baby, but I also needed to figure out how Moana would continue to be safe as the Golden Wolf. Without the help of the Mother Witch, I felt lost and clueless. The Mother Witch knew what would need to be done, and I

hardly knew anything about the Golden Wolf aside from the fairy tales I was told as a kid.

“I know this is our home,” I finally said, walking up to stand beside her. We looked out the window at the bustling city for a few moments. Below us, there was a throng of paparazzi waiting outside the penthouse like hungry sharks. They had been camping out there all day and would likely be camping out there for several days on end, just hoping for us to come outside so they could bombard us with photos and questions. I gestured to them, then looked over at Moana. She shot me an angry, but still understanding, look. “Just look at them,” I said. “We can’t be here with them out there like that. Imagine what it will be like when they find out that you’re the Golden Wolf.”

Moana chuckled slightly as she watched the mob mill about outside like zombies. “I guess you’re right,” she said quietly. “They’re like piranhas.”

I turned to face her then and took both of her shoulders in my hands. I stared sternly into her eyes, hoping that she would see my sense of urgency. “The poachers and bounty hunters will be worse,” I whispered, taking note of the way that her green eyes widened. “I’m only doing this to keep you safe. I hope you know that.”

Moana looked up at me for a few moments, chewing the inside of her cheek before she finally nodded.

“I understand,” she replied. “So long as you promise that we’ll come home soon.”

Chapter 199 Moving Day

Edrick

Moana was terribly quiet for the next few days. I didn't blame her, of course. She was going to be rightfully upset about having to leave, but it was the safest thing to be done. I only ever wanted to keep Moana and Ella safe, and despite our last incident at the mountain estate, I felt confident that our new security guards would protect us while we were there. During that time, though, I decided that I would have to figure out what to do about my father. I knew that he was going to come after us, but I had no real evidence. He hadn't made any real threats yet, at least not anything that we could prove, so we couldn't turn him in to the police. As of that moment, I was at a loss as to what to do about him. And my mother wasn't picking up her phone when I called, either. I was beginning to get worried, to say the least.

The next few days went by too quickly. I hired a moving company to get everything that we would need; mostly clothes, kitchenware, and sentimental items since the mountain estate was already fully furnished. I wanted Moana to feel at home there, so without her knowledge I hired an interior designer to go to the estate and furnish one of the rooms to make it a nice art studio for her. I figured that this would cheer Moana up and maybe make her not hate being there and being away from her job so much.

By the middle of the week, however, I started to feel a bit sad too.

I liked the penthouse. I had never really cared too much about the place, but ever since Moana had begun to call the penthouse her home, it had become more special to me. What was once just an expensive and luxurious place to live now felt entirely different. As we went around and prepared to move, I began to notice little things that I hadn't noticed before, too. Moana had placed flowers around the apartment. She had left various throw blankets and comfortable pillows on the furniture. Her sketchbook lay on the table by the armchair in the sun. Even in my bedroom, she had placed a little dish for her jewelry and a stack of books on the bedside table, and had a tray of lotions and serums for her skin and hair on the bathroom sink. I used to keep my bedroom curtains closed, as I needed complete darkness to try to sleep, but lately they had been open and my bedroom was filled with sunlight during the afternoons. I hadn't noticed, but apparently at one point Moana had replaced the boring black comforter on my bed with a lighter colored one that brightened up the room.

Seeing all of this now, I felt more reluctant to leave. I knew that we had to go, but it was so hard to say goodbye to this place.

Ella was distraught, too. When I initially told her about my plans to take them to the mountain estate, she had thrown a massive fit. She didn't remember anything about the event in the warehouse, so she really didn't understand why I was making them move, and she was furious with me. She spent the next few days fuming at me and refusing to speak because she didn't want to leave her new friends that she had made at school.

By the end of the week, however, it was time to leave. The movers were scheduled to come at noon, and once they had packed up all of our things they would be following us to the mountain estate along with our caravan of security vans. We would be leaving out the back, where the paparazzi weren't waiting for us. Within a couple of weeks, news would probably start to spread that the Morgan penthouse was dark and empty, which

would likely stir up a lot of news since Ethan was being held in jail. I didn't care, though. I just wanted to get out.

Friday morning, I woke up and finished packing up a few things. Moana eventually came out and helped Ella get ready, but she hardly spoke to me.

Oh well, I thought to myself. She would come around soon. Soon, she would understand why I was doing this and she wouldn't be so mad at me. And besides, the mountain estate was beautiful. For all I knew, she might even want to stay there; maybe eventually we would sell the penthouse, send Ella to a private school near the mountain estate, and I would manage WereCorp remotely. I wouldn't mind that.

I was passing through the living room at one point with a box in my hand, however, when something caught my eye: the piano.

I stopped and looked at it for a few moments. This past week, I hadn't been playing it much. But now, in the late morning sunlight, it looked tempting. So, setting the box down on the floor, I decided to sit at the piano and play one last song before we left.

At first, I played quietly and tentatively. I hated being overheard, as having an audience made me oddly nervous. Despite my public speaking abilities, I couldn't stand playing the piano in front of people. But as I played a little more, I soon got lost in the song. I started playing more fluidly, closing my eyes as I felt the smooth keys beneath my fingers. I stopped caring if anyone overheard me, and simply felt the music move through me.

I didn't know how long I played for. It could have been minutes or even hours. All I knew was that when I opened my eyes, I wasn't alone anymore.

She was standing by the window, looking out at the city. The sunlight streamed in and illuminated her red hair like fire. She was wearing a light,

loose dress — I never would have admitted it, but I couldn't help but notice that I could see the outline of her shapely body as the sunlight shined through her dress — and was holding her belly with one hand and rubbing it with the other.

Lately, her belly had been growing larger. It was much harder to hide it now that she was a few months along, and werewolf babies were notorious for growing a little faster than human babies. Seeing the protrusion of her round, full belly beneath her dress made me smile just a little bit.

She slowly turned to look at me, noticing that I had stopped playing. There were tears in her beautiful green eyes, although she still held her head high, just like she always did. Flashes of the way that she held herself together, even when my brother had her at gunpoint, floated through my mind as I looked at her.

For a long time, Moana and I just looked at each other without a single word said between us.

During those moments, everything that I had made up my mind about that past week was instantly torn away. As I looked at Moana, seeing how beautiful she looked in the sunlight and the way that the tears in her emerald eyes just made them sparkle even more, I knew that I couldn't leave this place.

This was our home.

Chapter 200 Stay

Moana

Leaving the penthouse broke my heart. That place had become my home. It was our home. I didn't want to leave, and neither did Ella.

I didn't think that Edrick even wanted to leave, either. He kept telling me that it was for the best, that it would be safer at the mountain estate. I wanted to believe him, but part of me didn't think that the mountain estate was all that much safer at all. The last time we had been there, we were almost attacked by a rogue in its wolf form. Even with all of the security guards that Edrick hired, I still didn't think that we were safe.

However, I tried to be understanding, so I didn't complain too much. No matter how much Ella's sadness over leaving her new friends that she made at school made me want to try, I needed to hold my head up. If Edrick thought that it would be better off for everyone if we went to the mountain estate, then I would listen to him. He hadn't failed me before.

As the days went on, I found it harder and harder to pack up my sentimental things. My room felt empty after packing up all of my clothes and my books and art supplies, and Ella's room felt even more empty with her toys packed away. She insisted on keeping her stuffed duck, the one that I had bought for her at the farmers' market over the summer, out for the car ride. Other than that, everything went into boxes for the movers to pick up.

By Friday morning, the day that we were supposed to leave, everything really did feel empty. As I walked around and checked to make sure that I had everything I wanted for the next seven or more months that we would be living at the mountain estate, I had to blink back tears on multiple occasions.

It's only going to be a few months, I told myself, as though that would comfort me. We'll be back in a few months. That's all.

But I didn't think that it was only going to be a few months in reality. One day that week, I had walked past Edrick while he was using his phone and I saw that he was looking at realtors online. He was thinking about selling the penthouse. I decided not to say anything, but the thought of it broke my heart.

As I walked around, I noticed that I had left a few things in my closet that I would want to bring. Sighing, I stooped down to pick up the pile of clothes that had been lost at the back of my closet, and as I did something came to my ears.

Edrick was playing the piano.

It was a sad, sweet song. One of my favorites, actually. The high notes mixed with the severity of the lower keys made for a melancholy tune, which fit the day perfectly. I quickly forgot the things that I had in my hand and walked out toward the sound, almost as though I was in a trance.

As I approached, Edrick didn't seem to notice me. He had his eyes closed, and appeared to be completely absorbed in the music. He looked so handsome playing the piano in the sunlight, with his sleeves rolled up to his elbows and his dark hair a little messy. Smiling slightly, I quietly walked over to the window and looked out while he played on the off chance that he opened his eyes and saw me there. Last time he had played, he didn't want me to look at him. Even though I wanted a snapshot in my mind of the way that he looked just then, I decided to look out at the city instead.

Eventually, the song came to an end and the air in the penthouse fell silent. I felt Edrick's eyes on me, and so I slowly turned. There were tears in my eyes, but I didn't bother to blink them away that time.

For several long moments, we just stared at each other without a word. Edrick's face seemed to soften, and something unrecognizable flashed through his eyes before he stood and slowly walked over to me. His shoes echoed against the wood floor.

When he stopped in front of me, the air between us was almost static. I felt his hand come down and press against mine, against my belly. He held it there firmly so that I could feel his warmth. I tilted my head back to look up at him, and as I did, he bent down and gently pressed his lips against mine.

His lips were warm and soft, and filled me with a sense of peace. Our kiss was long and sweet; when we finally pulled away, it was reluctant, and our lips parted from each other with a gentle smacking sound.

For a few more moments, Edrick touched his forehead to mine before raising his free hand and tucking a strand of hair behind my ear.

"We're staying," he whispered.

My eyes widened. I took a step back, half expecting him to be joking; but he wasn't. His eyes showed nothing but sincerity. "R-Really?" I said.

Edrick nodded. "This is our home," he said. "I can't make us leave."

I couldn't contain my excitement. Without thinking, I let out an excited laugh and threw my arms around him. I kissed him again, more deeply and fervently this time, and when I pulled away my face was red with embarrassment. But Edrick just smiled at me and held me tightly with his eyes full of love.

Suddenly, I heard Ella's little voice call out from the doorway.

“We’re staying?” she asked. Edrick and I both nodded, and while a squeal of happiness, she ran over to us. Edrick scooped her up and held her between us. I felt like a little family; a real one this time. And Edrick was right; this was our home. I still didn’t know what the future held for us now, even though I had marked Edrick, but I was excited about it. I was happy to call him my mate, and to be able to share this life together, even if this life was out of the ordinary.

No matter what came our way, I knew that we could tackle it together. I wasn’t afraid, so long as I had Edrick by my side.

But, at the same time, there was still so much at stake. With my wolf having emerged, I could shift at any time. Not only could the first shifting process be dangerous for our baby in and of itself, but it would also cause my scent to permeate the city, which could lead bounty hunters to us. And one of those hunters was, without a doubt, Edrick’s father.

With Kelly and Ethan both in jail, they were no longer a threat. But all along, I was certain that Michael was plotting something. Perhaps he already knew that I was the Golden Wolf and he would come for me soon.

I had no way of knowing what would happen next. But I did know one thing for certain: with Edrick by my side, everything would be okay.