

## Scars by Jessica Bailey Chapter 17

Chapter 17

Amelie

“BEEP, BEEP, BEEP, BEEP”

“I get it. I’m getting up,” I hit the snooze button again.

Nine minutes later, “BEEP, BEEP, BEEP” screaming at me again than a knock on the door.

“Am, breakfast will be ready soon. I want to see you before we leave.” Hope knows I am not a morning person, and I need to be coaxed.

I flop over on my back, kick off my blanket, “I’ll be right down. Leave me some coffee, or someone might die.”

I hear a laugh, “No worries, we already know.” I hear Hope’s footsteps heading down the hall.

I pull myself out of bed and into the bathroom. Time to get the day started. I turn on the shower and undress. I catch a glimpse of my mate mark in the mirror. Looking at myself naked makes me cringe because that damn mark is staring back at me. It has been about a month since “The Fight,” as it’s called now. I have healed completely and have minimal scarring, considering the extent of my injuries. It was primarily cuts and bruises, a few deep lacerations, nothing compared to what I did to Tate and Karen.

I get into the shower. I know Hope and Celeste will be leaving with Phillip for Texas on an afternoon flight. Celeste is going to make sure everything with the winery is like the reports Phillip has shown. Hope has not let Phillip mark her yet. She says it’s because she wants to meet his Pack fist and get her mother’s approval on the winery business, but I can’t help feeling that she’s pushing it off because of me. I don’t want what happened to me to make her scared of her mate or the mate bond. What happened to me was traumatizing for my whole family. It’s early September now, so they need to travel before snow engulfs the mountains and travel becomes challenging. Celeste will be gone for around a month.

I finish my shower and get dressed. I take a deep breath and put on my best smile before opening the door to face the day with trepidation. It was not that I was being mistreated the opposite. Everyone was overcompensating, and I wanted to scream! I have been going out every night to my mountain clearing just to get away, and dad had me followed; it was as away as I could get. I also needed to harvest some herbs and collect seeds for spring planting. It gave me something of my own to focus on so I wouldn’t go insane. Dad was working on putting my workshop in the house back together. I had one

before I was mated, but I took everything with me. I lost my favorite hammer. What's a girl to do?

I turn the corner, and I am in the family dining room. Celeste, Hope, and Phillip are heading to Rapid City Airport after breakfast to catch their afternoon flight to Austin, Texas. I guess it's going to be the boys and me for a while. "Good morning, everyone! What is on the menu today?"

"Good morning kiddo, I'm hoping for bacon and eggs myself." Dad would eat bacon with every meal if he could.

The swinging door bust open, and who do I see but Becky, pushing a cart of plates again. Celeste was impressed with her skill and dedication during my recovery, so she invites her back for small meals like this. I know she is thrilled to be recognized by the Alpha and Luna. I could not be happier for her. "Good morning, everyone! Since Hope will be heading to Texas to become a Luna, we wanted to celebrate and also welcome Phillip into our Ashwood family." She rushes to put a plant in front of everyone. "I made a medley of three breakfast tacos. The first one is chorizo and egg, the second one bacon and egg, and lastly, eggs potato and cheese. You have fresh pico de gallo, avocado, and salsa vere." Becky gives the biggest smile while waiting nervously for a response.

Phillip was the first to speak up, "Well, thank you, Hun, bless your heart, this looks amazing. Hopefully, it's as good as home." He gives her a smile and a wink.

"I'm just glad there's bacon." Dad puts some pico de gallo on his bacon and egg taco and digs in; we all follow suit. It's a refreshing change from our norm. I take a bit and give Becky a thump up. She shimmies with glee. She's getting better and better.

After everyone enjoys our morning meal, it's time to load up the SUV. James is dropping them off at the airport; two other SUVs will escort him with three guards in each. Two guards will go with Luna Celeste. Ever since "The Fight," dad has insisted on increasing guard detail. Gideon has even sent a few of his investigators to help with border patrols hoping to catch Tate. While the guys are loading the SUVs, I pull Hope aside.

"I know this is scary, and you are moving a long way away, but you were meant to be a Luna. I love you. Don't let what happened to me hold you back. Don't let Tate stand in your way too." I pull her into a hug.

She pulls back slightly, "I know it's just so fresh still. I mean, I know Phillip is not Tate; I'm just scared that once I'm there that he's going to change or start treating me differently." I can see the worry on her face.

"Look at Dad and your mom. They are a fated mated pair. I am not the norm; my situation is the exception. It's the crazy one-off. I can see how much Phillip already

loves you. He treats you like a Queen even when he thinks no one is looking. Let yourself, love." I lean in, putting my forehead to hers.

She giggles, "you're right. I need to let go and follow my heart. I'll facetime you so you can see the Packhouse and Winery. I hear Texas hill country is beautiful. I wish you could come too. I love you, sis." She pulls me in for a big hug.

"I love you too. I'm always just a phone call and plane ride away, OK?" She nods.

Phillip calls for her to get in before they miss their flight. She jumps in the SUV, and they drive off. It's just dad and I standing in the long driveway.

"OK, Amelie, I think we should have that talk we have both been putting off. Come on, my office." Dad pats my back, leading me back into the house.

Once we are in his office, he pulls out a bottle of bourbon and two glasses. "Dad, it's 9 AM. What are you doing?"

He looks at me with one eyebrow raised, "It's 9 AM, and we are werewolves. What's your point?" I cannot argue with his logic. It takes a lot of alcohol to get a werewolf drunk. I would take at least three bottles to get my dad a little tipsy.

"Point taken; I'll take two fingers if you're pouring." He hands me my glass. I take a seat on one of the leather sofas and take a sip. It's mellow and smooth with oak and vanilla notes. Dad sits on the sofa opposite of me, and we are silent for a few minutes, just enjoying each other's presence and the bourbon.

Dad breaks the silence, "Am, kiddo. We have not found any new leads on Tate and Karen. Alpha Gideon has personally taken on the case. He has placed Tate at the top of the most wanted and dangerous list."

I take a deep breath in and let it out, "Well, that's all he can do for now. I don't have any more information to give to help the investigation."

"I know, kiddo, no one expects you to find him yourself. Let's talk about what's next." Dad stands up, places his glass on the coffee table, and walks over to his desk. He unlocks the bottom drawer and pulls out a small wooden box with a lock on it. I already know what it is. My heart sinks.

"You told me when you were recovering that you were planning on completing the Rejection Ritual." He sets the box down on the coffee table, walks over to the built-in book self, and pulls an old book off the shelf. He walks back over to the sofa and takes a seat in front of me again. "This was never something I wanted you ever to have to do." He takes a big gulp of bourbon.

My voice cracks, "I know I don't want to do it if I'm honest, but it's something I have to do."

"Amelie, you are stronger and braver than anyone I know, hell than any warrior from any Pack. You always push forward no matter what and find the best out of any situation." I can see my father's ever-present stoic facade crack in front of me as tears well up in his eyes. He leans over and takes my hand. "Promise me that you will never give up and always push forward. Don't lose who you are again."

Seeing the strongest-willed man I know cry broke me, "I know, dad. I know. I couldn't have done it without you in my corner all this time, and I will need you again soon. I don't know what will happen after this, but I won't ever give up." We both calm ourselves and dry our tears. Neither of us are criers. I sniffle, "Bourbon was a good call." I take a sip, and dad lets out a laugh.

Dad pushes the book and box across the table. "You will need these to complete the ritual. It will have to be done on a new moon out on the mountain. That's in two weeks on a Wednesday. You should find a place that suits you. The guards will stay close enough to get to you quickly but far enough away to give you privacy."

"Thanks, that will be good. I think I already have a place in mind. I'll go check it out tomorrow. Today I think I need to read a bit." I pick up the book. Dad nods with understanding. I put my glass down and also pick up the wood box. Just knowing what's in it makes me feel ill. "Alright, I will be in my room if you need me." I stop at the door and turn around. "One last thing, dad. Can you tell everyone? I mean, I know they are all going to feel it, and I want them to be prepared."

"Yeah, kiddo, I can do that." I walk out of his office with the book and box and head to my room. It's going to be a very long day.