

## Chapter 28 - Rejected Mate's Secret Baby

ELIANA.

It was a dark, cloudy night with the winds growing more forceful with each moment that passed. I stood there with my eyes settling on the bonfire. The flames roared hungrily towards the inky skies. The skies that held the roundest moon I'd seen. The fullest.

Only a few of the Black Mountain Pack had gathered in the woods that night with Beta Cory and his wife, Thelma up front. I was only a few meters away from them when Denver walked up to me.

"Are you ready?" He softly asked, slipping his fingers behind my ears and drawing my eyes to look up at him. My heart throbbed with a little anxiety and the cold impaled the skin across my face. I was flustered but once his hands touched me, blood began to flow again.

"Are you sure you can do this?" I sensed this was the last time Denver was going to ask me that question—the last time I could possibly back down but I shook my head. "I can try" We were too far gone for me to give up now. Denver and I were mates.

And we could go our whole lives punishing ourselves by simply denying our fate or we could come together to make good use of it. The two Packs, both Black Mountain and the Blood Hounds would be united as one as of tonight. That was the plan.

And that way, it would be easier to take down Jaxon.

Tonight has been written down in history since the beginning of time. So I had to get it right, I told myself. I could feel the heat of the cracking bonfire flames against my face and when I looked at Denver, I could see his eyes slowly turn a golden brown color.

He was an Alpha, he could summon his work by command. But I only had just gotten mine. It was obviously going to be a lot harder.

"Close your eyes" He whispered softly and I did. "Take a deep breath, and clear your mind of every thought. The whole world doesn't exist at this moment. It's only you and I and Aria. Call unto her gently, she's always just below, scratching the surface of your humanity" Denver said.

I exhaled deeply through my lips, plunging myself into the darkness behind my eyelids and I tried everything to call on my wolf, Aria. It was harder than I thought.

"It's not working" I opened my eyes.

"Perhaps we need something that could trigger her" Cory stepped forward alongside Thelma. "Like what?" I questioned. "Anger?" Thelma's voice echoed. "It's easier to summon one's wolf when you're angry or in danger and the adrenaline fires up in your chest."

"Or love" Cory added.

"During ours, all it took was a kiss for our wolves to come out. Just like yours did that night" His eyes fell to both Denver and I. "But we would be breaking a rule?" There was a crack in my voice.

"A rule?" Cory was puzzled. "You wouldn't understand" Denver brushed off immediately. "So what are we going to do?" Thelma asked and a thunder rumbled in the skies cued at her words. I looked up and a deep breath escaped my lips. "The rain is imminent, we must hurry up" Cory drew our attention to the limited time.

And after a brief pause, I grunted. "Fine" It was just a kiss. Like the last one, what's the worst that could possibly happen?

"Are you sure about this?" Denver asked. He took my hands. I let him.

Closing my eyes, I whispered. "Yes" The air was tinged with an intoxicating blend of pine and wildflower scents but then I could scent him as well. He was drawing closer and palms where our skin met invoked a primal allure. Denver breathed against my face, slowly.

And even though I was expecting him, his lips still caught mine by surprise. His arms drew me close and I followed like there was some sort of magnetic force between us. Denver's hands cradled my face and at first, my breath hitched before surrendering to the inevitable.

His tongue slipped into my mouth as it fought mine for dominance. He kissed me like his life depended on it. Like lives depended on it. Like I was the only one in the entire world and there was an explosion in my chest, of pent-up desires. His lips, warm and hungry didn't want to stop.

I lost myself in his intoxicating embrace. Time stood still and there were like fireworks that rose from my stomach and into my chest. I wrapped my arms around Denver. He didn't even want to pull away but as the tension reached its zenith, I could feel Aria rise to the surface of my skin.

"It's okay!" Cory had to tear his Alpha away from me as I fell to the ground in my black dress. My eyes glinted. My hands clawed into the earth and my bones started to crack. I groaned but the pain wasn't as intense as the last time.

Somehow, I was able to get it under control.

I didn't care for the peering eyes that watched me. My claws appeared, and I could feel the winds swirl through my silver fur. From my peripheral vision, I caught Denver shifting as well. His voice was deeper and echoing with both anguish and satisfaction.

It took us minutes before we were finally done and when it was all over, a fragile howl escaped my lips. I crouched to the ground when Denver inched closer to me. But when his paws rested on mine, the fire creaked with double the intensity and the night came alive.

"We may begin!"

Cory urged the full moon and the skies electrified with a lightning strike.

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My gaze fell slowly to the ground as I felt Denver creep up to me. He circled around me, a pivotal part of the ritual. Gracefully, I did the same and for a few seconds, we were only going around the bonfire. The night fell silent and the winds quieted.

When we finally came to a halt, our eyes looked up and no surprise that they locked into each other's. Denver's wolf was at least three times bigger than mine. I was like a little pup next to him.

My fur was silver, his was glistening black. I did have a taint red along the lines of my back and he was gray at the exact same spot. I realized this was the first time, I truly saw him.

He sauntered toward me, bridging the gap after circling each other and I knew it was imminent. The moment, we both were waiting for.

The Pack, a silent, expectant audience drew close. His eyes fell on me, both commanding and reassuring with a potent mix of authority and affection. I covered my face down meekly as his growl rumbled from

deep inside his chest. It resonated an echo through the air.

As the tension in the clearing mounted, I laid my eyelids to rest. Denver was a breath away from my face before he lowered his head. And the winds softly carried his heated breaths and with a single, purposeful bite, the Alpha marked me. My Alpha.

I howled a dainty cry as Denver sank his teeth into my fur and flesh. My body tensed with a sensation that was a searing combination of both pain and pleasure as an unbreakable tether formed between us, a connection that bound us for life. This was it. I actually went through with it.

I could hardly believe it.

As soon as my blood dropped to the earth, the Pack arose with a proclamation and a roaring applause. I slowly parted my eyes and it felt like the moon was glowing in my heart. People used to say it was the sun that did that but at times, I thought the moon was more radiant.

More powerful, and this moment was proof.

Even as Denver pulled away, he didn't necessarily leave my side. And the storm of déjà vu whisked me in the face. Eight years ago, we were in this same exact spot, getting married. I once thought that was the happiest day of my life but this, it felt so different.

It felt right.

Like my wolf was finally at peace after being war-torn for so long. Since I was a little girl. I leaned against his forehead and he grunted. And for the first time really, I felt safe.

Once we had shifted back, Thelma was right there with a blanket which she wrapped around my limp, aching body. "You did great, Luna" She said softly. My eyes lifted to Cory who nodded back at me.

He was with the Alpha, a distance from where I stood but I could feel him like he was breathing down my neck. That's the thing with this, Denver could be a universe away but it wouldn't matter.

Because I'd still be able to feel him.

"Come on," Thelma helped me up before combing through my drenched hair. "Let's get you back home" And as she drew my hands, somehow I was still able to look back at Denver. He was already smiling at me when our gazes met. His bare skin was shimmering in sweat.

He was shirtless, standing in a way that fired up my heartbeat. And I pushed a hard lump down my dry throat. Why did I so suddenly want Denver? What was this need to have him?

Like I saw him differently for the first time. I batted my eyes away from him forcefully as I sank my teeth into my lips. My mind raced with the most carnal thoughts before I drove them out.

"Yeah," I staggered forward, holding tighter onto Thelma.

"We should really get back" My breath hitched in my throat and she looked at me. "Are you okay?" A slight chuckle escaped her lips and I nodded my head. "Yes!" It was only Aria who was still beneath the surface of my skin. That was the only explanation.

"I just need a warm shower right now" I added and Thelma smiled. We walked all the way back to the Pack House and she finally drifted once we reached my suite. "You should get some rest. I'll see you tomorrow" She said. "Uh hum" I nodded before closing the door.

I rested my back against it as my heart started to beat erratically. And he was all I could think about in my head. A piercing sound rang through my head before I clamped my ears with my hands.

"Fuck!" I cursed, scurrying my way into the shower when suddenly, there was a knock on my door. I stopped in my tracks immediately, darting a cautious glare back in that direction.

It was him.

I knew, even before I pulled the door open to find him standing in the corridor. His wet hair fell across his face and his body still shimmered in a way that made me wet.

"Are you okay?" His voice was deep and decadent and I nodded with a lump in my throat. "Uh hum" Denver inched closer to the door and I stepped backwards and once he was in, he closed it behind him.

"I just wanted to make sure" He whispered and his eyes flickered with desire. Mine fell to his perfectly sculpted body and before I lifted it again, Denver was only inches away from my face. His hands slipped beneath my chin as he leaned into me. Our lips grazed each other for the second time that night but ultimately, I pulled away.

"What are we doing?" There was a crack in my voice.

"Don't you feel it too?" He asked.

"I want you, Eliana. And I know that you want me too. Tonight is the first of many that we must spend as mates. My heart is unsettled in my chest and my skin wants to tear itself off. My mind is racing and I've almost gone mad. I simply must have you, Eliana" Denver gritted through his teeth before lifting my face again.

I felt it too.

It felt like it was impossible to go through the night without him.

"But the...the rules?" I whispered. He stepped closer. "To hell with the rules." He replied. "We're adults, it doesn't even have to mean anything if you don't want it. It's still an arrangement—" I puckered my lips.

"But it does" I said softly.

And I'd be foolish to think Denver even heard a word I said. His arms wrapped around me, holding my waist into him. He sniffed into my hair and breathed along my neck. I closed my eyes with my heart pounding in my chest. Once again, surrendering to the inevitable.

Denver lifted me into his arms and his hands held firmly clasped my bum.

I looked down at him, my hair in his face. He smiled at me before placing my back against the bed. He leaned in. "God, you're beautiful" He said, before swiping a strand of hair behind my ear.

And it was me who kissed him the second time.

"Fuck it." We might as well break all the rules tonight.

