

Chapter 8 - Of Mate Marks

Miles

I just let my nightly vigil at Paisley's cabin and am on my way to relieve Knight at the main gate. As I approach, I see Knight speaking to a female shifter. When they notice me, she turns to me and smiles—it's Marissa. I am stunned as Marissa is a fugitive. Knight watches my approach warily. Coming to stand with them, I address Knight. "I got this." I say. He nods, handing over his clipboard and radio, he stalks off into the night.

"Marissa." I begin. "What are you doing here?"

I drop the clipboard as Marissa jumps into my arms, wrapping her long legs around my waist. "Miles." She moans. "I missed you."

"What are you doing here Marissa?"

"Well, it turns out I didn't commit a crime after all." She smiles, winding her fingers through my hair. "I came here as soon as I was released."

"I have seen all the news reports, Marissa. You broke out." I push Marissa off me. She stands.

"Technically, I was broken out." She purrs. "But I turned myself in and was released." She pulls some paperwork out of her bag and hands it to me. She's telling the truth, all charges have been dropped and she has been freed. "Miles." she continues. "I would have never let you this time. Please, believe me. I still want to make a go of it." She smiles at me prettily.

I could never deny her anything. That has always been my weakness. "Let's talk to Alpha." She nods, smiling. I mind link Alpha and, fortunately, he is still in his office, even this late. After calling in an elite enforcer to run my perimeter checks, we head to the Alpha's office.

Before I can even knock, Alpha Stone thunders through the door, "Come in, Miles." Marissa and I enter and seat ourselves in the armchairs in front of his desk. Thankfully, Marissa conducts herself with dignity and sits in the chair instead of on my lap as she did last time we were here. She is a cool character. She has a strong Alpha personality and has never been one to show fear. However, she is trembling slightly, probably due to the oppressive angry aura that Alpha Stone is projecting.

"I am guessing you want to petition to become a member of the pack again. Am I correct, Marissa?" Alpha Stone growls. "Please tell me why I would allow such a thing?"

"Alpha—" Marissa begins, but I cut her off.

"Alpha. Marissa has been cleared and all charges have been dropped." Alpha Stone rubs his face, sighing deeply as she hands him the paperwork. "She would like to become a member of the pack and declares she is staying this time." I look at Marissa questionably.

"That's right." She agrees. "I want to settle down here at home with Miles." She plasters on her million watt smile.

"I—" Alpha Stone begins to speak as I cut him off.

"Please, Alpha Stone, with all due respect, let me finish." I plead. He waves his hand as if to say continue. "I have not discussed this with Marissa beforehand, but I want to do so now with you as witness." I look at Marissa who appears confused.

"Marissa, I want you to know that prior to this last time you returned, I had found my true mate." A glimmer of anger or jealousy flashes in her eyes. "She and I had a beautiful relationship and were together for a year before you came back and destroyed me again." Her anger is palpable now. "You say you never want to leave me again. Is that correct?"

"Yes." She says through gritted teeth, her eyes flashing.

"Paisley and I had a commitment." Marissa flinches. "We had a date set for our Wedding, and the night before it was to happen, you reappeared in my life and helped me blow it all up. I was happy. I love her."

She snarls and jumps from her seat growling.

I tug her back to her seat. "What do you expect, Marissa? You have played games with my emotions for years. Now I am torn. But thanks to what you and I have done, I don't even have my true mate anymore. I probably don't even stand a chance with her any longer." I drop my head. At this point, I don't care about the ramifications, I want to speak my truth.

Sighing, I face a livid Marissa and continue. "I love you, Marissa and I have loved you my entire life with all my heart and soul. Your inconsistent behaviors have kept me on edge—leaving and then coming back..."

She has the decency to look guilty at that moment, but remains silent. She has no justification.

"The only way I will take you back is if you make a commitment to me." I demand. "We will have our wedding ceremony tomorrow evening and we will mate and claim each other. You will not only wear my wedding ring, but you will bear my mate mark."

"Miles, you know how I feel about that. It's just a representation, a piece of paper, a ring; all symbols that mean nothing." She protests.

"Symbols that I require if we are to go any further in this relationship. All symbols that Paisley was willing to take and give from the moment I met her, but because of the mind-screw you put me through, I hesitated. Maybe for the best, seeing how I ended up devastating her."

"Oh, poor, perfect Paisley." She spits. "I am sick to death of hearing it, Miles." She stands and walks to the door.

"Before you leave, Marissa, know that there is no coming back this time. These are my requirements, take them or not." I meet her eyes. "If you accept them, I promise to focus on us and put all this behind us, never to mention Paisley again. But in return, you promise to be a faithful, present wife."

Marissa pauses and seems to contemplate her choices. "I do love you, Miles. I know I am flighty. But you are my home." She walks up to me and wraps her arms around my waist. "I agree to your terms and I promise to be a faithful, loving wife." She smiles up at me, her eyes shimmering with unshed tears. "I promise." She whispers, stretching up and kissing me.

Alpha Stone coughs, interrupting the kiss. "Miles, you know I believe in free will in this pack; therefore, I agree to these terms, under the condition that if Marissa ever leaves again, as she has done in the past, she is exiled and banned from the pack. Understood?"

"Yes, Alpha." Marissa and I agree simultaneously.

"Okay, then. Wedding ceremony is tonight. You can choose to mate and mark before or after. We will do the admission into the pack prior to the ceremony."

"Thanks, Alpha." I dip my head as Marissa precedes me out the door.

"And, Miles?"

"Yes, Alpha?"

"Stop stalking Paisley. Your stench is suocating out there." Alpha Blake warns in a low voice.

I drop my head. "Yes, Alpha."

Marissa tenses up beside me, a look of cold anger on her face.

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Paisley

It seems my life is to be endless rounds of torture. On my way to the school this morning, I was waylaid by Marissa. It appears she is back and she wanted to make sure I knew it.

"Paisley, right?" I nod. "I'm Marissa."

"I know who you are." I say calmly.

"Good." She snipes. "I want you to stay away from Miles. He and I are getting married this evening. We have already mated." She tilts her head to the side and pulls her hair back from her neck. My wolf, Juneau, mourns the loss of her mate and, her heart aches as I wonder why I was never good enough for Miles. She is wearing his claim, something he denied me, his true mate.

At least I can take comfort in the fact that I would not have to worry about CMS again. He has claimed Marissa and she has claimed him. Even though I rejected Miles, there is always pain, dulled by the medication I take. Those will go away completely now and I won't have to be medicated any longer.

I take in Marissa's appearance. Physically, Marissa and I are complete opposites. I'm petite and curvy, standing around 5'1", with brown eyes and long blonde hair. While Marissa is willowy and tall at about 5'9". She too is a blonde but with green eyes. She is undeniably beautiful outside, but there is a putrid undertone of creosote lingering in her scent, as if her soul is tainted.

"Do you understand me?" She hisses. "Miles is mine." She pokes her fingers in my chest.

"Miles became yours the night he cheated on me, Marissa." I scoff. "I don't want a male who can be taken so easily. And, I don't take second place to anyone. You are welcome to him." I eye her up and down with disgust.

I sense Miles walking up behind us. Marissa quickly seizes my hand, orchestrating a movement to make it look as though I pushed her. She falls to the ground with a scream. "Miles, help me. She pushed me! I was just trying to be nice and invite her to the wedding." Crocodile tears begin streaming down her cheeks.

Miles rushes to Marissa's side, reaching down to help her up. "Paisley! I can't believe you would actually attack another person." He berates me. "Don't believe you dare touch her again."

Tears prick my eyes. I have lived with Miles for the past year. He knows I would never harm anyone. My heart aches; my wolf howls inside, devastated that her once true mate would treat her so callously. Ignoring him, I know I have to get out of here before I completely break down. "I didn't—I—" I choke out. I straighten myself and address Marissa. "You've made your point! But, I don't play games, nor do I compete for a position. Game, set, and match. You win."

Marissa stutters innocently. "Wha-?"

Miles stares at me, his face clouded with pure confusion, as he holds Marissa next to him protectively. I notice a fleeting glimpse of suspicion in his eyes as he looks at Marissa. He shakes his head as if to clear his mind. Steeling myself, I turn and walk away, holding my head high.

"I'm done," I vow silently to myself.