

The Silent Alpha by StephanieLight Chapter 21

Vanessa***

The light of the full moon illuminates the dark skies as I make my drive through the woods. It was not difficult slipping out of the pack house without anyone noticing.

Christian is always trembling in his office or out in the training grounds pummeling his warriors to a pulp while Derek and Jordan are still trying to find my sister and her little brat.

I was practically running this s**t show off a pack on my own and as my mother-in-law, Kay, always liked to point out, I was not doing very well. But it does not matter.

Things were about to change.

I continue my drive down the winding road deeper into the woods until I reach the small cottage I was told to look for.

The cottage stands slightly at an angle and looks like no one has lived in it for over a decade, overgrown weeds climbing up its wooden walls.

The windows all have metal bars and from where I sit, I can see padlocks on the front door.

A cold shiver runs down my spine but there is no turning back now. I want to turn.

With shaking legs, I climb out of the car and walk down the little path to the front door, cursing myself for being so afraid.

My hand answers it.

“You Vanessa?” she asks in a gruff voice.

“Yes,” I whisper, trying my best to look nonchalant.

“Are you the one they call The Rogue?”

She ignores my question, looking me up and down with judging eyes and gesturing me inside. I follow her into the dark house, the kitchen dimly lit by a small lamp on the counter.

The woman leads me down the dark hall until we reach a room where she knocks just once before opening the door.

Aman sits behind a desk while staring at a laptop, his dark brows furrowed in concentration.

“Do you have your payment?” the man behind the desk asks without lifting his head from the screen.

“Y-yes,” I stammer, pulling out the small manila envelope from my purse and handing it to the blonde woman.

The blonde woman extracts the money and counts it in silence before nodding her head and placing the money on the desk.

“Leave us,” the man waves his hand and the blonde woman retreats into the hall, locking the door behind her.

I feel my nerves return and my legs once again start to shake f**k, am I really doing this?

“So, you’re the human who wants to turn?” The man asks, closing My teeth clench before I finally answer.

“I’m infertile,” I mutter bitterly.

“But werewolves...I heard turning could possibly reverse human ailments...I need to get pregnant.My Alpha needs an heir.” The man weighs my words carefully.

“I see,” he says, leaning back in his chair.

His dark eyes roam my body and I start to feel uncomfortable.I stare back at him with intense eyes, hoping to faze him but he just smirks back at me.

The mysterious man is quite handsome, with dark hair and dark eyes.

His beard is short and well groomed and his ears are pierced.

Waves of rippling muscles are barely contained within his black button up shirt.

“So, let’s talk business then,” the man continues, pressing in a code into what appears to be a safe beneath his desk.

The safe opens with a click and cold smoke emits from the inside.He pulls out three vials of dark liquid and places them on a rack on the desk.

“This is werewolf venom,” he says, pointing to the three vials.

“It’s highly potent.Each vial comes from a different wolf rank.The higher the rank, the greater the risk of death for you.As I said to you before, the safest way to turn is to have your mate turn you.”

“I don’t have a mate,” I retort and The Rogue sighs.

“The first vial here is Omega, then Beta, and finally Alpha,” he adds, lifting the Alpha vial up and inspecting it carefully before wolf.

I stare at the Alpha vial. If I want this to work and for Christian to take me seriously, I'll need to be an Alpha wolf.

"How much for the Alpha?" I ask, knowing very well I had no money left to spare.

The rogue seems to know this too and his eyes once again look me over.

"I think we can make an arrangement," he smirks, his wolf eyes darkening.

I slowly walk over to his desk and sit on his lap, draping my arms around his neck.

"What kind of arrangement?" I purr, playfully tugging at the top button of his shirt.

The Rogue carefully picks up the rack of vials and places them back in the cold safe. He then stands up and bends me over the desk, pulling down my jeans to my ankles.

I hear him fumble with his belt buckle before he pulls out his manhood. I do my best to stand on the balls of my feet and raise my ass a little for better access.

He yanks at my thong, nearly ripping it off and pulls the string off to the side, brushing his tip against my little slit, warm shivers running down my legs to my toes.

It has been a long time since I had a good f**k and I eagerly let The Rogue have his way with me, pounding into my folds until I scream. I grip onto the edge of the desk as I c*m all over him, feeling He pulls his rock hard c**k out of me and rips off my thong and jeans completely. I'm

shoved onto the desk and turned to my side so that my hip bears most of my weight.

He then throws my leg over his shoulder and once again thrusts his hard c**k inside me.

I moan as he fills me up to the hilt and he rocks in and out like a man abandoned in the desert, eager for his first drink. I lose count of how many times I make a payment, but in the end, I get exactly what I came for.

The Rogue takes me to a room much like one in a hospital, with a sterile bed and medical equipment. He instructs me to undress completely and has me lie on the bed.

The blonde woman returns to the room and ties up my hands and feet to the bed.

“Why am I being tied up?” I ask as she closes the cuffs over my wrists.

“The turn is a painful process. This is to hold you in place,” she says with no emotion in her voice.

She then hooks me up to a heart monitor, the machine coming to life with every beat of my heart.

The Rogue extracts the venom from the Alpha vial while the woman ties a rubber band around my arm to make my veins bulge.

“The process is simple,” The Rogue explains.

“You will be injected with the Alpha venom and over the course of the next 12 hours, the venom will infect every cell in your body. It’s going to feel like your that’s normal. When the time’s up, you will be able to hear your wolf but you will not be able to shift into her until the next full

moon. Are you sure you still want this?" He asks, holding the syringe over my arm.

"You're not guaranteed to survive this and once it goes in, there's no turning back. I won't be able to stop the turning if you change your mind."

I nod my head slowly and brace myself for the injection. The thick needle pierces my skin, releasing freezing cold liquid into my veins.

My teeth clench almost immediately as every nerve in my arm begins to burn, as if set on fire. I open my mouth to swallow air but choke on my own scream as the liquid surges through every vein and blood vessel in my body.

My arms and legs go through a cycle of thrashing and stiffening, every muscle becoming exhausted.

Beads of sweat roll down my forehead as I scream for mercy, wanting the pain to stop.

"I told you it would hurt like hell," The Rogue mutters.

"Suck it up!"

Tears blur my vision as I cuss him out, telling him to go f**k himself as black stars cloud my eyes.

My body finally gives out and I tumble into the black abyss.

The cycle repeats itself for several hours, with me waking up in excruciating pain only to black out in agony. I can feel my body on the verge of giving up and I curse myself for doing this. burning sensation

envelops every nerve. I fall into the darkness one last time, my heart sinking to the pit of my stomach as I crash through the emptiness.

Suddenly, the falling stops and I find myself surrounded by water. I thrash my arms around until I reach the surface, realizing I had fallen into what appears to be a lake in the middle of nothing but white light. I'm on the verge of tears finding myself in the middle of a place with no beginning and no end.

What do you do now? I ask myself as I look around white nothingness.

I stop moving my body and immediately start sinking into the water.

In a panic, I once again swim to the surface and realize if I stop moving, I will sink.

Out of options, I force my arms and legs to move forward, not knowing where forward led to.

I swim for what seems like an eternity, my limbs almost numb from the excessive exercise.

To my luck, the depth of the never ending lake grows shallower and shallower until it reaches only to my ankles.

Grateful for the moment of rest, I allow myself to sit on my knees to catch my breath.

I bend my neck low, allowing my hair to cover my face as I listen to the beating of my own heart, the only sound in this soundless place.

“What the f**k am I supposed to do now!” I scream into water, streams of tears flowing down my cheeks.

“f**k! f**k!” something breathing down my exposed neck.

My entire body stiffens like a statue, my breath hitching in the back of my throat.

A low snarl comes from behind me, my hands shaking in my lap.

It takes me a few seconds to muster up the courage, but I finally manage to get on the balls of my feet and very slowly, rotate my body to face the mysterious being behind me. I don't dare look up but a pair of paws come into view through my long hair.

The being snarls again, flaring its nostrils at me as a blast of hot breath blows through my hair.

“What are you?” I ask, my voice small, almost like a child's.

It only snarls in response and I finally force myself to look up, stumbling back when I find a large grey blue wolf standing just a few feet in front of me.

My eyes lock with its sapphire irises, as if in a trance I do not have the strength to break.

For a long time, we just stare at each other, neither of us moving an inch. I lick my dry lips and in a trembling voice ask, “Who are you?”

“Devina,” she replies in a voice of silk.

“Your wolf”

If my legs weren't so weak, I would leap onto my feet and jump with victory.

I have a wolf! Eager to be with her, I reach out to touch her snout when suddenly, she slips right between my fingers, her image crumbling into dust.

“No.....NOOOO!!”

I scream as the beautiful grey wolf disappears of darkness.

Christian’s POV

“We found her,”

Derek sighs into the phone.

“Those rogues dumped her body in a ditch.She’s still alive but just barely.” I grumble in annoyance.

I had Derek and Jordan follow Vanessa because I knew the stupid b***h was up to no good.

Unfortunately, she ended up ina forest riddled with rogues so Derek and Jordan had to keep a low profile and could not stop her from doing anything stupid.

“Take her to the pack hospital,” I snap, “Make sure that b***he is kept alive.”

As much as I would love for her to die, Vanessa is Natalia’s sister and she would never forgive me if I let her sister die.

“Natalia...”

I murmur, missing the way her name rolled off my tongue.I think back to the day we first met.

Vanessa and I had known each other through the University, both of us having been enrolled in a few classes together.

One group project later and she and I were f*****g almost every week but I did notice myself to her. I was still looking for my mate I invited Vanessa.

She showed up with her very shy sister who looked like she would rather be anywhere but there. She didn't talk to anyone and she trailed after her sister like a lost puppy, trying to convince Vanessa to stop drinking.

I found it wildly adorable how she'd protect her sister's drink with her life while Vanessa danced with guy after guy.

I watched her with curiosity while she sat at the bar with a drink in her hand but it wasn't until our eyes met that the world stood still for me.

Mate! Jack cried, head over heels for the short girl sitting alone at the bar.

I made my way through the crowd until I was standing face to face with her.

From up close, I could see every beautiful feature on her face, her luscious lips and her dark eyes.

The incredible scent of her skin made Jack almost go feral and I knew then she was my Luna. I could hear her heart almost skip a bit when I sat next to her despite her cool and uninterested demeanor.

"You know, most people go to parties to have a good time, not sit at a bar all night," I teased her.

"Yeah, well most people aren't dragged to parties by their alcoholic sister to babysit them, now are they?" She retorts, giving me a bored look.

“Who’s your sister?” I ask, already knowing the answer.

“The one currently humping two guys,” she mutters, nodding as I almost laughed but kept my cool.

“And you are?”

“Natalia, but everyone just calls me Talia,” she said nonchalantly, gripping the drink in her hand like her life depended on it.

“Well, I don’t want to be everyone,” I smiled at her, looking at her petite figure.

She was around 5’2 and tiny. Very tiny.

“Tiny,” I smirked at her.

“I’ll call you Tiny.”

Suddenly a thought enters my mind and I grab my phone, dialing my PI (private investigator).

Talia! She went by Talia back then!

“Yes, Mr.Hart, what can I do for you?” the PI replies.

“We’ve been going about this all wrong,” I chastise myself.

“Look for records of a woman going by the name of Talia. The last known record we have of her is in Wyoming a little over four years ago. She was pregnant at the time. She should have a three-year-old kid by now. Occupation is most likely in a hospital,” I add, remembering how Natalia had completed training as both an EMT and medical assistant before she became my Luna.

I can hear the PI jotting down all of this information on the other side of the line.

“I will look into it for you and have a full report within 72 hours,” The PI responds.

“Have a good day Mr.Hart.” I hang up the phone, pleased that things were finally starting to look up for me.

There’s a framed photograph on my desk of Natalia and I taken shortly after our wedding and I hold it between my hands, staring at my beautiful mate smiling at me as I kiss her cheek.

“I bring you home soon, Tiny,” I murmur.

The Silent Alpha by StephanieLight Chapter 22

Chapter 22: Rivers

WARNING

The following chapter contains a scene with self harm and abuse.

Reader discretion is advised, I will place (*) asterisk when the abuse self-harm begins for those of you who wish to Skip.

** ***Zane***

What are you so nervous about? Grayson mutters as we walk over to the main pack house, my legs barely able to drag me to our destination.

We need this training! What use is our gift if we can’t use it? I know he’s right but that doesn’t stop the fear somersaulting in my belly.

My father always said I was weak.

What if my power truly is weak and worthless? Then what? Then we learn to fight like any other f*****g mutt! Grayson growls in annoyance.

Talia and Agnes walk silently behind me, both equally nervous for our first day in our new assignments.

Kota appears to be the only one excited to visit the River Moon wolves.

To keep herself calm, Agnes holds her butterfly in her hand, the beautiful creature crawling along her finger and fluttering its wings.

She had kept it in her room since we arrived in River Moon and it seemed to give her comfort.

I would have to thank Salvador again for Talia fidgets with the sack lunch that I prepared for her this morning, wrinkling the paper bag with her fingers.

To my surprise, she took the lunch willingly and my heart only soared higher when I noticed she was still wearing the gold bracelet I gave her.

I just hope she will still be okay with me when she reads my note today.

Quit worrying.

We were smooth, Grayson grins We finally approach the pack house, Rosalie already waiting for us with her young pup cradled in her arms.

“Come with me Agnes,” She smiles warmly at her before turning to Talia and I.

“Aurora is in the entertainment room waiting for you.”

Talia and I exchange nervous glances and make our way to the entertainment room where we find Aurora sitting on the floor with her

eyes closed, Oliver combing through her hair with tenderness, as if her hair were made of silk.

Evan sits on the couch, watching the two with friendly disgust while Rio sits lazily at his feet.

Oliver leans in close to his mate and kisses her temples, murmuring soothing words in her ears.

The Queen looks completely relaxed in his lap as he begins to gently braid her hair into one long french braid, her breaths slow and steady.

It almost feels wrong to watch such an intimate moment between two loving mates and I feel a pain in my heart.

Would Talia ever trust me enough to let me care for her as the Rio jumps up to greet Kota and the two roll around the floor playfully.

“Please sit,” Aurora says, her eyes fluttering open as Oliver ties up the braid.

Kota stops his play for a moment and we bow our heads in reverence to the timid Queen.

“My sister will be here soon for you, Talia. You can wait here while I take Zane to the training grounds. Kota can stay at the daycare or here with Rosalie and Agnes. It’s up to you and what you feel most comfortable with.”

“Here,” Talia replies almost immediately.

“H-here, please.” The Queen smiles brilliantly at her as she rises to her feet with Oliver’s help.

“Then it shall be so.” Oliver grabs his coat and car keys from the coffee table and prepares to take off.

“Be safe,” Oliver murmurs as he kisses his Queen on the cheek before he glares at me.

“If you hurt her, I will kill you. Understand?” he threatens, his voice a low growl.

I nod obediently, swallowing the lump in my throat.

Aurora rolls her eyes at her mate and pacifies him with a kiss.

“No you will not,” she chuckles.

“You cannot heal on your own,” he argues.

“If he hurts you during training—”

“Then I will heal her,” a woman’s voice calls out from behind us.

“So go huff and puff somewhere else and let my sister train in. We all turn around to the source of the voice and find a small woman identical to Queen Aurora standing by the door.

The only difference between the two appears to be their eyes, with this woman’s eyes being silvery grey while Aurora’s are a golden honey color.

Aurora wastes no time running towards the woman, embracing her in a tight hug.

“You literally see each other every f*****g day,”

Evan exasperates, Oliver rolling his eyes at the gamma wolf.

The small woman lifts her middle finger up at Evan, Aurora giggling hysterically.

“Talia, Zane. This is my twin, Celina,” She says as she steps back from her hug.

“Satan’s spawn is more fitting,”

Evan mutters, Celina sticking her tongue out at him.

“If I’m Satan’s spawn, then what are you? His asshole?”

Celina retorts with a bored look on her face, Talia snorting as she tries to hold back her laughter.

“Anyways, where’s this Talia chick? I’m running late, so we gotta go.”

Talia presents herself and Celina looks her up and down as if assessing her. She then exchanges looks with her sister and sighs.

“Okay, I’m going to say it,” she says, stepping closer to Talia, Aurora giving her sister a warning growl.

“What? We’ve worked too day.”

Storm clouds swirl in Celina’s silver irises as she scowls and points an accusing finger at Talia.

“Watch your f*****g attitude,” she warns.

“I don’t give a f**k about your ex or what you’ve been through because I can guarantee, our girls have gone through far worse. They need someone who won’t flinch away from them or look at them like they’re maggots. They’re broken and they need help. I’m not taking you anywhere

until you promise Aurora and I that you will set aside your own feelings and help me take care of these girls.”

A calm but stern look washes over Celina’s face as she crosses her arms and waits for a response.

“I promise,” Talia nods, never once flinching from the cold tone in Celina’s voice.

Celina stares intently at her as if to catch any hesitation but Talia remains unfazed, as if used to being scrutinized by others.

“I like her,” Celina suddenly turns to her sister and smiles at her.

“She’s a b***h like me.” Aurora shakes her head disapprovingly at her sister and clears her throat.

“She didn’t mean that.”

“No, I most definitely did,” her sister shrugs with an innocent smile on her face.

“Now let’s go. We have a long day ahead of us.”

She grabs Talia’s hand and before I even blink an eye, the two women vanish into thin air wrapping his arms around my legs.

“Mommy will be back later tonight,”

Aurora reassures, getting down on her knees and speaking in a soothing tone to the little boy.

“In the meantime, you can stay here and play with Rio. Would you like that?” Kota grins and nods.

Aurora instructs Evan to take Kota upstairs to Rosalie's office before the three of us walk to the training grounds.

My hands shake uncontrollably at the thought of using my gifts so I shove them in my pockets, willing myself to calm down.

"Don't worry" Aurora reassures as we arrive to the grounds.

"Today is all about exploring your ability and helping you figure out exactly what you can do."

The entire training grounds is empty, with all of the equipment stored away and all trainers and fighters gone.

"I had the grounds cleared for us to work in peace," she smiles sheepishly as she leads me to a sparing circle.

"I figured you wouldn't want an audience today." She turns to Evan and grins.

"Evan can leave too."

"Not a chance," he replies, sitting down on a bench.

Aurora heaves a heavy sigh and rolls her neck.

"Okay, so let's see what you can do." I remain frozen in place, unsure what to do with myself but Aurora once again offers a reassuring smile.

Her calm voice enters my "Telepathy can be a little scary at first. It's a lot of voices in your head and they can be...overwhelming."

She says, sitting down and patting the ground in front of her, urging me to do the same.

“How did you know I was a telepath?” I ask as I take a seat before her.

“I can sense your walls,” she says, her eyes scanning me thoroughly.

“The only other person I know with walls is my sister and she is also a telepath. The walls help block out the voices and keep out intruders. I can usually make my way into a person’s thoughts and their memories without them noticing but it wasn’t so easy getting into your head. It was like there was this massive force trying to push me out,” she says, miming an unseen force in front of her.

“I got into your thoughts with a little push but you felt me enter your memories ...didn’t you?” I nod, remembering the pinch in my temples when she entered my memories and saw my past.

“Does your wolf help you with your gifts?” she asks.

No, Grayson snarls.

He locked me out for years! It wasn’t until Talia came into the picture that the bastard finally let me through.

Because you didn’t help! I argue.

Because you didn’t trust me! Aurora frowns at us.

“Enough! There’s no point in blaming each other. This just means you both need to learn to work together. Let’s frown my brows at her.”

“I thought I already was...”

“No, she chuckles softly.”

“I made our connection. I’m inside your head. Now I want you to do the same with me and make a new connection.”

“How?” I ask, growing nervous with hurting her as I remember all the failed attempts I had made on Agnes.

She would go into a catatonic state for hours after my attempts of reading her mind on purpose. I couldn't do that to the Queen.

The Queen says nothing for a moment and I fear she has already cut our connection and is now expecting me to make contact but she only smiles at me, holding out her palm.

Out of thin air, a small ball of fire forms inside her palm and she cradles the flame like a fragile flower.

“You have a lot of fears, Zane...” she murmurs.

“And that is very dangerous. Fear and anger make you irrational....they make you lose control.”

As if to demonstrate, the flames in her palm grow bigger until they engulf her entire fist.

“You can hurt a lot of people unintentionally by letting your fears get the best of you,” She adds, the violet flame growing hotter.

“As you can see, I can manipulate the fire element but it is very difficult to control. My flames are fueled by my emotions and if I let them get the best of me, I can lose control. I stare at the large flame nervously to my fears...” she closes her palm, the flames going out in an instant.

“I became the one who controls the flames. It's the same principle for you if you ever want to control your gift. You need to learn to let go of your fears and trust in your wolf to guide you.”

“I don't know if I can do that..” I mutter.

“You’ll never know if you don’t give him a chance to show you his worth,” She smiles.

“Just like you seek a connection with your mate, Grayson seeks a connection with you.” I don’t like him, Grayson mutters.

He’s an i**t.

Aurora frowns at me.

“You will not earn his trust by belittling him, “she says sternly, Grayson rolling his eyes at her.”

“Don’t make him fear more ashamed of himself than he already is, Wolf You know his pain better than anyone.” He doesn’t trust me! Grayson snarls .

I watched for years what Dad did to us and did he ever let me in to help? No! He put me in a corner and forced me to watch him suffer! I could feel the hurt in his voice as he growled out his frustration.

“I...didn’t even like myself...” I reply.

“I didn’t think you’d like me either or want to help...so I thought it was better to put you away.”

Grayson doesn’t reply, wallowing in his own frustration.

“ I stare at my hands, afraid to look Aurora in the eyes but she suddenly moves closer to me and holds my wrists care or listen,” she says quietly.

“But Grayson is your other half and he will never leave your side...no matter how much you hurt him.He is part of your soul.” I pull at the mat on the ground before I finally speak to Grayson.

“I’m sorry.I’m sorry I locked you out.I didn’t know what else to doI whisper.I’m sorry too, hesighs.I should have fought harder to break through.”

“Okay...this is good, ” Aurora smiles.

“Now work together to enter my head.I’ll put my walls down to make this easier-”

“But how do I enter your mind ? ” I ask, looking over at Evan who looks bored by our silent staring contest.

“Every time I enter someone’s head on purpose, I hurt them. ” Aurora nods as she assesses my concerns before replying.

“Think of thoughts as rivers.

All of them are flowing at different speeds and currents and unfortunately, they are all coming towards you.

You, however, have the power to build dams and slow the rivers down or stop them completely from coming at you.

To enter my mind, all you really have to do is let my thoughts come through.

Build a dam to block the other rivers you hear.

It’s not about forcing your way into my head, it’s about letting the river flow between us.

Once the connection flows between us, you can build little dams and slow down the current of information that’s coming at you so that you

can. She closes our connection and sits patiently across from me, closing her eyes and giving me her trust.

Okay, we can do this ... I reassure myself, closing my eyes and stepping into the dark abyss of my mind. Just let the voices flow like a river...

Grayson encourages. I slowly let my walls down, both Evan and Aurora's voices entering my mind at incredible speed. I almost put up the wall again when Grayson's voice comes through.

Build the dams and slow the rivers down... he reminds me.

I imagine myself physically blocking the voices and they start to slow down until I can understand them.

"Why are they just sitting on the floor with their eyes closed? Are they meditating?" Evan's thoughts come through.

I build a dam until Evan's voice fades out, leaving me only with Aurora's.

"Can you hear me?" I call out, nervous as hell that I may hurt her.

"Yes" she cries.

"You are doing so good! Don't be afraid. Make your way around if you like. What do you see?"

"Nothing" I mumble, looking around at the empty blackness.

"That's okay," she says.

"Just listen to the thoughts. Follow the river."

pitch black, I suddenly hear a small scream, so faint, I almost don't hear it.

Follow it, Grayson instructs. I walk into the emptiness where the sound came from until I hear it again, this time louder, sharper, more desperate.

A sudden bright flash blurs my vision and my eyes burst open so that a ray of light beams out of them like a movie projector, small images taking form on the ground in front of me.

Aurora and Evan gather around me and stare at memories that play like a film for us to watch. It appears to be a memory playing from Aurora's point of view and we see several kids gathering around her, holding their books and backpacks up like weapons.

They seem to have cornered her at the back of a bus, Aurora cowering on the ground with her arms raised above her head.

Aurora looks up at the bus driver as if begging for help but he does nothing, ignoring the cruelty that is about to take place.

The kids throw the books at her, spitting on her and kicking her until they grow bored and settle back into their seats.

The memory blurs for a moment before coming into focus again.

Aurora remains on the floor, too afraid to move until the bus comes to a halt at a pack, most of the kids eager to get off.

Aurora gathers herself off the floor, limping to the front while wiping the blood off her face.

The bus driver doesn't even spare her a second glance, snapping at her to hurry up and get off.

memory blurs even further from her tears as she stumbles her way down a road until she reaches a large pack house.

She uses a back entrance and silently limps down to the basement, throwing her tattered backpack on an old cot. She gets down on her knees and shoves her hand under the cot until she finds a small sharp razor.

Blinking away her tears, she waddles over to the bathroom.

My heart sinks to the pit of my stomach as I watch her lock the door with shaking hands.

She covers the mirror with a large towel, her eyes refusing to meet her reflection.

Aurora turns on the cold faucet and holds her wrist over the sink, revealing a sea of scars on her tender flesh.

I want to stop the memory but I can seem to close my eyes as I watch in horror what Aurora does next.

The razor breaks through the skin with ease as Aurora slides it across her wrist, a trail of blood following in its wake.

Blood trickles down her arm into the sink but she only raises the blade again and makes a second cut, throwing her head back in pain... and relief.

Unable to watch any further, I force my eyes shut, tears spilling onto my cheeks.

For a long time, the three of us remain frozen in place, none of us uttering a word about what we just witnessed until Evan breaks the silence, shifting into a large brown wolf with green eyes.

His wolf settles beside his Queen, laying his head on her lap and “It’s alright, Bodhi,” she soothes him as he whimpers.

“I survived.I’m okay now.”

Bodhi (Evan’s wolf) only whines, his heart breaking for his Luna.

As her gamma, he felt her pain almost as if it were his own and it hurt him to see her so broken at one point.

“I am so sorry,” I say through our connection.

” I didn’t know...I didn’t know that-”

Despite the tears in her eyes, she smiles warmly at me.

“It’s not your fault...” she sighs.

“At least now we know that you cannot only see and hear my thoughts and memories, but you can also project them out for others to see.Even I cannot do that.I can still sense a lot of power in you so it’s likely there’s more to your gift.We’ll just have to keep practicing.”

I am both shocked and relieved that she is not angry with me for exposing such a sensitive memory to her gamma and that she is willing to continue our training.

“I think this is a good place to stop for now...”she says, stroking Bodhi’s head.

“We can pick it up again tomorrow when both Evan and I feel...better.”

Bodhi rises to his feet, nudging the Queen with his head to get on his back.

Aurora obliges, climbing onto her gamma and the three of us return to the Pack house.

The Silent Alpha by StephanieLight Chapter 23

Chapter 23: Identity he

“Agnes** *

My little butterfly flutters around the room, its iridescent wings catching the light that filters in through the window.

On the floor, Kota watches a Disney film with Rio by his side, large headphones blocking out the rest of the world to him.

Rosalie types away at her desk, looking over hundreds of spreadsheets and developing promotional content for her pack’s company. She is the Head Social Media coordinator in charge of the company’s social media presence.

As she works, she instructs me to give her pup, Emile, a bath and put him to sleep. I execute the task with great care, preparing a warm bath with little bubbles.

Emile seems to enjoy the bath, his eyes widening as I pour a little water over his hair and his legs kicking frantically with excitement.

He likes the water...my wolf, Cynthia smiles.

Just like Archie.

An overwhelming sadness fills my heart as I look down at the small happy pup in my arms, seeing in him the little boy I had lost long before I became Zane’s mother.

He's with his father now, Cynthia tries to comfort me but it's no use.

There would forever be a small hole in my heart...all because of My life as a Ravenstone wolf was by no means perfect.

Being deaf, I was always pushed around and made fun of for being unable to talk or hear.

While my parents never said it, I knew they were ashamed to have a deaf daughter and Alpha Tristan (Alpha Toran's father and former Alpha of Ravenstone) would not have hesitated to get rid of me were it not for the fact that my father was the gamma's younger brother. I learned early on that it was best to stay out of the Alpha's way and be invisible.

But Damon saw me, and he never stopped seeing me.

Growing up, none of the other pups understood me nor did they bother to try. I was too strange because I talked with my hands and made weird sounds whenever I tried to speak.

But as Moon Goddess would have it, I met my mate in a sandbox of all places.

He wanted to know why I played with the sand all by myself and never joined in on the games with the other pups. He wanted to know why I used my hands instead of my words.

When Damon realized I could not hear, he brought me a notebook and wrote down all of his favorite things to do in it so that we could do them together.

Hide and seek, tag, and mancala were among our favorite games to play together.

I taught him how to sign and he taught me how to hear with my eyes and feet.

His father was learned to stay vigilant, like relying more on my nose and my sense of touch.

I was devastated the day of my first shift when I realized my wolf was as deaf as I was. I had held onto the hope that I could hear in her form, but Moon Goddess did not grant me that gift.

“You are not useless,” Damon told me as I shifted back into my human form and burst into tears.

“You are just different.”

Those simple words helped soothe my broken heart and I learned to accept myself as I was.

The day of Damon’s 18th birthday will forever be one of the greatest days of my life.

He did not hesitate to claim me as his mate, marking me that very same day.

I was only 16 but my parents were overjoyed that I would not spend the rest of my life in loneliness as they had expected me to.

With Alpha Toran’s permission, I was allowed to move in with Damon as his wife despite not being a matured wolf yet.

Neither Damon nor I were ready to start a family, so we focused on building our home and becoming contributing members of the pack.

Damon became a hunter like his father while I finished school and worked at the pack library as a custodian.

Damon was overjoyed to be a father.

He got to work building the nursery, putting special attention to every corner of our pup's room and child proofing virtually every room in the house.

Despite the joy, I was nervous about being a mother.

“What if he is deaf like me?”

I cried one night “Then we will love him,”

He replied as he wiped away my tears.

“And he will know love like no other.”

He quelled all of my fears with his kisses and his love, reassuring me that there was nothing wrong with my deafness.

Our pup came without trouble and he was the most beautiful boy my eyes had ever seen.

Archie's big blue eyes were shaded by a pair of thick long lashes like his father's and he had my dirty blonde hair.

No sign could describe the joy I felt when I held him in my arms for the first time.

Archie responded well to auditory stimulation like bells or the sound of his father's voice, asserting that he was not deaf at all.

Damon was a doting father, spending every second he could with sleep in the middle of the night.

“Go back to sleep,” he'd sign.

“I’ve got Archie.”

While our small family was not rich and we could barely make ends meet, our life was perfect.

Damon loved me and I loved him.

We had a healthy pup and a house to call our own. We had everything...

Until that fateful day Scarlet Haven attacked.

Scarlet Haven and Ravenstone were once close allies, but that all came crashing down the day Alpha Toran discovered Alpha Cyrus and Luna Bre’s betrayal.

This would mark the beginning of a vicious and bloody war.

Alpha Toran was determined to see Scarlet Haven burn to the ground and he killed Alpha Cyrus.

When Cyrus’s younger brother, Sebastian, took over, Alpha Toran wanted to send a message to young new Alpha, killing both his first-born son, Jonathan and then later his wife, Eleanor.

It was an unthinkable act, but Alpha Sebastian would go on to commit an even greater war crime a pack could ever undertake.

With Damon and I both working full-time, I was forced to sign Archie up in the pack daycare program.

On a day like any other, I it would be the last time I would ever see him.

That morning, four unlabeled packages were delivered to the daycare and at around noon, a large tremor was felt throughout the pack.

I ran out of the library as quickly as I could to see what all the commotion was about and to my horror, I saw the collapsed daycare center In the distance, the burning building giving off a stench of burnt flesh.

There were no survivors, all 26 pups and their accompanying teachers perishing in the explosion.

From then on, the war intensified, Damon volunteering to be a soldier in the name of our son.

I could not convince him otherwise and I lost my husband in the war just one month after losing my pup.I was devoid of all feelings, my heart shriveling up to the size of a shrimp.I could no longer find joy or peace, waking up every night in a puddle of tears and loneliness.

The day Alpha Toran called me to his office, I was more than ready to be cast out as a rogue.I craved It for I saw no purpose in

“I suspect Sebastian’s second son still lives,” he wrote to me as I sat silently in his office.

“Do you want revenge for your son and mate?” I sat there staring at the question on the sheet of paper, understanding the individual words but struggling to comprehend their intention.

“We never did find Sebastian’s secret heir, not even during the attack of the King’s birthday,” Alpha Toran explained.

“I suspect he’s kept the child hidden in the pack house which he has turned into a fortress my men cannot penetrate.”

“I don’t understand,” I replied, my trembling hands struggling to hold the pen to the sheet of paper.

“How could I possibly be of any service and get revenge?” The Alpha smiled wickedly at me, twirling a strand of my hair between his fingers.

“You are weak, there’s no doubt about that. A wolf of your caliber is virtually useless to any pack,” he wrote, his sinister smile never I stared at his bitter words before he continued to write.

“I want you to become a rogue stumbling through woods on the edge of their territory,” he explained.

“Sebastian will either take pity on your pathetic state and take you in, allowing you to find the hidden heir and kill him...” I read the words, gasping at the thought of taking a child’s life.

“Or...” the Alpha continued.

“He may kill you on sight, which I assume is a viable option for you, all things considered,” he shrugged, his eyes scanning my poor state of health.

My cheeks were hollowed out from lack of eating and my once bright eyes were now dull and had dark circles under them.

I shake my head at him. I had lost a child. I could not do the same to another man, not even to the man who took mine.

The Alpha smirked once more, unfazed by my lack of interest in revenge.

“Agnes, I’m not giving you an option,” he smiled.

“You are but a useless mouth to feed. I don’t have room for a worthless mutt like you in a time of war. You will be a rogue whether you accept my proposal or not,” he shrugged.

“However, if you take on my proposal, you will have the added satisfaction of having destroyed the man who took not only your pup, but the only man dumb enough to accept you for a mate.” The Alpha leans back in his chair as I read my fate.

“The choice is yours, my dear Agnes,” he adds on a separate sheet of paper.

“Will you die a worthless mutt in the woods, raped and killed by other rogues...or will you die a hero and end this war so that no other Ravenstone wolf ever has to fear for their pup again?”

My shoulders shook violently as I sobbed with frustration.

Why hadn't Moon Goddess taken me with my family? With a broken and angered heart, I accepted my new mission and was stripped of my omega status to become a full-fledged rogue.

Three guards escorted me out of the pack and to my horror, took advantage of me.

I was mercilessly beaten and assaulted, the guards claiming it would help me look more believable to Alpha. With trembling legs and no will left to live, I walked through the cold forest on my own for a few days, narrowly escaping other rogues in the woods.

Damon's tricks came of use to me, and I managed to navigate my way to Sebastian's territory, a group of guards finding me on the edge of Scarlet Haven grounds.

They brought me before the Alpha and I finally put a face to the man that killed my son and took my mate.

My hatred was almost instant and I vowed then and there to find his hidden heir and kill him.

To my surprise, Sebastian led me into his home and took me straight to the child he had kept a secret for years.

All of my anger melted away as I looked into the eyes of the little broken boy locked away in a hidden part of the house.

He trembled in the presence of his father, as if he were afraid to breathe the same air as him.

I knew instantly Zane was just another victim of the war, another pup whose life was taken from him.

A small pain filled my heart as I saw my beautiful Archie in his eyes and I made the realization that this was Moon Goddess's plan all along.

Zane lost his family and I lost mine.

We were two broken wolves brought together by tragedy.

Revenge left my heart and all I wanted was to protect the innocent little boy staring at me with fear in his eyes.

It's been 20 years since I lost Damon and Archie and while the pain has never faded, Zane has filled my heart with joy and laughter.

I have learned to smile again, to find beauty in a place full of ugly pain and secrets.

Zane is my sweet little boy and I would never let Sebastian or Toran hurt him...

Emile smiles as I finish rinsing out his little hairs and I carefully lift him out of the bath, drying him off with his towel and dressing him.

I carry the little pup back to the nursery where I find Kota still watching his film with Rio.

Emile blinks sleepily as I set him down in his rocker, and I gently rock him to sleep.

Kota crawls over to peek at the sleeping pup, asking me a question I cannot understand.

He tilts his head to the side as he waits for an answer but I only smile at the curious pup, placing my finger against my lips to tell him to be quiet so the baby can sleep.

Little vibrations tremble beneath my feet and I look up to find Zane at the door, a gentle smile on his lips.

Kota races to greet Zane, jumping in his arms and laughing.

The two speak for a little while, my heart swelling with joy that my Zane has found his own little boy to love.

“How was your morning, mom?” he signs, walking over to me and kissing me on the forehead.

“It was good,” I reply.

“Did your training go well?”

“Define well,” He smiles nervously, and I frown at him.

“You have to be patient with yourself,” I remind him, knowing how much figuring out his gift meant to him.

I do not fear him seeing my memories and finding out who I once was.

If anything, I wanted him to know that I once had a beautiful boy and a loving husband, that I once knew a love far greater than most wolves

would ever experience and that I hoped he would one day find love himself...

“You will learn to control it soon enough,” I add, cupping his cheeks.

“Trust yourself.”

The Silent Alpha by StephanieLight Chapter 24

Chapter 24: The Wolf Within

Jane

After a quick lunch, Kota begs me for a game of hide and seek, arguing his case by giving me a pair of cute puppy eyes.

The little boy grins triumphantly when I give in, and he asks permission from Aurora for Rio to join us. We walk around the pack for a little while until we find a quiet little patch of trees for us to play in undisturbed.

Kota and Rio take off, leaving me in the middle of a clearing to count out loud.

“O-one...Two...Th-Three...F-F-Four...”

I grow embarrassed as I stumble through the numbers and begin to count quietly to myself until I reach twenty.

“He-Here I c-come Kota!” I call out, my eyes scanning the trees for any signs of the boy.

I sniff the air, catching his scent lingering in the wind.

This is probably the worst game to play with a wolf, Grayson chuckles to himself.

ignore his comment, pretending to look among the bushes for the hiding pup.

An unfamiliar scent suddenly brushes against my nose, the hairs on the back of my neck standing on end.

Something's wrong, Grayson observes, my ears picking up the sound of rustling in the distance accompanied by the low rumble of a snarl.

Grayson wastes no time taking control and shifting mid-sprint as we follow the sound of Rio's barking and Kota's cries.

Please be okay, please be okay, please be okay, I pray to my dear Moon Goddess, my heart racing at the thought of Kota being hurt.

We sprint through the trees until we see a small clearing up ahead, Kota's scent guiding us to him.

Grayson breaks through the trees and into a clearing, a group of large unfamiliar wolves gathering in the middle as Rio barks up a storm at the intruders.

They don't appear to be rogues, their fur shiny and well-groomed and their build strong and muscular.

Two of them appear to be Alphas, their fur black as night and both bearing a single white spot on their foreheads, the symbol of an Alpha lineage among normal alpha wolves.

One appears to be older than the other, an air of power surrounding the older one.

The younger of the Alpha's has Kota in his jaws by the collar of his shirt, Kota's cheeks stained with tears.

It's enough to send Grayson into a blind fury, but before he can pounce, three River Moon guards come sprinting into the clearing in their wolf form to stand between the Alphas and I.

Grayson snarls and pushes past the guards, baring his teeth at the Alpha holding Kota hostage.

The Alpha scans me with judging eyes, an air of arrogance to him as he puffs out his chest to assert his is.

The bastard had our pup, and we were getting him back.

"Zane! Mommy!" Kota whimpers, large tears rolling down his cheeks.

Remembering my training with Aurora this morning, I lower down my walls and listen to the many rivers of thoughts flooding my mind until I figure out the Alpha's voice.

I build my imaginary dams so that his voice is the only one I hear.

"Whe the f**k does this silver wolf think he is to challenge me? " The Alpha thinks to himself, Grayson snarling in response.

"You would do well to put the pup down," Grayson growls, his lips curling back while his fur bristles.

"Unless you want me to rearrange the little stain on your face!"

The Alpha stares at me for a moment, a bit shocked to hear my wolf's voice inside his head.

"How the--"

"It said put my pup down!"

Grayson commands, the Alpha's body suddenly tensing as if in a trance.

Asheer black film glazes over the Alpha's eyes before he gently sets Kota down in front of him, his eyes returning back to normal when he looks up at me.

Rio rushes to comfort Kota, licking away his tears as he sobs. I step forward, placing my large paws on either side of Kota to protect him with my frame while I glare at the two Alphas and their friends.

The River Moon guards howl an alert and the once silent forest fills
Tearing down the dams I built, I fill the intruders' minds with my commands.

"Step back!" I snap, a black film glazing over their eyes as they carry out my order.

Kota shivers beneath me as he clutches Rio by the neck, his little whimpers breaking my heart.

Never in my life do I ever want to see him so scared again.

Grayson looks down at the small pup between his legs and nuzzles his face, licking away the tears on his cheeks.

"It's okay, Kota. I'm here _"

I whisper, opening a connection between us.

His large eyes widen as he looks up at me, his fears melting away when he recognizes my eyes which have shifted back to their warm brown color.

"Zane?" he asks, timidly reaching out his small hand to pet my snout.

I lean into his hand, letting his fingers stroke my fur. A small smile curls on his lips, his heart which had been racing, finally calming down

“Hi, Kota,” I murmur, Kota burying his face in my furry neck. A portal opens beside me, Aurora stepping through it with Evan at her side.

He’s in his wolf form and he does not look happy to see the intruding Alphas and their wolves.

The wolves all bow before the on high alert as more guards arrive at the scene.

“Are you alright?” Aurora asks, a look of worry on her face when she sees Kota snuggling up against my chest.

I nod to reassure her the pup is fine, relief washing over her face before she turns to the intruders.

“Alpha Jacque,” Aurora acknowledges the older Alpha, her face calm and collected despite the coldness in her tone.

“To what do we owe your visit?” The elder Alpha shifts into an older, tall man with salt and pepper hair, a cruel scowl folded in the light wrinkles surrounding his eyes.

Aurora resists the urge to cower, holding her head high as she smiles politely to the Alpha.

“I do not speak with little girls,”

Alpha Jacque replies, his eyes filling with disgust when he glances at the wedding band on her finger.

“I’m here to speak with Oliver about my daughter.”

Evan and the guards snarl at his disrespect towards their Queen but her smile never falters.

“Then, I’m afraid you have wasted your time, Alpha,” Aurora replies, turning on her heel to face me.

“May you have a safe flight back to France,” she adds over her shoulder.

The younger Alpha snarls and lunges at her for turning her back on them, but Aurora doesn’t miss a beat, thorny vines sprouting from the earth to shield her from his attack.

The young Alpha whines in pain when the vines wrap around his limbs, Evan smirking at the i****t Kota begins to cry as the wolf writhes in pain beside us, digging his little fingers into my fur for protection and I turn my body to shield him from the sight.

“Take Dakota home, Zane,”

Aurora instructs as she simultaneously levitates Kota onto my back and creates a cocoon of vines around the young Alpha. I waste no time and take off back towards the guest house, maneuvering carefully through to trees.

“Just hang on Kota,” I said to him.

“We’re almost home.” He replies with a small whimper, his arms wrapped tightly around my neck.

When we arrive at the lawn in front of the guest house, I slowly lower myself until I lay flat on my stomach, attempting to coax Kota off my back.

At first, he refuses, trembling in fear, but after I begin to lie on my side, he finally climbs off.

Grayson licks him clean, inspecting him for any wounds and to my relief, we find that he is unharmed.

He sits on the patch of grass in front of me, Grayson laying his big head on Kota's lap.

I can hear his little heart beating in his chest as he rests his chin on top of my head and holds me. I know Talia will be furious that I broke a rule in our contract, and it scares me, but I do not regret showing Kota my wolf.

He needed me ...and I came.

Kota is our pup now, Grayson declares, nuzzling his head against I the little boy. He should know who I am. I just hope Talia feels the same way.

The Silent Alpha by StephanieLight Chapter 25

Chapter 25: Help

Talla'

It turns out the pack clinic is not really a clinic at all, but instead a full blown hospital meant to care for its ever growing pack.

The three story building has a pediatric wing and OBGYN on the first floor, labs and OR rooms on the second floor and the refugee women placed temporarily on the third floor.

The first floor was once the infirmary but with Celina, Aurora, and Valentina being healers, it was no longer needed and the hospital was rearranged to house the Amethyst women and children.

Celina briefs me on the work they've been doing with the girls as we make our way to the third floor.

"About 200 men, women and children were rescued from Amethyst Lake, half of which live here on the third floor while the rest are at Lluvia Blanca," she explains, my eyes growing wide at the sheer amount of survivors from the fallen pack.

"Thirty men were rescued with the women, most of them victims of the no mate rule Nikolai imposed against them. They are good men who just want to love their mates, so we are not really concerned about them being here. Only authorized and mated males are allowed on the third floor," she continues.

"We don't need an unmated male going crazy and assaulting one of our girls if she goes into heat. You'll see authorized badge." The living arrangements are pretty clear.

We prioritized preserving family units so mothers, children and mated pairs are roomed together while unmated women and siblings are housed together, three or four to a room.

Many of the orphaned children were adopted either by some of the women here or by members of the Kingdom who were willing and able to take on a child or two.

No one here is a prisoner.

They can come and go as they please.

Most, though, prefer to stay here and only go out when there's a group activity.

We're still working on them gaining confidence to be independent but it will be a while before all of them are comfortable being on their own.

Our main job here is to make sure they feel safe on their own and provide a learning environment where they can grow and develop as individuals.

Our volunteers take turns cooking meals, taking the girls on trips to the city, and holding vocational and self defense training.

We want the girls to be independent by the time the pack renovations are complete, so that they will be able to move into their apartments and be functional members of the kingdom.”

She smiles brightly as she explains her hopes for the women, her eyes twinkling with the same passion as Aurora’s.

She gives me a few pointers on how to behave with the girls, emphasizing patience and asking for consent whenever possible to make them feel in control of their lives and decisions trip,” She shrugs.

“Part of our job is helping them feel confident in their own skin and having them see their own worth.Plus going out helps them feel like real people and gives them something to look forward to.”

We enter the third floor where a group of women are gathered around the large recreational area.

Upon seeing Celina, the girls rush to greet her, all of them bowing giddily.

Among the girls is Nadia, the Amethyst wolf I met yesterday.She waves timidly at me, her cheeks blushing as I smile back and wave.

“Guess who gave me his black card?” Celina wiggles her brows, the girls bubbling with excitement.

“Alpha Javier will be hosting today’s shopping spree!” Celina splits the girls into two groups of 10 and assigns them all into a van driven by the three authorized male guards, William, Hayden, and Cory.

The girls seem comfortable with the guards, some joking and laughing with them as we walk into the mall.

Nadia seems a bit smitten with William, but keeps her distance, walking quietly alongside me with her eyes cast down to avoid any eye contact with anyone.

“Would you like to hold my hand?” I ask her, holding out my palm for her to take, hoping to make her feel more comfortable.

“I-it’s okay,” she smiles sheepishly.

“You don’t have too-”

“I don’t mind,” I reply, thinking of the many times Zane calmed me down by simply holding my hand.

“Sometimes we all need Nadia timidly places her hand in mine, her palms a little sweaty and shaky. I feel a small pinch in my heart. How cruel must her life have been for her to be this timid in a shopping mall, afraid to look anyone in the eye? Celina leads us into a little boutique with beautiful summer dresses in the window display, instructing the girls to each pick a dress.

“You are all such beautiful girls,” she says to the group.

“But you have to feel it for yourselves. I can’t always be the one telling you. So pick address and see for yourselves just how perfect you all are.” Several of the girls look nervous but Celina offers a reassuring smile.

“I’ve asked the boutique owner to close up the shop for us while we’re here. It’s just us so don’t be shy. You’re safe with me.”

Some of the nervous smiles remain but the girls spread out, skimming the hundreds of dresses on the racks and filling up the changing rooms.

Celina has a speaker brought by one of the guards and plays some music for a mini fashion show with the girls.

Nadia clings to me, looking anxious about picking a dress.

“What kind of dress do you like?” I ask.

“Do you want a long one or a short one? Sleeves or no sleeves?” She turns bright red and shakes her head.

“I don’t know...I’ve never had a pretty dress before,” she replies quietly, biting her lower lip.

“I was a house keeping omega,” she shrugs.

“I was too ugly for the cleaning and cooking for the Alpha packhouse.”

“Auctions?” I ask, raising an eyebrow at her.

“Yeah,” she nods.

“All girls were raised in the omega house and automatically sold at auctions when we turned 18 by the Alpha. We would reject our mates so no bond could interfere with our duties...No one wanted to buy me so Alpha Nikolai kept me as a servant...”

She looks like she wants to say more, but she bites her lip again and waves her hand in dismissal.

“I’m sorry. That was a stupid thing to say. Ignore me.”

I cup her cheeks, Nadia flinching and stiffening a little at the sudden movement but relaxing when she sees the look in my eyes.

“You are not ugly.....And I will never ignore you.”

Her eyes glaze over but she tries to smile the tears away.

“You don’t have to say that. I know I’m not the prettiest wolf.” I shrug.

“I’m not lying when I say you are not ugly. I’ve seen ugly. My sister for example is an ugly bitch...but you? You are among the most beautiful wolves I’ve ever seen.”

She wipes her eyes in an attempt to hide her tears, but she fails miserably.

I inspect her frame as she collects herself, noting her wide hips and thick thighs, before grabbing her hand and pulling her to a different rack of dresses.

Nadia watches in silence as I push around dresses until I pull out a little pink dress that accentuates the waist and flares out at the hips in the dressing room. I hear her shuffling in the dressing room but she refuses to come out.

“I look silly,” She cries.

“I-I don’t think I can do this.” I think for a moment before knocking on the door.

“Would it help if I try on a dress too? That way we can both come out together.” She snuffles a little and there’s a long pause before she answers.

“O-okay...”I grab a shapeless dress that I know will do absolutely nothing for my figure so that she looks better and I quickly change in the room adjacent to hers.

“Okay, Nadia. You ready?” I call out.

“No,” she groans but regardless, I hear her open the door to her dressing room.

I step out with her and clap ecstatically when I see how gorgeous the dress fits her, the fabric hugging every curve of her body beautifully.

The color looks good on her naturally pale skin, her blue eyes popping against the pink.

There’s a few scars on her arms that she tries to hide by holding her hands over them and it saddens me that she’s constantly reminded of her past.

“You look amazing!” I squeal, trying my best to cheer her up and make her feel good.

She really does look lovely in the dress.

I notice Nadia has caught William’s attention, the guard lightly”I think William likes the dress,”I giggle, Nadia’s face morphing into a tomato when she looks up and locks eyes with William.

Her breath hitches in her throat and she looks back at the ground as if praying that the earth would swallow her.

“N-no,” she protests.

“William is not interested in being my mate right now...he’s still hurt about his last one...She wasn’t who he thought she was...”

“You’re his second chance mate?”

She nods her head, her fingers tugging at the dress.

“And he rejected you?” I ask, cursing mate bonds under my breath.

“No,” she shakes her head, showing me the mark on her neck.

“He marked me so he could be near me but he’s not ready to be my mate just yet ...He asked me to wait ...so I’m waiting.”

I eye the guard, William managing to look stiff and uninterested.

“He’s very nice,”

Nadia explains, sensing my growing frustration with her mate.

“A little cold and hard to speak to but that’s okay.I’m practically used to it,” she adds sheepishly.

“Maybe in time he’ll learn to accept me,” she says, her voice meek and small.

“At least, I hope I will be enough for him one day.”

“Of course you are enough!”

I snap, hoping he hears me as I knock some sense into her.The tips of his ears turn bright red, so I right to be so cold regardless of his past.I stop

mid sentence when I recognize Williams's behavior...recalling my own cold and unapproachable demeanor with my own mate.

"He's what?" Nadia asks quizzically, tilting her head to the side.

"Nothing," I mutter, going over to the dress rack again.

"How about a dress with long sleeves so you're more comfortable?" I ask, changing the subject completely.

Nadia looks like she wants to ask more but decides against it and smiles at me.

I hand her a dress in a similar style as the one she's wearing but with longer sleeves.

We spend several minutes trying on different dresses and by the time we leave, I manage to convince her to keep the first little pink dress.

The entire ride home, I think about my situation with Zane.

Despite my best efforts to push him away, Zane is slowly worming his way in.

He refuses to give up on me, playing by my rules, even when my rules were sometimes unfair to him. He's very sweet, I tell myself, before remembering how sweet Christian had been in the beginning too.

We arrive back at the pack hospital, the girls raiding the cafeteria for a home cooked meal by the volunteers.

I grab the sack lunch Zane prepared for me this morning, a small note attached to my sandwich.

Thank you for giving me a chance. I won't let you down.

I stare at the words for a moment, knowing in my heart that I have never truly given him a chance to prove himself to me.

For the rest of the day as I work with some of the girls with their reading, I think about Zane's note, wondering if it were truly possible for me to give him a chance. I had given Christian a chance but that had been a mistake.

A commotion interrupts my thoughts at the main entrance of the third floor, several of the girls rushing to greet the Queen who has arrived.

She looks worried, her hands curling and uncurling with nerves.

"Natalia," she calls me over, leading me to a private room to speak to me.

She gestures for me to take a seat at the small table, taking the seat directly in front of me.

She smiles but I can tell Aurora is upset about something.

"I-I..Sorry," she apologizes, taking a deep breath to relax herself.

"Today while Zane and Kota were playing out in the woods, a group of wolves entered River Moon without our knowledge...and there was an altercation with Kota." I jump to my feet in an instant, my heart in the pit of my stomach.

"Where is Kota?" I ask, my voice trembling with fear that my baby was hurt or worse, taken touch my hand.

"Zane was with him and he protected him. I just thought you should know."

“You said Kota was safe here!” I snap at her, pulling my hand away in anger.

“You said I could trust you!”

“You are safe,” Aurora replies, a bit of hurt in her voice.

“My men were on the scene as soon as we discovered the intrusion but even without my guards, Zane shifted and took care of your pup. He didn’t let anyone hurt him.”

“And I’m just supposed to just be grateful that my baby wasn’t hurt this time?” I scoff.

“What about the next time a wolf decides to just stroll into River Moon without anyone noticing? Should I be grateful for you then too?”

“Dakota was never in any real danger,” Aurora snaps.

“The wolves that came by are from our mother pack in France, Lune de Minuit. Alpha Jacque and his son, Benoit, came here to discuss the whereabouts of their daughter, Adeline and inquire about their assets in Artaud Inc, our pack company. Lune de Minuit holds shares in the company and they are not pleased with all the investments we’ve made regarding the Amethyst Lake women. They’ll be staying here while Oliver renegotiates the terms of their agreements. Adeline used to handle Lune de Minuit’s assets but she disappeared a couple months ago after orchestrating an attack against Oliver and I...”

“Wow, you are really selling the safety of your pack here,” I mumble sarcastically for her all around the world and we have reason to believe she’s not even in the States anymore.

She has a lot of connections in Europe and is most likely hiding out there.”

“So what does that mean for Kota and I?” I ask.

“Are we truly safe here?”

“River Moon is the safest place for Kota right now. He has Zane to protect him and he has all of River Moon on his side ready to defend him should it ever come to that.” Aurora reassures me.

“I give you my word, you and Kota are part of River Moon. You’re one of us now and we protect our own.”

“I find that hard to believe,” I mutter under my breath, recalling what an outsider I was in my own pack despite being told otherwise.

“I can’t make you stay,” Aurora sighs, her shoulders drooping in disappointment.

“But Guinevere wanted you here for a reason. If you trust her as I know you do, then you should also trust her judgment and trust in us. Regardless, if you wish to leave, I will help you make arrangements elsewhere.”

I have no more trust to give, Silver Crest tarnishing whatever faith I had in werewolves a long time ago.

Leaving pack life is all I’ve ever wanted for the past four years.

But I also couldn’t lie to myself either.

Kota would one day become a wolf, and no matter how much I hated that fact, he would need another wolf to help guide him.

The only problem is, who would be the wolf? feet.

“This is an important decision and while I want you to stay, you know what’s best for you and Kota.”

My head reels with all my thoughts as I try to figure out what to do.

Gwen wanted me here but I am beyond stressed in this environment.

These wolves seem nice and caring, but I had once fallen for my former pack’s kindness only to realize they were nothing but a pack of snakes. I could not allow myself to trust any of them just yet. I make my way back to the guest house, completely exhausted from my inner turmoil as I think about what I would say to Zane regarding the minor altercation he had with those wolves.

I had made it clear that his wolf form is forbidden near Kota but I also realize he shifted to protect my baby and I could not ignore that either.

My feet carry me into the kitchen where I find a simple dinner already prepared.

The house is quiet and I tiptoe upstairs where I find Zane fast asleep in the bedrooms, Dakota curled up on top of his stomach, already dressed in his Pj’s with a small story book by his side.

I can’t help the incredible warmth that seeps into my soul as I watch my baby cuddle with the only real male figure in his life so far.

Kota has never really asked about his father but I know it is only a matter of time before he realizes that someone important is missing in his life.

He needs a father...

A little voice in my head says as I watch the two sleep peacefully together, but the thought of letting another man in frightens me.

Zane is not Christian, The voice reminds me once more...

He deserves a chance too.

My feet move towards the bed before I realize it and I climb in next to the boys, laying my head on Zane's shoulder.

Zane stirs almost immediately, his body stiffening when he realizes it's me.

His reaction reminds me of Nadia and a sad thought enters my mind.

Had Zane also escaped a pack from hell too? Is that the reason for his scars? He remains frozen and I can tell he's holding his breath.

I gently stroke Kota's hair with my fingers, pushing away some hair from his little forehead.

I look up at Zane, his brown eyes so intensely beautiful, I almost forget my question.

“Will you go on a date with me?”

The Silent Alpha by StephanieLight Chapter 26

Chapter 26: Date 1

***Jane**

My hands shake anxiously as I watch the clock tick, both nervous and excited for my first date with Talia. I was stunned when she asked me out a few days ago but I greedily accepted the offer, desperately wanting to get to know her. I consulted with Aurora and Rosalie over what we should do, both of them insisting that I take Talia to the local amusement park to reduce the tension between us.

To make Talia feel more comfortable with me, I suggested that Kota join us for the first half and she readily accepted.

In all honesty, having Kota around would make me less nervous too.

We could then head over to the Lake at the AL park for an evening picnic with just the two of us.

“You’ll be fine,” Agnes reassures me with a kind smile.

“You just have to be yourself and Talia will fall in love with you. She won’t be able to resist,” she wiggles her eyebrows.

“You’ll see.” Kota jumps around the living room like a bunny, already dressed for the park.

It took me a while to get his sunscreen on but the little tyke finally gave in when I bribed him with a cookie.

“Can we go now?” he asks, tugging at his little baseball hat.

“J-j-just a few m-minutes. Mom-my sti-ll n-needs to come ho-home and get read-ready,” I assure him sheepishly as she races into the room.

“Just give me five minutes to change and touch up my makeup and then I’ll be good to go,” she says over her shoulder as she rushes up the stairs.

Kota groans, swinging his arms around in boredom as twenty minutes pass by.

My palms grow sweaty in fear that Talia may have changed her mind entirely, but she finally descends down the stairs looking as beautiful as ever.

She looks amazing in a pair of high waisted jeans and an off the shoulder blouse, her golden skin glowing against the white of her shirt.

Talia flashes me a shy smile as I gawk at her, nearly falling over the chair I am sitting on.

Dude, snap out of it! Grayson growls.

She's going to think you're a moron! I try not to make a fool of myself and stand up straight but as I catch a glimpse of the bracelet on her wrist, my entire body fills with butterflies and I trip over the leg of the chair, crashing ungracefully on the ground.

Kota and Agnes burst into laughter while Talia rushes over to help me up.

Sparks tingle up and down my arm when our hands meet, the sensation startling Talia enough that she lets go, letting me fall back onto the floor.

"Oh my goodness," she mutters to herself.

"I-I'm so sorry. I...I'm just nervous," she gulps, tucking away a loose strand of hair behind her ear as she once again reaches over to help me up.

"It's been Oh great, two nervous idiots going on a date to an amusement park with a child" Grayson mutters.

What could possibly go wrong? I block out his voice as I dust myself off, Talia holding out her hand for me to take.

"Let's go," She says quietly, waving over Kota to join us.

She checks Kota once more to make sure he's ready to go before we walk over to the pack house.

Evan takes us to Aurora's office where she appears to be hiding from the visiting Alphas.

"I'm not hiding," the Queen mutters as she looks over some documents.

"I'm just very busy."

Suddenly, a portal opens to her left and she grins at us, wiggling her eyebrows in mischief.

"Now you three have fun!"

She giggles, pushing Talia and Kota through the portal.

"And good luck!"

She hisses in my ear before shoving me through as well. I nearly lose my footing and crash into Talia, my chest bumping against hers.

She timidly looks up at me, our eyes locking in an intense gaze.

"H-hi," Talia whispers, her lips curved into a small smile.

Now's your chance, Say something to her, Grayson urges.

I open my mouth but end up choking on my tongue, coughing furiously into my arm.

Smooth, Grayson mutters as I struggle to regain control of my Talia hands me a bottle of water and I finally manage to catch my breath.

We look around the area Aurora sent us to and realize it's a small alley beside the park. We will have to return here to be transported home again.

Talia takes the lead, leaving Kota to me and we head for the ticket booth to get our park passes.

Kota's large eyes widened in shock at the incredible display of rides, games, and snack booths.

I'm no different, having never seen so much color and lights in one place before.

The thoughts of thousands of people start racing towards me, but I manage to put up my walls before I become too overwhelmed.

My training with Aurora has been great but I still could not filter out voices among large crowds.

For now, I'll have to use nods and gestures to communicate.

Kota spots a bouncing ATV ride with flashing lights and loud car horns, nearly taking off before I catch him.

"Kota, you need to stay with Mommy or Zane," Talia scolds.

"Don't run off."

Kota nods halfheartedly, his eyes locked on the Blue ATV he wants to ride.

The ride seems to be able to hold one adult passenger and two kids.

"Will you go with me?" He asks me, dragging me into the line driver's seat for himself.

"Beep! Beep!"

Kota's screams when the ride starts.

The ATV suddenly starts to bounce up and down, my hands gripping onto the sides of the car in shock.

I have never experienced this type of movement before, and while we were only moving in a circle, it's the most exhilarating moment of my life.

I have to bring Agnes here, I tell myself as Kota and I bounce up and down.

Kota honks his horn and we wave our hands at Talia every time we pass her, Kota and I laughing hysterically with every bounce.

Dude, what are you, five? Grayson laughs but I ignore him, just wanting to enjoy the ride.

Talia chuckles when the ride is over, helping Kota off the ATV.

"You looked like you were having more fun than Kota," she giggles as we walk out of the enclosure.

I want to ask if we can go again when Kota starts to pull us in the direction of some flying dragons.

"I want to ride the pink one!" Kota calls out, pointing to the pink dragon creature with horns.

Kota requires a chaperone for this ride and I happily volunteer, Talia chuckling to herself at my eagerness.

Once strapped in, Kota and I pull on the lever, the dragon slowly ascending until it reaches its the view is pretty.

“Make a silly face when we pass Mommy,”

Kota instructs, sticking his fingers into his mouth to pull his lips apart and hang his tongue out.

I take his lead, pushing out my lower jaw so that my teeth stick out and pulling my eyelids back with one hand while the other continues to pull the lever.

Talia bursts into laughter when she sees our faces, snapping a few pictures of us.

Kota takes complete control of the date, dragging us from ride to ride, but I don't mind one bit, getting on as many rides as I can with him.

We try the bumper cars, the train, the merry-go-round, and the spinning teacups, the last one nearly making me vomit from all the spinning.

Talia and Kota couldn't help but laugh at me as I held onto the grip for dear life, some of the people in line joining in.

Even Grayson laughed but it did not matter to me, I liked seeing Talia laugh. She was worth getting on a terrible ride for.

Kota suddenly pulls us to a giant game booth.

“I want the Octopus!” Kota smiles, pointing to a giant purple Octopus hanging on display.

The game is a milk bottle toss where we have to knock over a tower of 6 milk bottles with baseballs.

We get three tries but knocking all of the bottles in the first toss would get us the Octopus.

Talia pays the booth operator for a try and the operator hands her three balls. Her first throw narrowly misses the tower of bottles but her final throw manages to knock three bottles over.

“Sorry, sweetie,” Talia sighs sheepishly.

“No Octopus” Kota pouts, Talia attempting to soothe his broken heart with a bribe.

“How about we get some ice cream?” She asks.

I hand the operator another dollar so I can play.

Let me do it. I’m more coordinated than you, Grayson grumbles but I refuse, wanting to prove to myself that I could be useful. I line up to the toss and aim for the center, throwing the ball with all my strength.

We watch the ball strike the center of the tower, all 6 bottles tumbling into the pit.

The operator hands me with the Giant Octopus and I turn around to find Kota and Talia clapping for me.

Kota waddles over to me as I get down on my knees to show it to him, stroking the giant octopus’s head with his little fingers.

“Can I have it?” He asks shyly, his large eyes twinkling at me.

The biggest smile stretches across his mouth when I nod, the little boy jumping into my arms and kissing me on the cheek.

He struggles to wrap his arms around the large octopus, the stuffed animal nearly twice his size.

“Thanks Dad!” He cries, dragging the toy to his mom.

My heart skips a beat when the word slips out of his lips, all of my thoughts melting away to focus on the little boy who just claimed me Grayson howls in approval, liking the title for himself.

We had already claimed Kota as my own during the face off with the Alphas but it's different knowing Kota felt the same about us.

I want to hear him say it again but I eye Talia nervously, knowing Kota calling me Dad could upset her.

Something flickers in her eyes, but whatever it is disappears before I can decipher what she's feeling.

"Look Mommy!" Kota says, shoving the octopus in Talia's face.

"Look what Zane got me!"

"Very cool," she grins at him, taking him by the hand.

"Should we get some ice cream?"

The little boy nods, handing his stuffed toy to his mother to skip over the booth directly across the game booth.

Talia looks over at me, the smile on her face a little tight as she reaches for my hand and pulls me towards her.

She stands on the tips of her toes and kisses me on the cheek, my heart feeling as though it might burst out of my chest.

"Thank you for not overreacting about what Kota said," She whispers.

"I'll talk to him tonight and make sure it doesn't happen again."

I shake my head at her, wishing I could put into words that it means the world to me that he sees me that way, but only a small groan escapes my lips. I sigh in frustration to myself, but she doesn't seem to notice, already pulling me to the booth labeled Dippin

“What flavor do you want?” she asks, pointing to the little menu on the glass window of the booth.

I have never had Dippin' dots before, so I stare at the assortment of colorful dot-like ice cream flavors, unsure which to pick.

“You should try Cookies and Cream,” Talia suggests.

“You can't go wrong with Oreos.”

It's been years since I've had Oreos, the last time being when my mom snuck some into my room to share with me on my 6th birthday.

Cookies and pastries were rarely available to us back at the Hive.

If by chance a pack of Oreos made an appearance in the pantry, they were gone before Agnes, and I could ever grab some. I nod my head at her suggestion, and she hands me a cup full of black and white dots with crushed cookie pieces.

Kota gets Rainbow dots and Talia picks Mint and chip.

We take our treats to a nearby table and Talia watches me careful as I take my first bite.

The little dots melt in my mouth almost immediately, leaving an Oreo taste on my tongue that nearly brings tears to my eyes.

I eagerly put another spoonful in my mouth, moaning a little as I savor the sweet taste

“Do you like it?” She asks, letting out a sigh of relief when I nod.

“Can I try yours?” Kota asks, pointing at my cup of dots with his spoon.

“Kota, you have yours,” Talia scolds.

“Don’t be greedy.” It’s out for Kota. He opens his mouth and I sprinkle in the dots, Kota licking his lips when he’s finished.

“Yummy,” he hums.

“These are good. My turn,” he grins, scooping up a few dots onto his spoon for me to try.

I lower my head a little to help him drop the dots into my mouth, a burst of fruity flavor exploding on my tongue.

Talia snaps a photo of Kota feeding me his dots, a small smile on her lips as she saves the memory.

When we’re finished with our treats, I take Kota to the restroom for a potty break and to wash his sticky hands.

Once groomed, we go on a few more rides. I particularly enjoy the Flying swing set, the wind in my hair feeling amazing.

As we are about to call it a day, I spot a large black box labeled Photobooth, halting in my tracks to stare at it.

“Have you never seen one before?”

Talia asks when she realizes I’m no longer following them.

“It’s for taking pictures,” Talia explains when I shake my head.

Her eyes flicker with sadness before she grabs my hand and drags Kota and I towards the box.

“Come on, let’s take a picture.”

She shoves me in first before climbing in with Kota.

There’s a small bench inside the booth just big enough for Talia and I, but Kota has to sit on my lap to fit.

A large screen sits in front of us with a camera on top.

Talia inserts some coins and starts the timers on the screen and I following her instructions and contorting our faces as the camera flashes.

“Okay, now. We kiss Kota,” she laughs, both she and I kissing one of Kota’s cheeks as he smiles.

The camera flashes once again before the timer restarts, Kota turning to Talia and grinning.

“Now Mommy kisses Zane!” He cries, pushing Talia’s face closer to mine.

“Kota, stop being silly,” Talia scolds.

Dude, the kid just gave you an opening.

Take it! Grayson snaps, urging me to kiss Talia.

Mustering up all of my courage, I place my hand on Talia’s cheek and pull her closer to me.

“what are you-”

Before Talia can say anything else, I press my lips against hers, sparks exploding all over my body.

She doesn't seem to know what to do at first but as I kiss her again, Talia moves her lips with mine, her hand pressing up against my chest for support.

Kota stands on his tippy toes as the camera flashes, his smiling face covering up the camera. I don't want to pull away, not ready to let her go, but Talia comes to her senses and turns away from me.

"We should go," She mumbles, carefully wiping her lips as she steps out of the booth.

"Aurora is waiting for Kota." My heart sinks.

She must have not liked the kiss...

I sigh, cursing myself for taking Grayson's advice.

Talia collects the strip of pictures as Kota and I climb out, shoving the photos in her purse.

The three of us head back to the alley, a portal suddenly opening for us.

Aurora kindly greets us, Kota explaining in detail what we did.

"Sounds like a fun day," She chuckles.

"I'm glad you liked the park."

The Queen glances at Talia and the two women seem to have a private conversation.

I grow nervous as Aurora switches her eyes between Talia and I, her face unreadable. I want to open a connection when she raises her eyebrows in surprise.

“Okay. Just text me when you’re ready,” the Queen grins, taking Kota’s hand and his prize before waving at us.

Talia suddenly slips her hand in mine and pulls me back through the portal, both of us returning to the park.

“Now, it’s just you and me,” Talia smiles.

The Silent Alpha by StephanieLight Chapter 27

*Natalia***

“Now it’s just you and me,” I smile at Zane, the wolf staring at me with anxious eyes.

“Relax,” I chuckle.

“I don’t bite.”

The nervous look never leaves his eyes as I drag him back to the park.

During the first part of our date with Kota, I watched Zane carefully, noticing how excited he got over such simple things like Dippin Dots or the disco music that was playing during the rides.

It’s obvious this is his first time seeing an amusement park before, leaving me to wonder what else he had yet to experience. I take him to the nearest roller coaster, explaining to him the thrill of dropping and rising on a train.

He doesn't seem convinced by my explanation, but he nonetheless humors me and gets on the train.

There's a slight hint of fear in Zane's eyes as the ride operator locks us into our seats, the automated announcements telling us to keep our arms and legs inside the vehicle at all times. I reach out to hold Zane's hand and comfort him, interlocking our fingers to let him know we were going to be okay.

The train shoots out of the station, Zane's eyes widening as we rush down a track, making a sudden sharp turn and climbing up the first hill.

"Hold on tight!" I squeal, growing excited for the drop.

The anticipation grows as the entire park shrinks before our eyes, the sun setting off in the horizon.

The pretty view distracts Zane temporarily before we reach the apex and look down at the drop.

"Oh f**k,"

Someone behind us shouts before we race down the hill, a camera flashing as we zoom past it terrified and amused by the sharp turns and sudden drops.

A huge grin is plastered on his face when we get off and I can tell he wants to ride again.

We make our way to the photo booth at the end of the ride, and I laugh my butt off when I see our picture.

I'm smiling like a lunatic with my arms raised in the air while Zane has a look of absolute terror, his eyes and mouth wide open in fright.

“I’m buying it,” I giggle, Zane’s ears turning red in embarrassment.

“And I’m going to frame it.” He shakes his head in horror, as if willing me not to buy it but I give him a stern look.

“This is a picture of your very first roller coaster,” I sigh.

“And I want to remember being the one who shared that moment with you.”

His entire face turns redder than a tomato, the edges of his lips slightly curving up in a little smile.

Satisfied that I can now keep the picture, I hand the money to the clerk and receive two copies of our photo.

“Hehe, now I get to remember the look on your face forever,” I tease him, shoving the pictures in my purse before he can take them from me.

We go on a few more roller coasters, Zane nervous about each one but coming out of each ride with a contagious smile on his lips. I spot a cotton candy stand and buy two big clouds of cotton for each of us, Zane staring at the large pink cloud with a puzzled look on his face.

“Open your mouth,” I laugh, tearing off a piece of his cotton.

Zane hesitantly follows my orders, slowly hanging his mouth open.

“Now, stick your tongue out.”

He once again does as he’s told and I place the little cotton fluff on his tongue, his eyes lighting up like a child at Christmas as the candy melts in his mouth, leaving the sugar taste in its wake luttu from my candy.

He holds it out to me and I raise an eyebrow at him.

“You want to feed me?” I ask.

He turns bright red again and lowers his gaze in shame, guilt quickly filling my mind.

Jeez, Talia, why are you such a b***h? I scold myself, opening my mouth and leaning in close to him.

His hand shakes a little as he deposits the little fluff in my mouth, the sugar spreading across my tastebuds. He smiles nervously so I offer him a smile in return and wiggle my eyebrows to ease the awkward tension between us.

“We should try the Ferris wheel,” I suggest, pulling him towards the giant wheel at the end of the park.

A young operator greets us and lets us into the little cage, Zane gripping onto the sides when it begins to rock upon our ascension.

“Relax, wolf,” I chuckle.

“It’s supposed to rock a little. Just sit back and enjoy the view.”

Almost as if on cue, we reach the top of the Ferris wheel overlooking the entire park, his breath hitching when he sees the incredible view.

“It’s pretty, isn’t it?”

I sigh, looking up at the glittering stars decorating the sky.

“I could stay up here for hours just watching the stars.”

I feel his gaze settle on me and I turn to look at him, my face flushing when I see the tender look in his eyes.

Turning my face to hide my blush, I sit back in our seats and watch the moon for a bit, listening to the laughter coming from the park.

Zane timidly inches closer to me, stretching his arms out in a yawn.

I do my best to hold back my laughter when he carefully drapes his arm behind my seat, knowing his face is probably bright red as he avoids my stare.

Seeing no real harm in indulging him on his little quest, I lean my body chest.

His body tenses with tear as I trace patterns on his broad chest, my heart growing heavy knowing he is likely suffering from trauma like the girls at the clinic.

“Thank you for today,” I murmur, avoiding his eyes for fear that I might actually cave and kiss him.

“I’ve never seen Kota so happy. That’s the best gift anyone could have ever given me.”

I curl up at his side, allowing him to wrap his arms around me.

He feels so warm and strong, and for a brief moment, I allow myself to imagine what it would be like to be his.

At first, the idea is calming, bringing me a sense of comfort knowing Kota would have a dad to look up to...but as with every potential partner I take interest in, the looming fear of betrayal casts a shadow of doubt.

While! could see that Zane and Kota get along just fine, one day Zane will want a pup of his own.

What will happen to us when I struggle to give him one? Will he find someone else, leaving me to pick up all the pieces of my heart again?

We go several rounds on the Ferris wheel, the thought lingering in the back of my mind serving as a gentle reminder to be careful.

I do not know Zane after all, and it is best I practice caution before diving in headfirst into another mate bond.

It's not long before my hunger gets the best of me, and I text Aurora to let her know that we're ready to come home.

We make our way to the alley, the portal opening to a candlelit picnic by the lake.

Aurora hurriedly lights the last of the candles set up on a large stone that will be serving as our dinner table, her Gamma, Evan, watching her in boredom.

"That's enough candles, Aurora," Evan groans.

"They're already here."

Aurora hushes him, turning to us with a smile.

"We're leaving, I promise! disappearing in an instant look around at the incredible set up, admiring the attention to detail. There's a large blanket on the ground with pillows and dishes scattered around it. A basket with a delicious scent coming from it sits in the middle of the blanket, a bottle of wine in ice resting beside it.

Pretty fairy lights illuminate the grass surrounding the picnic, the lake providing a pretty backdrop for our dinner.

“Did you do all of this?” I ask, wondering how much planning went into this arrangement.

Zane nods, taking my hand and leading me to the stone table.

He quickly arranges the plates and cutlery, producing two wine glasses for us.

I watch in awe as he pulls out containers of fruits, cheeses, macaroni salads, sandwiches, fried chicken, cookies, and even a small chocolate cake, allowing him to serve me.

He watches me while I eat, as if to see if I’m enjoying the food.

“This is delicious,” I say as I finish up my plate.

“Who made the macaroni salad?” He slowly spells out Agnes’s name with his fingers and I mentally pat myself on my back for understanding him.

I had been practicing my signs over the past few days with the girls at the clinic.

“Well then I need this recipe because this is absolutely delicious.”

Zane puffs out his chest a little in pride at my compliment to his mother, bringing a tiny smile to my face. I like that his relationship with his mother is so close.

The silence once again takes over and we both awkwardly pick at our cake.

It’s difficult keeping up a conversation with a man who does not speak and I find myself running out of things to say with his simple replies.

He can tell I'm getting anxious and it seems to only make him nervous.the only real way we can: by laying all of our cards out on the table.

I clear my throat to catch his attention and put away my dishes back into the picnic basket.

"I had a mate once," I blurt out, carefully wiping my wine glass before finally looking up at him.

"Christian," I sigh.

***Zanet**

I freeze, not sure what to do.

"He was Alpha.Very tall, very handsome," She sighs irritably.

"Ya know, like every other Alpha you've ever met.Practically perfect in every single way, " She laughs bitterly.

A cold shiver runs down my spine.

Alpha blood runs through my veins but I am far from perfect.

My own father made it very clear that lam no Alpha, reminding everyday just how worthless I am.

I will be a huge disappointment to her should she ever find out who I really am.

"I was shocked a guy like him would take an interest in a girl like me," she says, her voice suddenly growing very small.

“I wasn’t a geek or a loner or anything like that,” she says with air quotes.

“I was just definitely not his type. Guess I’m still not his type,” she laughs sarcastically.

Her laugh doesn’t reach her eyes and she goes a little quiet, swallowing her emotions before continuing.

“But anyways, things moved fairly quickly, and we tied the knot shortly after he explained that he was a wolf. It wasn’t an easy thing to wrap my head around but it made a little sense. It explained why I felt like I was home with him. Like he was my home.”

She bites her lips and rolls her eyes, Grayson snarls at the idea of another man ever claiming her as his but I shove him to the back of my mind, reminding him that we did not have a right to be angry that she had a life before meeting us.

“We were...um married for 2 years,” She continues.

“I could say we were happy for the most part but of course, it wasn’t all flowers and rainbows. I had to prove myself to the former Alpha and the entire pack that I was Capable of leading them despite being a human. I did the best that I could but, in the end, Christian wasn’t very happy with me. He needed an heir and I...”

Her bottom lip quivers as she wipes away a stray tear rolling down her cheek.

I can hear her heartbeat erratically in her chest, the thick scent of anger surrounding her.

“I spent the last part of our marriage struggling to get pregnant, doing everything I could to give him his pup but it was never enough,”

She spits through gritted teeth, holding back the more tears desperately wanting to spill onto her cheeks.

“I was never enough...So Christain took matters into his own hands.”

She suddenly goes very quiet, balling up her fists at her side.

Taking a deep breath, I concentrate on the walls I built, letting her thoughts and memories trickle into my mind.

The image of a man and woman laying on a bed together flickers in my head, and I watch in disgust as the two make love to each other.

“Give.Me.A.Pup,” he pants between thrusts, the woman moaning louder as she orgasms.

“And I will make you my Luna,” he whispers.

Grayson snarls at the memory as I realize Talia’s mate had cheated on her with another woman.

I quickly crawl up behind her, pulling her onto my lap to wipe the tears that finally spilled onto her cheeks in hopes of comforting her from shame of letting me see her in such a vulnerable state.

“He cheated,” She whispers, holding back a sob.

“He cheated on me...with my sister.My entire pack knew....And they didn’t say a word to me about it.They lied to me!” she screams, pounding her fist against my chest.

“They lied to me! They were supposed to protect their Luna but they lied to me! They lied. Wolves lie!” she sobs, burying her face in my chest.

“They all lie,” she whimpers.

Her reluctance to let me into her life is all so clear now. She was hurt by a wolf who once claimed her as his mate and in her eyes, I would be no different.

I wrap my arms around her, wanting to protect her from all the lies and pain.

“My sister took my place in the pack,” She sighs when she’s finished crying, wiping away her tears.

“I was stripped of my title and she was crowned the new Luna.”

The brutal memories enter my mind, my wolf seething with rage as we watch this so-called Christian not only reject our mate but also claim her sister right in front of her.

My veins fill with anger, Grayson and I unable to comprehend how a wolf could ever hurt his mate.

How could anyone ever want to give HER up? How can anyone ever trade in a diamond for a stone?

“I didn’t really have much time to dwell on what happened,” she laughs half-heartedly, though I see no humor in her eyes.

“My baby needed me. I just had to salvage the most important pieces of my heart and pray it would be enough. I’ve protected every piece viciously and given them all to Kota. I have none to spare, nothing left to give to anyone. I haven’t been whole in years and I’m okay with that. I’ve

learned to be a little broken, a little bruised ...but a lot stronger.” again hiding behind her mask.

But it is too late.I have already seen everything.

Talia’s eyes are clouded by pain and anger but just behind all of that, is the joy and laughter she once embodied.

That happy woman is still inside her, just very guarded and very afraid to let anyone else in.

But I am patient.I would break through her barriers just enough to let the light out again.

She would make herself whole again, and I would be there to watch her light up the room again.

“Anyways,”

She shrugs, trying to brush off the sudden shyness overtaking her.

“It’s probably best if we just go our separate ways and forget we were ever fated,” she says with a forced smile.

“We can part as friends, and you can just come visit Ko-”

If her chin up, her breath hitching at the sight of the gentle smile on my lips.

As if in a trance, she places her fingers on my lips, parting them slightly.

She suddenly leans in close to me, pecking me lightly on the lips a few times, my muscles growing stiff, a bit shocked she’s made the first move.

Grayson is suddenly very quiet, the bastard providing no feedback to help me out.

She cups my cheek with one hand and wraps her other arm around my neck, pulling me closer as she deepens the kiss.

“Kiss me back,” she murmurs.

I part my lips a little more, allowing her to poke her tongue in just a little for a taste.

She gasps when I snake my arms around her waist, my tongue clumsily exploring her mouth.

A little moan escapes her lips, my entire body craving her and the incredible sparks she ignites within me.

She adjusts herself on my lap, straddling me between her thighs and leaning most of her weight on me.

I slowly let myself fall onto my back, our lips never parting as she falls with me. I slide her body up a little so that she Her lips are intoxicating, enticing me with their sweet taste as she bites and nips at me.

But just as suddenly as it all happened, she quickly pulls away, scrambling off of me to catch her breath.

“Sorry,” she mutters.

“I-I don’t know what...”

She stops her rambling, relief washing over her when she sees me equally breathless, as if I had just run a marathon.

Neither one of us says a word while we calm ourselves down.

“Tell me about you,”

She pants when the awkward silence becomes suffocating.

My palms begin to sweat, completely unprepared to tell her about the horrors I survived.

“It’s only fair”

She scolds me when I remain silent.

“I told you about me. I deserve to know your story too. How else do you expect me to trust you if know nothing about you?”

An internal war wages in my brain.

“You don’t have to tell me everything,” She adds.

“But I need something. Anything.”

This doesn’t make me feel any better, and I beg Grayson for help.

Tell her we’re an Aquarius, he teases, leaving me to wonder what I did in my past life to deserve an i***t for a wolf.

“Tell me about your scars,” she offers, pointing to my back.

“Or at least what you did to become a rogue.”

The Silent Alpha by StephanieLight Chapter 28

Zane***

“You can use my phone if that helps,”

Talia suggests, pulling out her phone from her pocket and unlocking it for me.

Beads of sweat gather at my temple as I stare blankly at the Notepad app.

She’s not asking for much, Grayson mutters.

Did you miss the part where she’s been married to a perfect Alpha? I snap at him.

What do you think will go through her head when she realizes she’s mated to a freak? You are being dramatic, Grayson groans.

He wasn’t THAT perfect.

He cheated on her! WITH HER SISTER! That’s not the point! The point is my own father refused to recognize me as his son! \retort.

When Talia realizes how truly worthless I am, she’ll reject me like everyone else has.

Do you not trust our mate will treat us fairly? Grayson asks.

I look up at my mate, her smile faltering with my everlasting silence.

She deserves the truth...

Grayson sighs.

And so do we.

We won’t know how she truly feels about us if all we show her is a lie.

But...Anything.

The phone trembles in my hand, my fingers unwilling to type out a message.

Minutes crawl by before Talia finally loses her patience.

“Okay, I think this date is over,”

Talia laughs dryly, my heart sinking as a few tears cling to her eyes.

She wipes at them angrily and starts to get up, disappointed by my lack of response.

“I honestly don’t even know what I was expecting,” she mutters, shaking her head at herself.

“This was such a f*****g mistake and I can’t even be mad at you because I did this to myself,” she huffs, rolling her eyes.

“I should have just kept my mouth shut.”

She presses the palms of her hands against her eyes to stop the tears from flowing down her cheeks.

“Please take me home,” she whimpers.

“I don’t want to be here anymore.”

My mind goes into a panic when I hear the hurt in her voice. I open my mouth to explain but it feels as though the wind has been knocked out of me and all that comes out is a gasp.

Come on! I snap at myself.

Say something! But the harder I try to utter a word, the drier my mouth feels and the heavier my tongue becomes.

All the memories of my father screaming at me to speak come flooding back and the words get caught in my throat, unable to escape.

She deserves the truth, I remind myself, taking a few deep breaths and rising to my feet shoulders and turn her towards me, embracing her in my arms.

I try to hold her to my chest but Talia only shakes her head in anger at me.

“No,” she cries.

“You don’t get to just hug this all away. I told you my story. I shared my pain with you,” she hiccups.

“Why can’t you do the same for me?”

Knowing she is right, I urge her to sit back down, patting the space beside me as my eyes plead with her to sit.

Reluctantly, she settles down, hugging her knees to her chest.

Her brown eyes watch me carefully, scrutinizing my every move.

I pull the phone from my pocket and after she unlocks it, I type out my plan.

“I can’t tell you my story, but I can show you,” She reads aloud.

“Close your eyes.”

She gives me a confused look but I just smile and place my hand over my own eyes to show her what I need from her.

Very hesitantly, she places both hands over her eyes, sighing deeply in annoyance.

Taking a deep breath, I close my own eyes and concentrate, letting down my walls and accepting the river of thoughts coming from my mate.

“This is silly,” her voice echoes in my head.

“Shhh,”

I whisper, Talia suddenly jumping up and looking around frantically.

“What was that? Did you hear something?” she asks, her eyes opening and scanning the surrounding area.

I laugh a little and gesture for her to close her eyes again.

Natalia

I scan the darkness behind my eyelids when suddenly a little white light appears in the black abyss of my mind.

The faint voice of a woman echoes from the light, singing a sweet lullaby of sorts, and I freeze.

“Where is that voice coming from?” I wonder, looking around the emptiness but only seeing the white light.

Realizing I am alone with my thoughts, I decide to follow the voice towards the light, approaching it cautiously.

Just as abruptly as it surfaced, the white light envelopes me, temporarily blinding me for a few moments before settling back and revealing a room.

The room is large and spacious with a high ceiling, the decor mimicking a forest.

Two tree-like structures stand on opposite sides of the room, a treehouse sitting on the tree on the left and a slide wrapping around the tree on the right.

A rope bridge connects the two trees.

Just below the bridge, there is a large bed with forest covers and pillows.

On the opposite side of the room there is what appears to be a small kitchenette equipped with a sink, a toaster oven, a mini fridge, and cabinets which I assume contain food.

A small table with two chairs sits beside the the left wall and hundreds of books and index cards stored on countless shelves.

Despite this appearing to be a child's room, there are very few toys, only a small stuffed gray wolf sitting on the desk.

To my surprise, there are no windows in the room, an air vent the only means of fresh air, providing ventilation and cool air.

I can make out a bathroom near the entrance of the room, which appears to be bolted shut with a myriad of locks and chains dangling on the door.

This is no child's room, I realize.

This is a prison.

A little boy appears at the desk, hunching over several sheets of paper. He can't be more than 5 or 6 years old.

I come closer to him and to my horror, find that his left eye is completely swollen shut, dark bruises littering the entirety of his face and arms.

He's crying, furiously wiping at his tears with his sleeve as he scribbles "My name is Zane" over and over again on a sheet of paper.

Beside him, there is a pile of sheets repeating the same sentence.

These must be Zane's memories, I whisper.

The locks on the door begin to jingle, the little boy stiffening up in fear.

Finally, after several of the locks are undone, the door swings open, a beautiful woman walking in.

Her kind eyes and warm smile resemble Zane's whenever he looks at Kota.

They must be related, I take note, watching as Zane climbs out of his chair to greet the woman with a hug.

"Hello, my beautiful boy," she giggles as she lifts him into her arms, Zane resting his head on her shoulder pushing in a small cart with food.

He is quite handsome, his piercing blue eyes like the ocean, and he is fit but not bulky.

Zane wiggles out of his mother's arms and rushes to the desk, pulling out a small card with a crudely drawn wolf on the front.

He very timidly pokes the man's arm who is busy setting up the food on the table.

The man looks down at little Zane and grins.

“That for me kid?” He asks, taking the card and reading the words out loud.

“Happy Father’s Day, Wyatt. You smell very nice and you’re not mean. I like you.” he says, his face softening a little.

“Thanks, I’m glad I don’t smell,” he chuckles.

“But I’m not a father yet.”

“Your wife is due any minute now,” the woman laughs, Zane nodding in agreement.

“Zane, sweetie, do you have a card for your Dad?”

Zane’s smile falters slightly but he nods anyway and fishes out another card, this one darker and with no picture on it.

He hands it to the woman who reads it out loud.

“Happy Father’s Day, Dad. I promise to be good now,” she says, her voice cracking a little as she reads before she kneels down and pulls Zane to her.

“You are already a very good boy, my love,” she sighs, trying very hard not to let her tears fall.

“Daddy is just....” she pauses, searching for the right words.

“He loves you, baby. He loves you very much. Just in his own way.” see in her eyes that even she doesn’t believe her own words.

“Why don’t you and I have our lunch, okay?” she forces a smile, little Zane nodding his head.

The woman dismisses Wyatt, the two of them enjoying their meal together.

Zane is very quiet as he eats, careful not to chew loudly or make a mess.

The woman does most of the talking, explaining to him the many birds she saw on her run earlier that day.

The door suddenly bursts open, a tall man storming in.

He stands at about 6ft 4, his bulging muscles and broad shoulders barely contained within his dark suit.

There is a scar just below his ear.

His dark hair is combed back and his eyes are almost black with anger.

“Care to explain why you called me in here, Ellie?” he snaps at the woman.

“I’m due for a meeting in 15 minutes.”

“Our son has a gift for you,” she replies coolly.

She’s his mother? I wonder.

But what about Agnes? The man turns to look at Zane who is trembling in his seat.

“Go on, Zane,”

Ellie nudges him by the arm.

“Show Daddy what you made for him on his special day.”

Zane looks at his father in fear but does not disobey his mother, climbing out of his seat and timidly holding out the card to his father.

The man towers over Zane, glaring at him with flared nostrils keeps his head down, his hand shaking violently as he holds out the card.

“You will look me in the eye when addressing me, boy,” the man spits, Zane remaining frozen in place.

The man then raises his arm and strikes Zane in the face, Zane falling over on the ground with a small cry.

Ellie is on her feet in an instant, screaming at the man.

“Sebastian, you animal!” she snarls, shoving him though he does not budge.

“He was just showing you his card!”

“He did not look me in the eye!” Sebastian retorts.

“A real man looks another man in the eye when he’s talking to him.”

“He’s just a boy!”

Ellie argues, helping Zane to his feet.

“A boy that will one day lead this pack, Elenore,”

Sebastian roars, curling his finger at Zane to come forward.

“And I will not leave behind a weak Alpha to take my place. Understand?”

The little boy straightens himself out as he once again approaches his father. He holds his head high, his freshly split lip quivering slightly as he holds the card out to the tall man.

Tears cling to his eyes but little Zane remains strong, holding them back with all of his might so as not to enrage his father any further.

He breathes heavily, swallowing back the sobs I know he wants to let out.

Despite his shaking legs and tear-stained cheeks, Zane faces his father, my heart swelling with pride at his sheer strength and courage at the card with mild disgust.

“Read it.”

“Sebastian—”

“If he can’t say the words, then he doesn’t deserve to call me father,” Sebastian snarls.

The memory fades into the abyss, leaving me all alone in the pitch black with my heart shattering to pieces at what I just witnessed.

Even more painful than the memory, however, is the realization that I have been unkind to a man who has grown up feeling unloved by someone who should have cherished him.

When I open my eyes, I find Zane staring blankly at the floor, his face devoid of all emotion.

I don't even know what to say to help comfort him, my mind still reeling from all the information I got.

He was a prisoner in his own pack.

Agnes is not his mother.

He is an Alpha...And his father is a monster.

But there are still so many questions swirling in my head.

Where is his biological mother? Who is Agnes? Why is he a rogue now when he was the Heir to the title? Did his pack fall? As I look at Zane sitting in perfect silence, however, I realize that none of these questions matter.

All that matters is that he is willing to show me who he is and for now, that is more than enough.

In time, I will learn more about him.

Without saying a word, I crawl into his lap, Zane gasping as I settle into his arms.

I bury my face in the crook of his neck, wrapping my arms around his stomach.

He doesn't say anything, sit in each other's arms for several minutes, comforting each other with our presence.

Finally, I pull back and cup his cheeks, wanting him to understand that I meant this with every fiber in my being.

“You are the bravest man I’ve ever met” I murmur, leaning my forehead against his.

“I’m so sorry you went through that.”

At first, shock ripples across his face before he finally processes what I said and he bites his lower lip to contain his emotions.

Tears line his eyes but he blinks them away, doing his best to remain strong. But he doesn’t have to be strong anymore.

Not with me.

“Thank you for sharing your gift with me,” I whisper against his lips.

“I don’t fully understand what you did, but it was beautiful.”

An awkward smile stretches across his face and it becomes obvious he’s not used to this many compliments.

It’s adorable to see him so flustered with me but at the same time, my heart breaks knowing he has probably missed out on so many things that I have taken for granted my entire life.

Seeing that we are both being honest and vulnerable, I decide to break my own rule and push myself beyond my comfort zone.

“Can I meet your wolf?” I ask, doing my best to look enthusiastic despite the fire alarms going off in my head.

The last me before an elder.

But Zane has his own wolf, one who deserves a fair chance.

“I would like to thank him....” I add, forcing a smile.

“And you of course, for protecting Kota the other day.” Zane looks nervous, grabbing the phone and typing a question.

“Are you sure?” he types.

The timidness from his childhood still lingers in his eyes, reminding me that despite his incredible power and alpha blood, inside he is still that very shy little boy just wanting to be loved.

“Yes,” I murmur, stroking the side of his face.

“I want to see you. All of you. Even the parts that might scare me.”

Zane hesitates for a moment but when I gently peck his lips, he seems to be on board with my request.

“What is his name?” I ask, wanting to know who I would be speaking with.

“Grayson,” he types, his brows furrowing in a scowl.

“He’s an idiot.”

“I think I decide that for myself,” I chuckle, pecking him again.

I wait patiently as he closes his eyes and when he opens them again, they are no longer brown but gold, swirls of green and honey swimming in his irises.

It’s the most beautiful combination I’ve ever seen.

He very gently slides me off of his lap, rising to his feet and jogging off behind some trees.

I fiddle with my hair as I wait, suddenly very anxious to see Grayson in his wolf form and I stand up on my feet to fix my shirt.

My entire world stops, however, when a silver wolf emerges from the trees, his golden eyes focused only on me.

The wolf gracefully approaches me, my breath hitching in my throat.

I had seen many wolves during my time as Luna, but none compared to Grayson.

The beautiful wolf is covered head to toe with silver fur, each hair glittering with a metallic sheen under the moonlight.

His tail wags with every playful step he takes towards me and I find myself unable to move.

The wolf gently nuzzles his head against mine, his snout lightly brushing my cheek.

I can hear the giant wolf begin to purr, tugging at my shirt as if asking me to follow him.

He leads me to a tiny patch of grass, plopping down on his side to rest.

Unable to resist the temptation of curling up with a warm wolf, I settle in between his paws, gently stroking his head and scratching his ears.

Jack (Christian's wolf) was very temperamental, always on edge and ready to establish dominance over others if they got too close to me.

I constantly found myself facing off with the dominant wolf to protect others from his wrath.

Grayson, on the other hand, seems very different.

Although he too possesses a dominant aura, he appears to be far more relaxed, completely content with just being in my presence.

puppy, Grayson groaning and barking at me.

Ultimately annoyed with my stubbornness, the large wolf rolls over onto his back and stares up at the stars.

Curling up beside him, I watch his chest rise and fall, wondering how on earth it was possible to feel this content with a wolf.

“Thank you for tonight. This has been the best first date ever, ”

I whisper against his chest.

“I can’t wait for our second.”

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Chapter 29: The Boy

Sebastian (Zane’s Dad)

Sara rests on her knees, her ass in the air and her face buried in a pile of pillows.

Her calves are tied to her thighs in a frog tie, her legs spread apart to give me access to her dripping pussy.

She wears a chest harness to keep her arms restrained against her sides, the straps spread across her chest but not over her n****s, so I can still lick and bite them as I please.

Her hands are tied behind her back and there’s a ball gag in her mouth to keep her quiet.

She looks like the perfect little slut, eager to fulfill my every desire.

I push my c**k into her pretty pink p***y, Sara letting out a moan against her gag.

“Did I say you could moan?” I snap.

She shakes her head knowingly and I smirk at her.

“Then you know you must be punished, right?” I say, climbing off the bed to grab my riding crop.

She nods her head, the hint of a smile on her lips.

She tries to sit up but a snarl from me reminds her that I am in charge and she settles back into her position, a glare in her eyes.

Oh, she’s really asking for a punishment, — my wolf, Arden, laughs.

I walk over to her, taking a moment to admire the perfect differences, Sara is exquisite, my wolf and I defiling her body every so often to curb our cravings.

She is the perfect sub, enjoying pain with her pleasure and eagerly adhering to my demands.

We do not like one another but we understand each other in the bedroom, both of us coming to an agreement that we would be sub and dom when together and nothing more when apart.

We are free to take other lovers at our leisure so long as our bedroom remains only ours.

I glide the leather tip of the riding crop over each of her naked shoulders, pushing away her hair before moving the crop along her spine.

Sara arches her back against the sensation, her breath quickening as I grow closer to her ass. I undo her ball gag, Sara licking her lips as she waits for instructions.

“S licks for disobeying me.”

“Only 5?” she purrs, knowing she is pushing me.

I quickly grab her by the neck and lift her so that her back is pressed against my bare chest, Sara doing her best to contain her excitement, but I can smell her arousal growing with the anticipation of her punishment.

“Since you seem so keen on talking back, let’s see what else that little mouth can do,” I challenge her, a smirk curling on her lips.

I bend her over so that she’s at eye level with my c**k.

“Eat,” I demand, Sara licking her lips eagerly.

“Yes Alpha,” She says, wiggling her ass for my benefit.

I grip her by her hair so it doesn’t get in her way and guide her the back of her throat. I pull her back a little, her cheeks hollowing as she sucks me.

“You like that?”

I growl, slapping the crop against Sara’s bare ass.

“You like being my little w***e?”

She responds by flicking her tongue over my tip, a shiver of pleasure running up my spine. She takes me in all the way again and I begin to f**k her little mouth, watching in ecstasy as she chokes on my girth over and over again.

When I'm close to my climax, I pull myself out, her mouth making a loud pop.

She whimpers as I force her on her knees again.

“Open,”

I command, grabbing my c**k in my hands to finish myself off.

Sara opens her mouth, sticking out her tongue to drink in my c*m, her tongue swiping over her lips to get every last drop.

I grab a cloth to wipe her chin and she smiles greedily at me.

“Thank you Alpha,” she purrs.

“Thank you for cuming in my mouth.”

“I'm not finished with you yet,” I snap, pushing her face back into the pillows and forcing her ass in the air.

“You still need your other punishment.”

“Yes, Alpha,” she giggles, wiggling her ass.

“Please punish me.”

“15 licks for having a smart mouth, but you can ask to stop if I need words.”

“Yes, Alpha,” she replies.

“I will use my safeword,”

Satisfied that we are both in agreement with this punishment, I bring down the crop on her bare ass, Sara yelping as her skin turns bright pink where the leather tip meets her body.

The smell of her arousal thickens, the scent making me rock hard again.

“Thank you, Alpha,”

She pants, a little c*m dripping down the side of her thighs.

I give her 14 more licks with the crop, each time Sara thanking me for the punishment.

Knowing she won't last much longer, I spread her legs as far as she can and push my tip in between the entrance of her p***y folds.

“You ready to be my good little w***e?” I ask, peppering kisses on her shoulder.

“You gonna behave for your Alpha?”

“Yes, sir,” she whines as I move my tip along the seam of her slit to drive her crazy.

“I-I'll be good now.I...I-I promise.”

I tease her a little longer, her toes curling and uncurling as she tries to fight off her moans.

“You may moan now,” I relent, Sara letting out a long sinful moan of relief.

“Thank you, Alpha,” she sobs, her body writhing as I pump into her.

The sound of slapping skin and her moans create an erotic symphony, bringing me closer and closer to the edge.

Sara's legs her high.

"Please, Alpha. Please let me c*m,"

She cries, tears lining her eyes.

"c*m for your Alpha,"

I roar, Sara's body going stiff as she explodes all over me, a loud sob escaping her lips.

Her muscles tighten as shock after shock of ecstasy courses through her body, my own orgasm ripping through me.

It takes me a few minutes to compose myself as I come down from my high, my labored breaths kissing her shoulders.

I undo Sara's harness, inspecting her skin for welts and bruising.

Aside from her very red ass and some indents from the straps, she appears to be unharmed.

I start a hot bath for her, pouring in her favorite rose-scented bath bomb and rose petals before carrying her into the tub.

She hands me the sponge and I take my time washing her body, paying special attention to her sore ass cheeks.

"It was really good today," Sara reassures me as I massage her scalp.

“Thank you for taking such good care of me, Alpha. It is during these intimate moments that I find Sara tolerable, almost likable even, both of us a little vulnerable from the scene.

“My pleasure,” I murmur, rinsing out the shampoo from her hair.

“Did you enjoy the punishment?”

“I did,” She smirks.

“I love when you punish me...almost as Her dark blue eyes twinkle with mischief, but I know better than to fall for her s**t. Our scene is over and we have a meeting in 2 hours.

When she’s finished with her bath, I carry her back to the bedroom and dry her off, handing her a bottle of water while I lay her across my lap to massage her cheeks with some lotion.

I rub and squeeze each perfect cheek until I loosen up her muscles before grabbing a comb to brush her hair.

Prior to marrying Sara, my mate, Elenore, enjoyed when I brushed her hair after a scene.

It is the one act I still continue to keep her memory alive.

I do not normally let myself think about her too much, but with Zane gone, I find it hard to not feel so lonely.

Elenore and I were once a happily mated couple, two high school sweethearts who turned out to be fated to each other.

Shortly after I was given the Beta title, we found out we were pregnant and everything seemed to be falling into place...

But that all changed the day Cyrus died.

At 19, I became Alpha and from one day to the next, I had the weight of the world on my shoulders.

My life completely shattered the day little Johnny was killed and I became colder, crueler, and angrier.

A part of Ellie's soul never healed at the loss of our child and the bright light in her eyes dimmed to a faint spark.

I wanted revenge for what was taken from me and my mate too loving with him.

She never got the chance to show Jonathan all the love she could give, so she gave it all to Zane, turning him into a stuttering fool.

Ellie could not see how she was spoiling the boy, so I tried to correct her mistakes and teach Zane to be a real man.

But it was all in vain.

Our fights only got worse and worse until, finally, she broke.

"I'm leaving you," she told me on the day of the King's party.

"And I'm taking my baby with me."

At first, I did not believe her, but when I looked into her eyes, I realized she wasn't kidding.

"I'll take the things that I need and nothing more," she said quietly as she prepared a plate of snacks for Zane.

“And don’t worry, I don’t expect any of your money to help me raise him. You never treated him like a son anyways, so why start now?”

Arden was furious, wanting to remind her exactly who she belonged to, but I stormed away from her, not wanting to cause a scene.

And then the attack began...

Ellie called my name through our mind-link...but in my anger, I chose to ignore her cries for help thinking Wyatt would find her instead.

He never reached her in time and the last piece of my heart shattered.

I had no more love left to give, not even to Zane.

“What’s it like to have a mate?” Sara asks, interrupting me. I stare at her blankly for a moment, reminding myself that Sara has never known what it is like to be loved by a mate.

At 46 years old, she has yet to cross paths with her true mate.

“It’s a burden,” I sigh, shaking my thoughts from Elenore and Zane.

“Like a heavy weight on your chest making it hard for you to breathe.”

“Was Elenore a burden?” She asks, a hint of jealousy in her voice.

“Elenore was a weakness,”

I growl, Arden snarling at my disrespect towards his former mate.

“That’s all a mate will ever be. A weakness.”

“If Caine ever finds his mate-”

“He will reject her,”

I snap, tossing the comb off to the side and climbing off the bed to get dressed.

“He will reject her or he will not take my title.”

“But you had a mate—”

“And look what that got me: A dead mate and two dead kids!”

I roar, panting furiously as I feel my anger course through my veins.

“Caine should learn from my mistakes.No mates.Just a handful of heirs to continue the bloodline.”

Sara stares at me in silence as I slide on my boxers.

“Get dressed.We have a meeting with the King.Try not to look like a whore.”

“f**k you,”

Sara snarls as I storm out of the bedroom.

I find my blue business suit already steamed and pressed in my office and begin to layer on my clothes.As I finish tying up my

“What is it?”

I sigh, knowing he was about to ruin my already dampened mood.

When he says nothing, I lose my patience.

“If I have to repeat myself, I’ll repaint my walls with your blood.”

“Sir, we can’t find the boy.”

I immediately stop to look at him.

“What?”

“The scouts lost track of his trail,”

Wyatt mumbles, my anger only growing at his meekness.

“Speak up!”

“He was last seen with a human and a child. They were headed to the Seattle airport.”

What the hell could that boy be doing with a human and a child? I wonder, trying to piece together all the information.

“How long since you lost him?” I ask.

“A week, sir,”

Wyatt gulps, shifting nervously on his feet.

“We tracked his flight to San Francisco but then lost him in the airport. He could be anywhere in California, sir.”

I grab Wyatt by the collar of his shirt, pinning him against the wall.

“Do you have any idea what could happen should Ravenstone discover that—”

“Should Ravenstone discover what?”

Sara asks as she walks in dressed in an elegant red bodycon dress, a coy smile on her lips.

I ignore her question, grabbing her by the hand and leading her to the door.

“Let’s go.”

“I said ‘Let’s go!’” I snap, pushing her out the door.

“Find the boy,”

I mind-link Wyatt as I follow my wife out of the office.

We drive in silence to the King’s mansion, though I can tell Sara is fuming that I refuse to tell her about what’s going on.

“Let it go,” I sigh, pulling up to the mansion.

“I am your Luna,”

She snaps, crossing her arms over her chest.

“You should not be hiding anything from me, especially if it has something to do with Ravenstone!”

My jaw clenches, my patience reaching its limit. I put the car in park and wrap my hand around Sara’s neck, slamming her against her head rest .

I said, “Let it go”

I snarl through gritted teeth, Sara nodding slowly at me before I let her go. I give her a minute to compose herself before we step out of the car and join hands..

A group of guards meet us at the door of the mansion and lead us to the meeting room.

The doors are pulled open, a guard announcing our titles to the King.

It appears we are the last pack to arrive, several other Alphas and Lunas already gathered around the table, standing on their feet as they wait for us to take our places.

Once settled, King Arthur begins the meeting.

“Alpha Richard has a message for you, Alpha Sebastian,”

King Arthur gesturing to Sara’s older brother, Richard, who sits directly
“Yes, indeed. But first, my father sends his regards,”

Alpha Richard says coolly as he orders his beta to fetch something.

Sara snickers beside me and I pinch her thigh to shut her up.

“Glad to hear he’s still alive and kicking,” I smile, though it doesn’t reach my eyes.

“Do send him my regards as well, Dick.”

“Of course,” the Alpha replies with a tight smile, an awkward silence filling the room.

The Beta returns with a box, a disgusting stench emanating from the cardboard.

The box is set on the table, Alpha Richard rising to his feet and reaching into it.

He carefully lifts out a severed head, the women in the room gasping in shock as blood drips from its torn neck.

There's a note stapled to the man's eyeball, my face paling when I recognize him as one of the scouts Wyatt sent to track Zane.

"This was found on my territory this morning by my guards," Alpha Richard explains.

"He's one of yours, is he not?" Richard asks, though he doesn't wait for me to reply before continuing.

"I believe the note is for you."

He carefully plucks the note from the scout's eye and slides it across the table, a trail of blood staining the surface.

"Read it out loud,"

King Arthur demands.

"Do your Allies know he's still alive, Seba? – TR" Seba as a kid whenever he came to visit Cyrus.

"Who is the 'He' Toran is referring to?" King Arthur demands.

"No one we should be concerned about," I reply, wishing with all my might Zane would just quietly disappear.

"Oh really?"

Alpha Richard replies.

"Because it seems to me like you're hiding something from your fellow Allies."

“Spit it out, Alpha and I’ll decide if it’s something we should be concerned about,”

King Arthur commands, my wolf unable to fight his King’s order.

Arden steps forward to reply.

“Elenore’s son is still alive.”

“Which one?”

The King, Richard, and Sara all ask in unison.

“The second one.”

“Where is he?” Sara snaps.

“And why the f**k didn’t you tell me?!”

“Like I said, he’s none of your concern. The boy is somewhere no one will find him,” Arden snarls.

“So we can move on-”

“Move on?” Sara scoffed.

“You expect us to move on when you’ve been hiding a son from me, your wife!”

“It’s no secret that I had two sons before I married you!” I explode.

“And what I do with him is none of your business. Caine is still my only heir, so you and Richard have nothing to worry about. Scarlett Haven’s

next Alpha will be a descendant from your pack.” voice shaking the walls.

The room fills with silence for the King to speak.

“The boy is a silver wolf and those are far and few in between. Gaining another strong wolf in this war would put us at an advantage over Ravenstone and their allies. Bring him to me and I will see to it that he becomes a strong soldier in my army.”

I take control again, shoving Arden to the back of my mind for opening his mouth.

“But sir-”

“That’s an order,”

King Arthur roars.

“Yes, sir,” I reply through gritted teeth.

“Oh and Sebastian,”

King Arthur calls out as he dismisses the meeting, his voice lowering an octave.

“If you ever keep another secret from me again, I will kill you myself.”

***Sarat**

Sebastian refuses to give me any answers regarding his secret son, ignoring me the entire ride to the pack.

I scream and kick but my little tantrum proves futile, Sebastian pulling up to the pack-house without so much as a second glance in my direction.

Determined to get some answers, I follow him into the office, refusing to leave as he calls in Beta Xavier and Gamma Wyatt.

“Not until you tell me who the boy is!” I snap.

Sebastian eyes me carefully before once again sighing.

“He’s not here. Wyatt will go get him.”

“Then Caine should go with him,” I demand, refusing to give in.

“He has a right to know who his brother is before you send him off to war with the King’s soldiers.

“If I do this, will you shut the f**k up?”

Sebastian replies, my earlier tantrum seeming to have broken him. I nod like a good girl and he gestures to the door.

“Then bring Caine in and get out. The King wants the boy for war, but if he proves to be stronger than Caine, Sebastian will have no choice but to take away our baby’s title. We have to ensure our baby takes his rightful place as Alpha, Rhea, my wolf, hisses as we leave to search for Caine. I sigh knowing she is right and find my son terrorizing an omega in the laundry room.

“Caine!” I command, Caine rolling his eyes at me as he removes his hands from inside the crying omega’s skirt.

“Your father is calling you.”

“I’m busy,” he snaps, stealing a kiss from the omega’s lips, the poor girl shaking in fear.

“Leave,” I nod to her, the girl scrambling out of the room and thanking me on the way out.

“What the f**k!”

Caine snarls but I silence him with a “Your father is sending you on a mission,”

I smile calmly, Caine’s mood lightening up.

“Really?” He asks, standing up straighter.

“When? What am I doing? Killing, torturing? I’ll do anything-”

“You’re going with Wyatt to find your older brother,” I sigh.

“My what?” He asks, his smile faltering.

“Older brother? B-but I’m the Alpha.”

“Well, as it turns out, you’re not the only one in line for the title,” I reply as I inspect my nails.

“But you’re going to make sure you’re the only remaining heir left.”

“What do you mean?” Caine asks, my patience wearing thin.

“Everyone knows the oldest son takes the title.”

“Exactly,” I smirk, stepping closer to him so that only he hears me.

“Which is why you’re going to find your brother and kill him before he can take what’s yours.”

The Silent Alpha by StephanieLight Chapter 30

Chapter 30: Mistakes

***Zanet**

My eyes flutter open to find Natalia nestled up by my side, her head resting on my shoulder and her nose buried in my neck. She drapes her left arm over my chest while tucking her left leg over my thigh.

To my right, I feel Kota curled up under my arm, snoring lightly in his sleep as he clutches his little wolf tightly to his chest.

For a moment, I remain perfectly still, afraid the mirage would fade away if I moved.

The sparks tingling across my body from Talia's touch, however, make me realize I'm not dreaming at all, both my mate and our pup nestled safely in my arms.

This must be what heaven feels like... I tell myself as my heart beats uncontrollably in my chest.

It feels so natural to hold them in my arms, as if they were always meant to be with me.

Kota suddenly stirs, sitting up on his knees and glancing around the room in confusion.

Messy hairs stick out from his head and his pajamas are all ruffled and crooked.

He wipes his tired eyes and looks up at me with a grin.

"I'm hungry," he yawns, stretching out his little arms.

He lays his head on my stomach and gives me puppy eyes.

“Can we make waffles, Zane?”

I smile at him, afraid to move and disturb Talia in her sleep.

It to me and then roll her to her side to free myself from her grasp.

My heart beats frantically as she stirs before she settles into her new spot comfortably, sighing contently in her sleep.

I help Kota brush his teeth and wash his face before we head into the kitchen where I spend a couple of minutes watching videos on my phone on how to make waffles.

Kota is practically dancing on his toes with excitement as I gather ingredients for his breakfast.

“Can I help you?” he asks eagerly, picking up a whisk with a cheeky grin.

“Auntie Gwen lets me help her.Can I please help you?”

His puppy eyes make it incredibly difficult to say no and I put a chair against the counter for him to stand on before placing the mixing bowl in front of him.

I hand measuring cups filled with ingredients to Kota, the little boy happily pouring them into the bowl and repeating the measurements out loud to me.

Placing my hand over his, I guide his little hand through the motion of whisking the ingredients together until we have a nice batter.

I pull out the waffle iron, staring at the infernal contraption until I finally figure out how to turn it on.

“Can I pour?” Kota asks as we both look at the iron.

I give him a measuring cup with some batter and steady him up over the counter while he pours.

“Oopsies...” he gasps as some of the batter spills over the counter.

“I’m sorry, Zane.” a beating and a week with no visits from Mom.

The little boy hides his batter covered fingers behind his back, unsure what my reaction will be to his mistake. I never want him to be afraid of me...

“I-It’s o-kay,” I smile, closing the iron and sitting Kota on the chair. I cup his cheeks, not wanting him to feel like he is in trouble for making a mistake.

“A-a-accidents happen. We j-just ha-have to c-clean it up, o-okay?”

I hand him a towel and help him wipe the counter, high-fiving him when the mess is all gone.

As I flip the waffle iron over to cook the other side, Kota taps me on my shoulder.

“Zane,” he says timidly, looking up at me with his large blue and brown eyes.

“Are you my daddy?”

My entire body stiffens but Grayson is more than willing to respond. Say yes, he grumbles. He belongs to us just as much as Talia. He’s ours.

The question, however, can only be answered by Talia.

“I- I-like you and your m-mommy very m-much,” I reply with a nervous smile.

“B-but I don’t know what I-I am to you yet.”

“I know what you are,” He giggles.

“You’re a wolf.”

He bursts out into a howl.

“Can I be a wolf like you?” I don’t want him to be a wolf like me...

A wolf who struggles to speak, a wolf who makes too many mistakes, a wolf who will inevitably always fail.

forehead.

“And y-you will be a wolf e-even great-er than m-me.”

He gives me another howl and settles back into his chair, resting his head on the counter.

“Waffles...” he hisses, watching the steam rise from the iron.

Soft footsteps suddenly make their way down the stairs and I look up to see Talia walking towards us, her arms stretching out tiredly as she yawns.

Even in her sleepy state, she looks incredibly beautiful, my heart nearly skipping a beat at the mere sight of her.

“Mommy look! We made waffles!”

Kota squeals, climbing out of the chair and rushing over to greet his mother. She raises an eyebrow at me in curiosity as she lifts her pup in her arms, kissing his cheeks softly.

The timer on the waffle iron goes off and I hurriedly remove the hot waffle out of the iron before it burns.

Spreading butter and syrup on the waffle, I place it on a plate in front of Kota who smiles proudly at it and shoves the plate to his mother.

“Mommy, taste our waffle,” he beams at her, poking his finger into a pool of syrup and licking it off.

A small smile curls on Talia’s lips and she timidly takes a bite, my heart sinking when she swallows with great difficulty and smacks her lips to remove the taste from her tongue buckle from the pressure of her silence.

“That is...That is an interesting taste,” she gags, taking the plate and throwing the waffle in the trash.

“What umm...What sugar did you use?” She asks me, the soft smile still on her lips.

I point to the white powder in a jar sitting on the counter and she sticks her finger inside to taste it.

Her face scrunches up as she bursts into laughter, the sound making my heart soar. How could a laugh sound so beautiful?

“Taste it,”

She giggles, pushing the jar towards me. I nervously taste the sugar and nearly choke on my own cough when I realize the jar of sugar actually contains salt.

Talia can't hold back her laughter, the sound contagious enough to make Kota and I join her. I throw out the salty batter while Talia locates the real jar of sugar for us to use.

"Let's try this again," she teases, measuring out the proper amount of sugar and handing it to me.

Our fingers touch in the exchange, sparks tingling up my hand.

A blush creeps up on Talia's cheeks as she pulls her hand away to tuck some hair behind her ear.

"K-kota," she coughs to clear her throat.

"Come help me with the milk and butter."

Kota happily skips over to his mother who sets him on the chair for him to see over the counter.

The two of them whisk the wet ingredient together, Talia counter.

My hands shake as I sift the flour and baking powder together, suddenly feeling very self-conscious about messing up again.

The overwhelming thoughts of failure collide in my head, making it hard to concentrate.

Don't forget the salt, Grayson teases, and I shove him away to the recess of my mind.

As I reach for the jar of salt, I accidentally knock over my bowl of dry ingredients, a cloud of flour puffing in the air.

I stare blankly at Talia and Kota, afraid to move an inch.

“Uh oh, Zane,” Kota gasps, breaking the silence.

“Uh-oh.Clean up time!” he sings.

He climbs out of his chair and scurries into the closet to grab a broom.

Kota struggles to maneuver the tall handle, wrapping both arms around it as he pushes the broom in a sweeping motion.

Unfortunately, the helpful little tyke only spreads the flour all over the floor, making an even bigger mess.

“It’s okay Kota,”

Talia chirps, taking the broom from him.

“I’ll sweep.”

I hide my trembling hands behind my back and remain in the corner, not wanting to make any more mistakes.

“It’s okay, Zane,” Kota says, tugging at my hands.

“Accidents happen.”

I force a smile on my face and look over at my mate, nearly jumping when I realize she’s right in front of me hand.I flinch involuntarily and she stops, a look of sadness in her eyes.

“You have flour in your hair,” she whispers, carefully reaching into my hair and ruffling it up, another cloud of flour filling the air.I blink at her, my cheeks flushing in embarrassment at my own weakness.

She stands on the tips of her toes and kisses me on the nose, resting her head against my forehead. She's not Dad, Grayson sighs. She's not him...

"You're okay with me," she murmurs, warm sparks tingling up my arm when she timidly places her hand over mine, tugging me over the counter. I almost pull away, fearing my hands might disgust her, but she doesn't let go.

My hands stop trembling with her soothing touch and my racing heart finally calms down.

Just as suddenly as she touched me, Talia pulls her hand away and smiles nervously at me.

"I'll get you some more flour," she whispers, her own heart pounding in her chest.

"I trust you'll find the sugar this time?"

She teases me, my cheeks burning bright red. Our third attempt at waffle making finally bears fruit, Kota smiling giddily as Talia serves him up his breakfast.

Agnes makes her way to the table and I proudly serve her a very fluffy waffle.

"I see you and Talia are getting along much better," she signs, yet?" she chuckles, "Stop talking,"

I sign back, groaning audibly.

"Everything okay?" Talia asks, raising an eyebrow at me curiously.

I nod my head, Agnes teasing me relentlessly with her kissing signs and wiggling brows.

Luckily for me, Talia doesn't seem to pick up on the meaning, but of course, curious Kota wants to find out.

"What is Agnes doing?" he asks, micking her sign.

"She's speaking with her hands," Talia replies, holding up her hands to demonstrate.

"Like this." She spells out his name for him.

"What did you say?" Kota asks, attempting to replicate her signs but failing.

"I said KOTA," Talia replies, grabbing his hands and folding his fingers to make the four letters.

"K, O, T, A. See? KOTA," she smiles.

Kota tries his best to sign but very quickly forgets how to fold his fingers and shrugs.

"What did Agnes say?" he asks his mother.

"I don't know," Talia shrugs, my face turning bright red.

"What does this mean?" She asks, pinching her fingers and bringing her hands together so they touch.

I shake my head at her, shoving a large chunk of waffle into my mouth.

Talia narrows her eyes suspiciously at Agnes and I but breakfast despite Agnes's best efforts to embarrass me and Agnes goes off to the Main pack house to take care of baby Emile.

Talia is off today from working at the clinic, leaving the three of us with nothing to do.

It's a particularly hot day so Talia suggests we go outside for some fun with water.

We walk down to the pack drugstore where Talia purchases a kiddie pool and some sunscreen for Kota.

She notices me staring at a bag of multicolored balloons attached to black sticks in the seasonal toys aisle.

"Don't tell me you've never played with water balloons before," she laughs, her smile widening when she realizes I haven't.

"Well, we'll just have to fix that." She grabs five packs of the balloons and pays at the register, Kota jumping excitedly at her feet.

Natalia

Back at the guest house, I coat Kota in a thick layer of sunscreen, his pale skin very sensitive to the sun compared to my darker complexion. I dress him in a pair of shorts and flip flops, Kota very excited for a chance to play with water. I don't have a bathing suit so I opt for a pair of shorts, a black tube top, and some sandals.

We make our way down to the kitchen where I find Zane hard basketball shorts and a plain white t-shirt. I can make out a few scars on his legs but pretend I don't notice them, knowing he is very likely ashamed of his body.

Zane turns a bright shade of red when he looks at me and he becomes visibly flustered, nearly dropping the tangerine he's peeling.

It is incredibly adorable and rather refreshing to meet a clumsy Alpha.

All the ones I had ever met were very composed and domineering, even in the presence of their mates.

Christian himself was usually unimpressed by my efforts to look good for him but on the rare occasion that I succeeded, he would just look at me like a meal.

Zane, however, always looks at me as if my mere presence were a gift to him, something for him to cherish always, even if I just rolled out of bed.

I don't fully understand what it is he sees in me and the very cynical part of me believes one day he'll wake up and realize I am not what he wants...

Just like Christian.

The clash of a butter knife colliding on the floor brings me out of my thoughts, Kota bursting into laughter as Zane stumbles to pick up the knife. I push away my stupid thoughts, reminding myself that I need to give Zane a chance too.

"Silly wolf," Kota giggles, rushing over to grab Zane's hand.

"Come on! Let's go play!"

The Guest House lawn merges with the backyard of the Pack house, creating a wide open space in the middle of the woods..

There's a beautiful poolside pavilion with an outdoor fireplace and kitchen closer to the pack house but for the most part, the off into the surrounding trees.

Kota drags Zane outside, instructing him to bring the kiddie pool and unwind the hose. I grab the balloons on my way out and join them in the center of the yard.

“Okay Zane. These are self-tying balloons,” I explain to him.

”

You just connect the top here to the nozzle of the hose until the balloons are full and shake the tubes when you’re done.” I demonstrate with the first pack, 25 balloons filling at once and falling into the kiddie pool.

He tries for himself, watching in amazement as each balloon swells with water until we fill up the entire kiddie pool. I pick up a balloon and hold it up to Zane.

“And now we just—” I stop mid sentence and break the balloon on Zane’s head, water exploding all over his hair.

“Use it,” I grin, daring him to do the same.

Zane stares at me blankly before his brown eyes morph into a golden color, letting me know Grayson is in charge now.

The wolf smirks at me, bending over to grab the hose still spilling water. I slowly back away, trying my best to hold back my giggles.

“Grayson, don’t you dare,”

I warn, bending over to grab some balloons for my defense.

The wolf shoves his thumb into the mouth of the hose, spraying me with a fan of water.

I squeal as the cold water hits my skin, throwing the water balloons in my hands in Grayson's Grayson chases Kota and I around the yard with the hose, laughing like a child as he soaks us in water.

Kota runs back to the kiddie pool to grab ammunition but ends up tripping into the pool, giggling hysterically as he pops several balloons on himself.

Grayson fishes him out of the tiny pool and throws him over the shoulder, letting out a howl as Kota laughs.

The two of them chase me around the yard with balloons, our screams and laughter echoing off the surrounding forest.

Finally, my clumsy ass trips over a rock and I fall, Grayson and Kota towering over me.

Kota holds me down with the threat of two balloons in his hands while Grayson runs off to grab the kiddie pool.

I try to bargain with Kota to help me attack Grayson, but the little traitor only grins at me.

Grayson returns with the kiddie pool, the water swishing back and forth as he holds it over his head.

“Don't you dare!”

I squeal, covering my head with my hands. I gasp in shock as Grayson dumps the cold water and balloons on my head, Kota bursting into evil laughter at me.

The wolf winks at me as I glare at him, very pleased with himself.

He picks me up abruptly, my legs automatically wrapping around his waist as I yelp and my arms hooking around his neck.

It feels so natural to be in his arms and even more natural when he leans into me, pressing his lips against mine in a soft kiss.

My lips take a life of their own, kissing him back with equal eyes looking at me as if I were the most precious gift to him.

The wind suddenly begins to pick up, Kota's teeth chattering as he shivers.

"We should clean up," I whisper as Zane puts me down.

"Kota needs his towel."

Zane nods and runs off the house to grab our towels while I instruct Kota to help me pick up the balloon debris.

"We have to pick up all the balloons," I explain to him.

"We don't want a little bird or an animal eating them. It's bad for them. We scour the yard for the balloon pieces, Kota skipping alongside me. As we get closer to the woods, I hear a low snarl that makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.

"What is a pathetic human doing in a pack like this?" A low voice growls.

A tall young man suddenly appears from the trees, Kota holding onto my leg and hiding behind me.

The man is easily over 6 feet tall with dark brown hair and bright blue eyes spitting fire at me.

The domineering stance he holds himself with makes it clear that he is an Alpha so I do my best to look strong despite the fear bubbling inside me.

“I don’t think it’s any of your concern what I’m doing here,” I retort, slowly backing away with Kota.

“So you can f**k off-.”

The space between us disappears, the man towering over me with a sinister smirk on his lips.

“Looks like someone needs to volunteer.”

Before he can take another step forward, a silver blur rushes past me.