## Chapter 9 - Casen

And there it is. The thing that has been swirling around our minds for months. No...years.

Corinda has been so cut off from us. She doesn't let us in. Not into her emotions. Not into her thoughts. Not into her mind via the mindlink, unless she has something that she wants to say. We don't know anything about what she's thinking.

Corinda stares at Severn, her mouth gaping open in astonishment. "
What?" It comes out in a whisper, barely heard in the stillness of the
forest.

Severn's eyes are full, pain and grief dripping down his face. "Tell me I'm wrong. Tell me that you still want to be with us. Tell me that you still love us and can put this behind us. Because if not, I'd rather that you reject me now. I'd rather us be done - " his voice breaks and he has to swallow before he can continue. "I'd rather us be done than continue like this."

My heart is beating so hard I feel like Brandon has to hear it back in the cave. His mates have to know through their mindlink that something earth shattering is happening where we are. Something that could rip my world apart. If they rejected each other, where would that leave me? I'd lose one of them. No!

I expect Corinda to fall at his feet, to tell him that he's wrong and beg for him to take the words back. But she just stares at him, astonished.

"What are you doing?" I scream at her. Her wide eyes turn toward

me, her mouth open and closing like a fish.

"He just said that he wants you to reject him! Tell him that he's wrong!" My hands gripping my pants in an attempt to keep my body together, to stop my emotions from ripping me apart.

It seems to surprise Corinda enough that she comes out of her stupor. She runs to Severn, reaching her hands out to touch him, though she hesitates, obviously afraid that he'll push her away. " Sevy! Severn, of course I love you. Of course I want to be with you!" Her desperation showing in her face.

Severn pulls Corinda into his arms, hugging her to him. I'm afraid to break up the delicate balance between them. I love them both so, so much. I can't...I just can't lose them.

"I'll try," she whispers into Severn's chest. "I'll try to let it go. It has just consumed so much of me. So many of my thoughts. Even after their deaths, it doesn't feel like enough. It doesn't fill the hole. I'm gonna need help."

"We'll help. You just have to let us." He pushes a strand of hair from her face and looks intently into her eyes.

She nods, tears falling from her cheeks. "I'm - I'm so sorry, Sevy. I'm sorry that I made you doubt my love for you. I will try. I will do my best to push it away. To forget."

I walk over, wrapping my arms around them from behind Corinda. "We don't want you to forget, Rin. We haven't. We never will. But we've worked on our grief together. Its made us stronger. Its brought Sev and I closer together." I kiss the nape of her neck. "Give us some of your grief. Let us in."

She tenses, making herself smaller in our arms. Her fear is palpable.

Severn and I both push lightly at her inner shields, almost as if we are caressing a finger down a barrier.

"Please, Rin. Let us in." Severn pleads.

She hesitates for another second. I feel the barrier shiver. Shake. Fall.

And then blackness swallows us all.

