

Chapter 11

Temperance

My heart races in my chest when I find myself face down in the dirt. Nova is completely drained as the wolfsbane burns through our system. I try to pull the poisoned spike from my leg when I feel hands grip my legs. I kick, thrashing violently as I'm dragged from the cliff edge. I can hear fighting, hear wolves tearing each other apart when my vision slowly returns and Nova recedes.

The spike comes out of my skin as I'm dragged across the rocky earth. A scream erupts out of me, and the stars taunt me as I give up, knowing it is inevitable, knowing what's coming.

"Nova?" I murmur to her when I feel my legs drop, my entire body aches, unused muscles aching and burning when he shoves my legs apart. His putrid breath on my neck and his face too close, take away the sight of the stars peeking through the treetops.

"Close your eyes," Nova whispers, her voice barely audible in my head as she keeps slipping further away.

"Remember when Lulu made those dream catchers?" Nova whispers, trying to flood my memory with washed-out grainy memories before Lulu, too, was killed, along with the rest of the women. Lulu was my babysitter when I was a small child.

"Yes—"

“Then Satish came along and beat you for wandering away from the pack...fight... get up!” Shadow screams from somewhere. I tilt my head, looking for her.

“Fight, I’m sick of playing dead, fight, let me out, Nova!” Shadow screams, yet her words confuse me.

“No! Fighting gets us worse,” Nova retorts when I clutch my head, pain explodes in my skull and my vision blurs, while I thrash, feeling some tug of war inside, ripping my skull apart as Shadow screams from somewhere, and Nova argues back.

“I’m done being their bitch! It’s time she knows! Now submit! Drop the veil,” Shadow screams angrily, and I feel my blood thicken in my veins, turning ice-cold when I realize her voice is in my head somehow. My vision turns white, and I call out for Shadow, trying to see past the light that is stealing my vision and making my head pound.

“Know what? Shadow, help me! Where are you?”

“I am you!” she screams, and I jolt, a shivery feeling ebbing through me, and I feel her. The tether flickers as Nova gives up when the man trying to have his way with me punches me. I blink, staring up at the canopying trees dazedly.

“Accept me!” Shadow screams!

“Shadow?” I whisper as my vision blurs, and I dig my nails into his shoulders and scratch at his chest when he slaps me. Blood pools in my mouth, and Shadow snarls when I feel her, feel her just as I do Nova, living inside me, taking up space in my head.

“Accept me!” she screams furiously.

“Don’t. Don’t do it Temperance, she’ll kill us all!” Nova yells. But why? She can help us. Why doesn’t Nova want her to help?

“I can’t use this body unless you accept me. Do it now!” Shadow snarls.

“I...” I gasp, and my vision clears to see the furious man above me. His face is highlighted. So does every line and crease as my vision enhances.

“Freeze!”

The man turns stiff as a board above me. As the voice booms the order and my head turns to see another man, dread pools in my stomach when I notice he too is naked and headed our way.

“No, no, we have to run,” Shadow tells me, but I am caught in a trance. Gold tendrils sliver down his arms, and his hands glow as brightly as the golden fluorescent eyes glaring at us.

“What are you doing? Get up, this is our chance run, Temperance! Give me control!” Shadow and Nova both scream at me simultaneously. My head throbs at both their voices in my head, like a pulse, yet I can’t pull my gaze from the man walking with calculating steps down the hill.

Power oozes off him, his aura more frightening than Satish’s. His canines protrude as he speaks again, his words shockingly clear despite the sharp points of his teeth.

“Stand up!” he orders. The man trying to have his way with me does, almost robotically. Sweat runs down his body, seeping from his pores, and I blink the strange trance away, peering up at the man.

“Remove it!” The man snarls, stepping closer. His voice sends a shiver up my spine, and the man blinks, his hands shaking as he grabs his cock between his legs.

“You won’t be needing it where you’re going. I said remove it...” his voice is so cold I become frozen in place, paralyzed by my fear. Shadow is screaming at me, and so is Nova. They’re telling me to run, telling me this man is here to hurt me, too. The man whimpers when I hear flesh tearing, and I am sprayed with blood.

The blood splatter coats me, and I scream, coming out of my daze and scrambling away from him. I feel like throwing up when I see the man holding his cock in his hand, his blood spilling onto the ground at his feet.

He groans as his wolf heals him, stopping his bleeding when sparks brush against my back, and I come to a stop. Looking up, I see the man who ordered him, yet his eyes are trained on the man holding his cock in his hands.

“Please, you can have her. I’ll give her to you,” the man pleads.

The man laughs, and the sound is sinister. “She was always coming with me, but you made a mistake.” I blink up at the man, who trembles, clutching his cock tighter. The sweat seeping from his pores reeks and cascades down his filthy body.

“I.. Alpha Satish... he... made a mistake... I...” the man stutters.

“He did... but he’s not here right now. You are!”

“I’m sorry, she’s no one... You can.”

“No one?” the man questions, and I look up at him. The sharp points of his teeth glint back at me when he smiles sadistically, and my heart thumps rapidly against my chest.

“Now that is where you’re wrong... See Temperance. Temperance is everything. She is mine, and you touched her. Put your filthy paws on her. Do you know why that bothers me?” the man asks, stepping over me and walking toward the trembling man.

I back up slowly, my fingers digging into the dirt as my stomach drops deep inside me, somewhere cold as his aura bleeds out. He walks behind the man, gripping his shoulders, and the man flinches, still clutching his cock in two shaky hands.

The man sobs, shaking his head when my savior or new captor I wasn’t sure dips his head. “You touched my mate.” The word hangs heavily in

the air and the man's eyes widen and his entire body shakes violently. His mouth opens and closes like he can't form words when the man with glowing eyes speaks again.

"Now eat it!" He squeezes his shoulders, and the man whimpers, yet his hands lift.

"All of it," the man orders, and I watch in horror as the man puts his own cock in his mouth and starts chewing. My stomach heaves violently, watching the grotesque scene in front of me. He chokes and gags but can't stop himself. I creep backward, slow as a snail, trying not to draw attention to myself.

Nova and Shadow scream at me to run and escape when I hear footsteps coming up behind me. Turning my head, I see another man, drenched in blood with cuts, grazing his skin.

"Oh, just in time," the man chuckles, and I turn my gaze back to the horror scene before me. The man cries out when my supposed mate grips his shoulders tighter.

"I'm just getting started," the man taunts me when his eyes flick to me. His eyes trail the length of me, and I don't like his scrutinizing gaze when they stop at my breasts, then my hips and thighs.

"You don't need to fear me," he speaks, his eyes flickering oddly.

Don't need to fear him? He just made a man eat his own cock! I swallow but he says nothing more, instead, turning his attention back to the man who tried to rape me.

"Excellent, I love a good show," the newcomer says, sitting down and bracing his elbows on his knees. He chuckles when the man who claims I'm his mate smiles at him.

However, when he makes his next command, I throw up. My stomach heaves and upturns when he makes him slice out his own testicles and eat them, but he doesn't stop there. He then orders him to eat each finger.

It takes me a while to figure out how the man hasn't dropped dead or passed out when I see that every time he orders him to do something. His hands glow brighter, the gold seeping into the man and healing him.

"Please no more, just kill me," the man pleads as he fights the command to bite off his thumb.

"Last one," the newcomer muses, and I feel dizzy when I hear the sickening crunch as he starts chewing it off.

"Now, that isn't so bad, is it?" he taunts when he grabs the rapist's head between his hands. The man's eyes widen, and his hands glow brighter when blood starts seeping from his eyes, nose, and his lips quiver. His mouth opens in a silent scream, and my heart nearly stops in my chest.

It then starts pounding faster. Adrenaline courses through me, each pump of my heart feeling thicker and harder, as it pumps the blood around my body. The sweat spilling from the man's pores turns to blood seeping when he suddenly combusts, exploding and drenching us all in misty blood.

Seeing that, seeing what this monster is capable of, snaps something inside me as fear overtakes me, and I feel Nova shove forward, having regained her strength. The next, I see black as she shoves me into the darkness of my mind when she starts to run. Only this time, I'm not alone in the darkness. This time Shadow is here with me.

"Accept me!" she spits at me, and I shiver, my skin tingling, and I feel like passing out, which is odd when I already see and feel nothing.

"I accept." I breathe out when I hear her thunderous cackle before she roars.

Chapter 10

Eziah

Blood splatters all over me as he explodes between my hands, and so does the rage that enveloped me. It fizzles away, and I'm left with just a puddle of blood, fragmented bones, tissue, and muscle at my feet. Looking around, I try to remember why I was so angry as the cold shivery feeling as it abates makes me shudder.

"I think he's dead," Casen chuckles, wiping his hands on the grass. Malachi presses forward and the moment he does, he searches for her, snapping me back to the present and reminding me what is happening and why.

"Fuck! Where did she go?" Casen jumps to his feet and snarls. My eyes move to where she was sitting, only now she is gone. Malachi growls angrily, forcing the shift at the same time Casen does as we dart after her, following her scent. Her scent is powerfully strong so we know she couldn't have got far, and it only takes us seconds to notice her white wolf darting between the trees.

Pushing the mindlink open, I force it to connect with Casen. "*Fuck, she's quick,*" I tell him.

"*She's headed toward the road. I will go around blocking her off,*" he tells me before I see his wolf, Zyan, detour, veering off and going wide. Malachi gives chase, his paws thumping the ground as he picks up speed. The only issue is: She is smaller and squeezes through where we can't, which slows us down.

Yet as we get closer, panic sets in, and she hesitates, picking up Casen's scent ahead of her. She pauses in the gully, which she slides into. Malachi

pauses and slowly walks along the top. She is stuck, especially when she notices Zyan on the other side, and we were both looking down at her like a fish in a bowl.

“Why is she running?” Malachi asks, confused.

“She’s our mate, but she isn’t acting like one,” he growls. Most are excited and overjoyed to find theirs, but she runs from us.

“Probably because we just killed someone?” I deadpan, though I kinda wish I could take that back now, seeing how spooked she is. However, sometimes I can’t control it. And sometimes I don’t want to.

“Shift back,” I tell him, and Malachi immediately does. Her white wolf turns to face us, her shoulders hunching as I climb down a little. She looks on the verge of attacking us if we get too close, so I slow down, almost stopping, my steps hesitant as she watches with calculating eyes.

“I won’t hurt you, Temperance.”

Her wolf cocks its head to the side, sniffs the air, and shakes its head.

“Nova, Right?” I ask her, trying to remember the name my mother gave me for her wolf. She backs up, jumping when she brushes against a log behind her, thinking something is coming up behind her.

“I’ll take you back to get your friend.... Shadow? But you need to come with me,” I tell her, but she growls, backing up, and I see Zyan across from me creeping closer as he comes up behind her.

“Do you know who I am to you?” I ask. Her wolf doesn’t give any sign she even understands what I’m saying. When I finally get close enough to really look at her as I reach the bottom, my eyes trail over her scrawny wolf.

Her wolf is snow white, but her eyes are the oddest I’ve ever seen, which is saying something since I have gold eyes but hers. She has one blue eye

and the other reddish pink. Malachi urges me closer when Zyan snaps a twig, making her pivot, and the moment she does, she snarls and runs.

“Fuck!” I roar, chasing her and giving Malachi the reins. He takes them without hesitation, shifting and giving chase as she races up the wall of the gully. “You need to mark her!” I snap at him.

“What?” Malachi retorts, knowing it rarely works like that. Most consider it savage for the wolf to mark their mate, taboo, but it’s happened in my family, my mother being one who was marked by both the human and wolf counterparts. My twin was the same, so it is hardly taboo in my family. More like a damn ritual; we have the worst luck with mates.

“She won’t be escaping us again, fucking mark her. I’m done playing hide and seek!” I tell him. He growls, but knows I’m right. At least if she manages to escape us again, we’ll be able to feel her and find her quicker.

Zyan races to catch up to us when I lose her. Then, she comes to some lantana bushes, squeezing beneath them. Her fur catches on the thorny branches and Malachi growls, knowing if we try, we’ll come out looking like a plucked chicken or not come out at all. Her wolf is only tiny, but we certainly wouldn’t squeeze through the dense matted branches. Malachi races along it, trying to find where she’ll come out when we hear her getting tangled, and her wolf whimpers.

Zyan, catching up, moves to the side and follows along the top while we keep checking she doesn’t dart back and go back the way she came. Finding the end of the monstrous plant, I hear rustling and Malachi steps back, waiting for her to pop out. But then, I hear her go back the other way she came. I curse.

“*She’s headed toward you?*” I mindlink Casen. He darts back when she suddenly rushes straight out the side behind us. Malachi turns to chase her when he stops, seeing a blueish-gray wolf burst out of the lantana and runs off.

“Where did that wolf come from?” Casen says when Malachi sniffs the air before he darts after it.

“Malachi?”

“It’s her!” he snaps.

“What are you doing?” Casen yells at me.

“Malachi thinks it’s her!” I tell him, trying to take control of him. “Does he need fucking glasses? It’s the wrong color!”

“It’s her!” He snarls, gaining on the wolf. The wolf looks over its shoulder and I immediately notice the pink and blue eyes. *What the fuck!* Her momentum is thrown off by glancing back, and she stumbles over a broken branch and lunges forward, skidding across the dirt. Malachi wastes no time pouncing on her.

“Malachi, you can’t be sure!” I snarl at him when he sinks his teeth into the gray wolf’s neck. It whimpers and thrashes, turning savage and biting his chest. The wolf’s potent scent hits me and it is indeed her.

Malachi bites down harder, pinning her wolf and her thrashing slows, then he starts licking her, healing the gaping wound he created, and she is suddenly forced to shift back beneath us.

Malachi steps back, sniffing her and ensuring she is alright before allowing me to force him to shift back. Falling to my knees next to her, I stare at her when I hear Zyan come over; he shifts back and Casen is suddenly crouched next to me.

He looks at her and then at me, his mouth opening and closing. “She was white right, I wasn’t seeing things... then...” he shakes his head.

“She changed,” I whisper, sweeping her hair from her face that is slack from passing out.

“Now what?” Casen asks as I scoop her up into my arms. I tuck her closer, her head resting on my shoulder.

“We go back to her pack, although she is fucking coming this time!” I tell him, peering down at her. I wasn’t letting out of my sight until she was locked in my damn room and I could speak to her. Make her understand she’s safe with me.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” Casen asks.

“Well, I’m not letting her out of my sight in case she runs, besides she’s unconscious. She’ll be out for a few hours,” I tell him, and he nods, knowing I’m right.

I glance at her neck and shoulder where Malachi bit her. It’s healed but definitely scarred, but she’ll get over it, eventually. Besides, hopefully, once I mark her myself, his savagery won’t be as noticeable.

Trudging back through the forest, we are now heaps closer to the pack. The moment we break through the trees, we can see them scattering when my voice booms across the clearing as we approach.

“Don’t move!” I order and they freeze what they’re doing. Men are everywhere in states of panic, some holding bags and getting ready to run.

“We need the packhouse if we want information on her.” Malachi reminds me and I growl.

“Line up!” I yell at them, and even those inside their houses stumble out, lining up out in front of the barbecue area.

“Where’s your Alpha?” I ask one man.

“He fled, abandoned us,” he whimpers when the one beside him sobs.

“Take her,” I tell Casen. He takes her from me, and I move toward the packhouse. Casen follows, standing on the front porch next to me.

The men glance at each other. Their fear is potent in the air, as it should be.

“How many of you know Temperance? Raise your hand,” I ask, and my stomach drops when they all lift a hand in the air.

“Just kill them, and be done with it, some things you don’t want to know,” Casen growls at me.

“Please,” one man begs, and the others whimper and sob. So clearly they know what I’m capable of. As they should, no family is feared more than mine.

“How many of you hurt her?” I ask ignoring their pleas, praying not all of them were her tormentors. However, all of them raise their hands, and I clench my teeth.

My hands balled into fists. “Eziah! Let her tell you, I don’t want to know what they’ve done to her, so please,” Casen pleads, turning and shielding her naked body from them.

“I felt her for fucking years! Felt what they’ve done to her!” I snarl at him.

“Exactly, so make sure it never happens again and be done with it!” Casen snarls back. I suck in a breath, exhaling loudly, trying to tame my temper.

Turning back to face all these men, men I know who harmed her, tortured her, and assaulted her in the worst ways possible. I walk down the steps.

“Go back to your cabins and stand on your porches. Don’t move until I leave your pack,” I order them. Robotically they do, some even running to get away from me.

Calm settles over me, and I see Casen walk inside with Temperance. Whoever said that light wasn’t dark was wrong. Light is the dark’s twin flame. One always chasing the other but never quite catching the other.

One thing with light, it has the ability to burn everything it touches. Darkness swallows everything whole, extinguishes it in the dark, and leaves you blind to your surroundings. But light? No, that illuminates everything, shows you what you wish you didn’t see, shows you what

hides in the shadows that darkness obscures. So, being a Gemini twin, a healer, you don't just heal; you absorb everything, the good, the bad, and the evil.

Feeling her fear for years, I absorbed it too. I might as well have been right beside her in the dark. And now they'll burn for it. Opening my hand, I feel my power sliver down my arms and burst from my fingertips. I've had plenty of time to learn how to use light, pure, burning bright, a spark of life. And one spark is all it takes to burn everything to ashes.

I click my fingers, and sparks zap from my fingertips, catching the dry grass on fire. My eyes burn fiercely as I steer it toward the rows of cabins, and the men shriek and whimper.

"Now no running until we leave," I tell them, taking a seat on the bottom step. The fire moves closer to the first cabin, and his begging and pleading grows louder as the fire licks at the steps. Then his pleas and cries turn to screams. Now they'll scream the way she did.