

Chapter 3

Temperance

“Did he take Nova out of the cage?” I ask her, knowing what that means. It makes my skin itch. I know the answer, but I hope she tells me differently.

“Yes, he said he would be back for me later,” she tells me with a whimper. I sigh, that would explain the blood, and the scent of lingering soap. He always hosed me down before putting me back in the cage. Yet she never tells me what he does with her. I have a faint idea from the voices and the vulgar comments of men I vaguely hear; or by the throbbing pain that sits between my legs and the handprints I can still feel on my thighs and hips. The stickiness that doesn't quite leave my skin; I know it is nothing good.

My body always feels sore and aches, sometimes my scalp hurts, sometimes everything does. Sitting in the darkness, I listen to the TV above, trying to picture the faces of the voices and listening to the story they speak. In the dark for so long, you develop a great imagination, yet that swings both ways. Sometimes what I hear, I don't want to imagine. But my mind conjures it up anyway.

Hearing the TV cut off, I have no idea how much time has passed. Time isn't exactly something I can keep up with. The passing of time is as lost to me as hope. All I know is darkness and darker darkness when Nova locks me away. Heavy footsteps sound above, and I turn my head, clutching the mesh, searching the vast cold space.

The sound of the door handle twisting makes me scoot back, then the heavy sounds of footsteps on the old, creaky stairs make my heart beat faster.

“Nova!” I hiss, but she is too weak, and I gulp as my brother comes closer. I can tell he is closer because of his scent, and the deadly aura radiating out of him, encasing me with fear so strong I can scent it in the air.

“Shadow you’re up!” Satish’s deep, cruel voice orders. Shadow snarls loudly, and I turn my head to look at her.

“Now! Or I can take it out on Temperance! Is that what you want? To listen to her scream?” He snaps, and a lump forms in my throat at the threat as I tug on Nova. But whatever he did, he hurt her badly. I can feel how weak she is. She tries to get up and take the reins, but I know she can’t endure another round.

“It’s okay, Nova. Rest,” I urge. Still, she fights to force the barrier in place, but I push back, I can survive whatever he throws at me if she can. For her, I will be strong just as she is for me.

“What will it be?” Satish snarls at Shadow. His features are obscured as I peer out of the cage, the only thing I can smell is his cologne and his heady wolf scent.

“Very well then!” Satish snaps kicking my cage, and I jump as he crouches in front of me.

“Hello Sis,” he sneers at me. “Looks like you are going for round two?” My heart races, and I feel Nova trying to come forward, trying to take my place. Fear of what is to come seizes my already broken body as the keys rattle and he undoes the padlocks. We’ve tried and failed to breach those padlocks of the too-small cage. Too small to even shift.

“Fine, Fine. I’ll go!” Shadow yells.

Satish pauses, and the slightest silver glint of the keys he holds shines back at me.

“You’ll behave Shadow? No tricks like last time?” he asks her. I wonder what he means, did she try to escape?

“I promise Alpha!” she answers. My brother’s teeth glint back at me as he smiles cruelly at her.

“Your lucky day Sis, you have a volunteer,” he chuckles. Not realizing I always do. Nova always volunteers and takes my place, she pretends to be me.

“Only if you give us food,” she snarls. Just the mention of food makes my belly growl. I cringe wondering what he will do now that she demanded something of him. He huffs standing.

“You dare complain and ask for things, after what you did?” he snarls. I wonder what she did last time.

“Feed the girl at least, she is far too weak, can’t you see she’s not healing!” Her voice is merely a snarl.

He huffs, but Shadow is braver than me to speak to him in such a way. I would never dare. I can’t even remember the taste of food, though I know he must feed us. Nova told me he grants us the bare scraps, but I am yet to see them. I suppose it is when he takes her out of the cage while I am buried in the deepest parts of my mind.

Footsteps sound a few minutes later as someone comes into the basement. A scent I know because I can still smell it lingering on my skin. “Thank you, Trent,” my brother tells the man I cannot see.

I see his figure crouch down in front of my cage. His teeth gleam in the darkness, canines that are far too sharp. I try to press away, but I have nowhere to go when my nose picks up something tantalizing. Enticing. He pushes something through mesh, and before I can think of my actions my hands snatch it. It appears to be some sort of bone, small but still enticing.

“That is it?” Shadow growls.

“You behave and I will grant her another,” my brother snarls back at her. But I am hyper focused on the prize in my hand she gifted me. My mouth salivating as my teeth tear into it. It’s...it’s... it reminds me of...

“It’s a chicken leg,” Nova tells me, her voice barely reaching me she is so consumed by exhaustion.

“It’s delicious,” I tell her, and she sobs in my head, thinking otherwise. My taste buds explode and all too soon, it is gone. I chew on the bone, my blunt teeth trying to gnaw it down.

“Don’t eat the bone!” Nova yells at me, but it tastes too good.

“I have something you can wrap your lips around sweets, do you want my bone?” this Trent man speaks into the darkness. I flinch and pull my legs close to my chest, protecting my bone.

“That is all, Trent, you need to go pick up our guests.” My brother dismisses him.

“Now Shadow, I have a very special guest coming that I need you to entertain, and when his guards are down I need you to kill him, but don’t be reckless I need his blood. So preferably leave him in one piece.”

“What for?” she questions.

“Never mind that, you do as you’re told and I shall reward you,” he continues, and I retreat having chewed the piece of bone apart, my throat hurts, the bone scraping all the way to my stomach.

“I told you not to eat the bone,” Nova scolds.

“But I...” I sigh as my belly cramps. I can taste the blood in my mouth from my bleeding gums and now aching teeth. Cringing as I listen to my brother. I wonder why he offers her a reward this time and what it will be? Would he set her free? Is her time here up for her crimes? He never offers us a reward, no we get threats, either comply or die.

Chapter 4

Eziah

22 years old

“Temperance!” I scream, panic and fear enveloping me. I can hear my heart thundering in my ears, when suddenly my hands grip my arms. I am shaken violently, ripping me out of the nightmare I am suffering from my mate. There is nothing worse than feeling what she feels and being helpless to save her. All I can do is sit here and watch it all. I hate feeling so useless. I don’t know how she has survived this long in complete darkness. It is enough to send someone mad. Though I know she already is, my mother told me this much when she let me spy into the fountains of fates all those years ago in the Moon Goddess realm.

My eyes fly open to see Casen hovering above me. His dreary gaze tells me I once again woke him. Seeing me, he exhales in relief. “You alright bro?” Casen sighs, hanging his head while looking as exhausted as I feel. He lets me go, moving away while I try to catch my breath, trying to remove the remnants of the dream that settle over me like a dark cloud, suffocatingly strong.

“That one was worse than last night, you were screaming her name,” Casen informs me and I groan, scrubbing a hand down my face, not realizing the sound left my lips and wasn’t just in my head. I can’t keep living like this, yet Malachi urges me to find her, he wants to help her, craves his mate. Yet what state she will be in when we do is what I fear most. But even then, I can’t just leave her in the state she is, it’s my duty to protect her, but to do that, I need to find her first.

Sweat beads on my skin, the bedsheets sticking to me as I sit up and glance at the clock on the nightstand. Malachi presses forward, also peering out my eyes at the small alarm clock in this shitty hotel. 3 am. I feel restless and uncomfortable, needing to get some space.

Tossing the blankets back is like peeling off skin after a bad sunburn, the sheets are saturated with sweat. “Fuck, I hope this one is the last pack,” Casen mumbles. I can’t blame him, I know he is eager to get home to Rose.

We have been gone for two years and still, we have not found her, searching every pack in the country. It was like finding a needle in a huge haystack, we searched and searched with no results.

Each pack we visited left me with a little less hope of ever finding her. This seems to be the cruel fate written for me. Destined to feel her but never touch her, destined to hear her screams but never speak with her.

Forcing myself up, I rip the sweat soaked bed linen from the bed, tossing it in the hamper in the tiny bathroom as I step inside. Flicking the light on, the fluorescent orange light flickers and I shake my head.

“This is the last one,” I mutter, not knowing anywhere else to look, we have searched every pack. Every single damn one. And still we were no closer to finding her. It terrified me that this was it, that after this I won't know where to look anymore. How much longer can she hold on? Her life is a living hell.

“We’ll find her eventually,” Casen calls out, and I glance over my shoulder to see him checking his phone. Every day, he checks and every day, I listen to the same groan of disappointment when he finds no messages or missed calls. I feel for him, the pain he must be going through.

My cousin rejected him, and for two years, he has followed me around the country. But soon, I’ll be forced to come home. My parents want to retire,

and that means I have no choice but to take over the pack. Although it makes me wonder what Casen will do. Rose is the Alpha of Casen's former pack and has been for a year from what my mother and twin sister have told me. Growing up, he always looked out for her, and it won't get easier. Two years have passed, but he's still hung up over her.

I know as much as he wants to go home, he also fears her rejection again. "Nothing?" I sing out to him.

"Nothing," he answers, sighing and I nod once, closing the door behind me and turning the shower on. Malachi, my wolf, stirs within me and an uneasy feeling settles over me as I strip my shorts off and turn the shower on that only offers lukewarm water drizzling out of the shower head.

Placing my hand on the shower wall, I feel for my magic, my hands glowing. The pipes inside the shower wall rattle as I use my magic to heat the water more before controlling the shower head's spray, the water spurting out how it should. Although washing with one hand is a tedious, painstaking process.

Her screams from the dream replay in my head, fucking with my thoughts and causing anger to course through me. "Pull yourself together!" Malachi snarls angrily, knowing exactly the trouble I get into when my temper gets the better of me. Just like when I visited the last pack. I know Mom will have a few choice words for me.

I didn't mean to kill the Alpha of the pack. He just needed to grant entry, and he dared to defy A Gemini Demi-God. My mother hates having to clean up after me, hates having to bring order within the packs, but it is her job, she is the Moon Goddess after all. My sister may be darkness and I light, but my temper of late makes the darkness that flows through my twin look like a fucking rainbow.

Then again, few can blame me if they had to listen to their mate's screams each night and feel her fear. Two years scouring only to now have to turn around and go home empty-handed. It has messed with my mind in more

ways than I can ever express. I feel for the past years, I've been stuck in limbo trying to find her and to save her. As everyone carries on with their lives, only I'll feel her pain and anguish, and just the thought about going home with no result makes my stomach twist.

Washing quickly, I step out of the shower and finish getting ready, wanting to get a head start on the day.

As I am drying myself, the door pushes open as Casen steps into the bathroom. He starts the shower as I dry my now very grown out hair. I need to remember to cut it, yet a haircut is the last thing on my mind.

“This Alpha we are meeting today, what is his name again?” Casen asks as I reach for my gel under the sink. I open the lid and rub some on my hands before smoothing it through my hair.

“Alpha Satish,” I reply, frowning slightly.

“Ah, he is the one with the all male pack, right?” Casen muses.

“Yep, not much is known about him since he took over after his father killed all the women. Apparently, his pack keeps to themselves, Mom told me he never attends Alpha meetings and that the entire pack lives off grid.” I frown at my own words, this pack sounded suspicious as hell and I am not even there yet.

“Great, fucking hillbilly’s,” Casen mutters, and I chuckle.

“Sounds like it,” I laugh, wishing Mom could give me more answers than that. I hated how cryptic she was. She's always paranoid about changing the future or altering by telling too much. Yet from my standpoint and if the past four years were any indication, the future doesn't sound too great for my mate. Was it worth it? Letting my mate suffer just so the future doesn't change? I didn't think so. I wish Mom saw that, saw the suffering I am going through, if not my mate's.

I was sick of hearing her mumbo jumbo on fates and her obligations as Moon Goddess. She is a Moon Goddess yet can't even help her son find

his own mate who spends everyday being tortured one way or another. Didn't sound fair to me, no matter how I look at it, that's why I took this into my own hands. I'll find her, one way, or another.