

Chapter 5

When we finally leave the shitty backwards hotel, Casen rings the Alpha. It takes him four attempts before finally the Alpha answers, having moved to an area of reception. Apparently, there is only one phone out here, which makes me wonder why he would choose to keep his pack so far from the rest of the world. What is he hiding?

We drove for about an hour before finding the dirt track. It leads into dense thick woods, the gaps between the trees covered in thick greenery, and canopy trees make the dirt road dark.

“Well, this looks like bumfuck-ville, hope you brought your chastity belt, your ass may need it out here,” Casen states while peering out the windows. The road is secluded, and I would hardly call it a road at all, greenery covered half the dirt track, the road washed out and the car scrubs out. This is not a suitable car for this area.

When we reach a part of the road, I curse seeing there is no way we would get the car through. With a growl, I pull over and toss my door open and climb out. Looking around, Malachi stirs beneath my skin, his entire demeanor is uneasy, something having set him on edge. I stretch and crack my neck just as Casen climbs out. He checks his phone and mutters about the lack of reception. With a shake of his head he tosses his phone back into the car and slams the door.

“Now what?” he snaps, throwing his hands up in the air. “Exactly how do we get to the pack now?”

“Two feet and fucking heart beat is how!” I tell him, shaking my head. I lock my car and start walking. Yet as we walk, Malachi presses forward urging me to sniff the air.

I let him forward, and he takes the reins, giving himself over and surrendering to my senses which aren't as strong as his but something appears to have piqued his interest.

“Do you smell that?” he asks and I roll my eyes at my wolf.

“Well, yeah of course, but what is it?” I ask only then noticing I have stopped. Casen is stomping ahead talking away as if I am still right beside him when I hear the sound of an engine. I tilt my head listening to it get closer. It sounds like a quad bike. Out of the corner of my eye I see Casen finally stop and turn noticing I have.

“What's wrong?” he calls out.

“Malachi picked up a weird scent,” I tell him when he looks behind him and points to his ear letting me know he can hear the quad approaching. I nod to him, yet Malachi still has control and wants me to march through the woods.

However before we get a chance to investigate the strange scent that has him antsy, two quads pull up, throwing dust all over Casen as they skid to a stop.

“Great!” I mutter when I hear a thunderous growl. The dust settles and I see Casen punch the man closest to him straight of the damn thing. He falls off, landing on his back with a thud and I shake my head.

The man on the other one puts up his hands, yet Casen stalks around the other side where the man was flat on his back. He grips the front of the man's flannel shirt and punches once, twice, and thrice.

“Casen!” I command and he stiffens under the command. “Let him go!”

“Damn prick sprayed me with dirt.” I shake my head. Malachi hands me back full control as I move toward them. The other man watching his buddy get pummeled stands frozen with hands in the air. Casen reluctantly lets the man go, shoving him back into the dirt. The man’s face is a bloody mess as Casen takes a step back.

He turns to the other man. “What the fuck are you looking at?” the man shakes his head and I suck in a breath. Great first impression, *not!*

“Alpha sent us to collect you,” the man stutters out as I stop beside Casen.

“Did he tell you to spray us with dirt too?” Casen snaps. The man shakes his head while the other finally finds his feet. He goes to get back on the bike, but Casen growls.

“I ain’t being your bitch, get on with him, I’ll follow,” Casen snaps. The man nods scurrying to the other bike as Casen climbs on it.

“Names?” I ask them.

The unbloodied man answers. “Micky, and he’s Trent.” I nod climbing on the back behind Casen. We could shift and run, but I don’t feel like walking around the pack naked or feel like carrying my clothes. Malachi has a bad habit of shredding them anyhow.

Casen starts the engine and we follow beside Micky and a bloody Trent. “So what brings you out to these parts?” Trent asks, wiping his face with the front of his shirt.

“I’m looking for someone,” I answer vaguely.

“Not many of us out here, someone in trouble?” he asks.

“Depends if you have who I’m looking for,” I answer, not really feeling like talking to the Alpha’s henchmen.

“Anyone in particular?” This man and his damn questions. I press my lips in a line.

“A girl, her name is Temperance,” I tell them, watching for any reaction to my words, and they both look at each other. I tilt my head observing them when Casen hits a bump, and I grip his shoulder, nearly being thrown off.

“Sorry,” he mutters. I wave him off when I turn my attention back to Trent. His eyes are glazed over, and I can tell he is in a mindlink.

When he comes out of it, I observe his aura, the color changing slightly taking on a nervous air to it. It flickers around the edges and turning my head to Micky's, his holds the same nervous energy.

“Alpha wondering how far out we were,” the man answers, yet his aura flickers and I can see the underlying deceit in it.

“Something is off, be prepared.” I mindlink Casen.

“What is it?”

“Nothing, they are nervous, and Trent told me a half-truth,” I tell him, keeping my eyes on the two men. They speed up ahead when the trail narrows. Casen keeps up, but far enough back not to be sprayed in the rocks and dirt. We drive a little further, and finally, the packhouse comes into view. If you could even call it that. It is more of a cabin, clearly filled with them. It kind of reminds of Rose's pack, yet these are dated old log homes with tin roofs and almost looked condemned.

Casen stops beside the two men, and both of us climb off. Faces peer out at us from the cabins, men everywhere around a huge bonfire and others are chopping wood, a pig on a spit is cooking over an open fire.

“No women?” Casen questions, but before either man answers, the front door opens to the largest place here which I know is the packhouse because it is the only one that resembles an actual house.

“No, rogues killed them and wiped half my pack,” the Alpha answers, stepping out of his house. He stomps down the steps, making his way over to us. He holds his hand out to me. I stare at it. I don't like touching people.

There are some things I don't like to see and touch has always been a funny element to me. Sometimes I get nothing, other times, I see the person's darkest secrets.

Yet something urges me to take his hand. Casen goes to, knowing I am not one to shake hands, and I notice his shock when I grip his hand. Yet when I do, I see nothing which disappoints me because the urge has been so strong.

“Alpha Eziah right?” the Alpha questions.

“Yes, and you must be Satish?” I ask, and he nods. His eyes glaze for a few seconds, and his head whips to the side. His lips press in a line when I see a few of his men suddenly take off toward the trees behind the back house. I tilt my head to try to see around him when he steps in front of me.

“They spotted a rogue, how about I give you a tour, Alpha!” he offers while motioning with his hand to follow him. He walks in the opposite direction of the Packhouse, and my brows furrow. I can hear the distant running in the woods. Something is off.

“I hear you are looking for someone?” Satish asks, walking between two cabins. He leads me to a clearing filled with solar panels and vegetable patches. In the distance, I can see a huge fenced off area full of chickens, another area that has three large pigs.

“Yes, I'm looking for my mate,” I tell him, and he stops.

“Your mate?” he asks, and I nod, peering around. Casen's eyes follow mine.

“Well, I'm sorry to tell you Alpha, there are no women here. Not since my father went mad and killed all of them,” Satish tells me.

Chapter 6

Temperance

Temperance

Shadow managed to convince Satish to let me shower. I don't know what is with her today. First the chicken leg, and now she has convinced him to let me shower. It feels surreal as he unlocks the cage, his grip on my arm makes me whimper as he drags me out kicking and screaming.

“Stop it!” Satish snarls at me before his hand connects with my face. My head whips to the side and momentum sends me sprawling on the dirt with a thud. The air is knocked from my lungs, and Shadow starts yelling at him. I glance at her as I get to my hands and knees, her eyes in the dark corner of the room glowing fiercely back at me.

Why is she being like this? Does she know what her prize is? Is she really getting out of here, and this is just to satiate her guilt of leaving me behind to rot here? I don't understand her, one minute she is hot, the next she is cold as ice. Either way, I am still grateful for the piece of chicken.

“Shut it Shadow or I'll take her instead,” Satish snarls at her. His fingers grip my hair and he rips my head back, hauling me to my feet. My legs are unsteady as I try to figure out how to use them. I feel like a foreigner in my own body, limbs I haven't used in so long are hard to maneuver.

“What is wrong with you Temperance! Fucking walk properly!” Satish snarls, little does he know I haven't walked in my own body in years. This is a foreign feeling to me. His grip is still strong in my hair as he twists it around his fist and makes me cry out. Stumbling blindly, I clutch a hold of his shirt, unable to figure out how to move my limbs properly. He snarls, prying my fingers off when for the first time in years I see light. I

squint, wondering if I am imagining it. Just a sliver but something I have barely witnessed since coming down here. The last time I had control was my 18th birthday.

My fear on that horrid day kept me present and Nova at the back until I passed out from their brutality. But even then it was dark outside and offered little light. My feet hit something, and I fall forward, my hands hitting the wooden steps. “Nova?” I plead, not knowing if I can manage the stairs by myself, I get a grunt from her.

“You can do it, there are thirteen steps, that light is coming from under the crack in the door,” she whispers to me. Satish, however, doesn’t give me a chance to try when he grabs me with a feral growl that makes goosebumps lace my skin. He jerks me up by my hair before his shoulder hits my ribs as he tosses me over it.

“You’re wasting my time!” he snaps at me, stomping up the steps. He tosses the door open, and I squint my eyes aching from the brightness and I cover my eyes with my hands.

The pain is horrendous, how does Nova handle it?

I keep rubbing them, trying to let my vision adjust, while Satish stomps through the house, a cold breeze wisps across my backside, and I shriek, my hands flailing out only to see that beneath my nails is caked with blood. Molten bruises lace every patch of skin, bones jutting out in my wrists. And I am very much naked. Startled at the sight of my hands, I hold them out in front of my face, staring at them. When did my hands get this big, were they always this big? Were my nails always this long? Shaking the surreal feeling off, I try to glance around when I hear a man's voice which makes me freeze.

“Bath is full, and ready Alpha.”

“Thank you Micky, go with Trent, he should be leaving soon,” Satish answers, and I turn my head to see where we are, when suddenly, I am

tossed. A gasp leaves my lips and my hands clutch air. Anything to break my fall when I am suddenly plunged underwater.

My eyes open frantically, and I see my brother standing over me with a cruel smirk on his face. Sputtering, my head breaches the surface and I suck in air as my hands clutch the sides of the tub filled with ice cold water.

The moment I suck in a lungful, his hand is shoving me back under. I kick and scream, choking on the water; it burns my nose, eyes and throat as he viciously starts scrubbing away at me all while I am drowning.

The rough pumice stone scrapes over my face and I scream under the water, sending bubbles to the surface, while his hand is in my hair, holding me under at the base of the tub. My vision darkens, and I choke, my body spasming only for him to rip me out.

“Hold still!” he snarls, scrubbing with the stone before reaching for a scourge, he scrubs at my skin, the harsh abrasive material feels like it is scratching my skin off, bit by bit.

“Stop crying, you’re filthy!” he scolds, dunking me back under the water. I clutch the sides of the bath, trying to pull my face out of the water when he suddenly freezes. His eyes glaze over and he lets me go. I gasp for air when a growl slips past his lips.

His eyes refocus landing on me when he grabs my face harshly. “Who have you been talking to?” he snarls. I blink at him, having no idea what he means.

“No one,” I stutter out. How could I when I am locked in the basement? I ask Nova but she is also clueless. His hand connects with the side of my face and my head rebounds off the tiles with a loud crack. The next second his hands are wrapped around my throat.

“Why is my guest looking for you? How does he know your name?” he asks, crushing my windpipe; I claw at his hands, my mouth opens needing air and I can feel my face changing color.

“You fucking always ruin everything. Did one of my men give you a phone? Fucking answer me!” he screams in my face. How can I answer when I can’t even breathe? Nova tries to shove forward yet is too weak to even help me.

He shakes me, my head rocking back and forth before he yanks me from the tub. He starts dragging me back to the basement. My surroundings blur as I try to take in what used to be my old home. The door opens, and I thrash, not wanting to go back to the basement.

“Alpha, they just pulled up out front!” someone calls.

“Fuck!” my brother snarls. The next minute I am airborne as I am shoved backward down the stairs into the basement. My body bounces off the steps before it hits the dirt at the bottom.

“One fucking word, and you die!” he snaps, slamming the basement door. Groaning, I crawl to my hands and knees, the sounds of distant voices and my brother’s footsteps on the floorboards above are barely audible with the ringing in my ears.

I cough, the metallic taste of my blood fills my mouth, and a warm trickle of blood is running from my hairline down my face. Everything hurts. My bones ache, skin aches, my soul aches.

Crawling, I move toward my cage and the little safety it offers. “What are you doing?” Shadow snarls at me and I lift my gaze to the corner. Her eyes peer back at me.

“This is your chance, fucking run!” she snaps at me. I shake my head.

“Fucking run!” she roars, and her tone makes me shake.

“He’ll kill me!” I whimper.

“You’ve been dead for years, what do you think he will do to you when he comes down here, fucking run. Save yourself.”

“I can’t leave you here,” I whimper, crawling closer when she starts laughing. I stop not liking the manic tone to it. It sets my skin ablaze with goosebumps and the hair on the back of my neck rises.

“Go, now! The idiot forgot to lock the door; I never heard it click!” She laughs harder. I try to move toward her when Nova lurches forward at her words, regaining control.

“We can’t leave her!” I cry out to Nova.

“She’s right this is our one chance while he is distracted!”

“You can’t even shift!”

“No, but I can run,” Nova tells me before shoving me back to the darkness of my mind.

“No, let me see, let me forward.”

“You won’t want to see this!” Nova tells me when I am plunged into utter darkness.