

Prologue

Pain and loss was something I would never grow accustomed to, even with so much of it befalling my family over the last decade. I couldn't come to terms with how easily it was for people to be torn from me when I least expected it.

The moment I felt the tether to my mother break, my heart was torn to pieces.

Running through the forest over fallen trees and broken branches, I tried to reach the others. For a year, my family had been helping my sister and a missing piece to some puzzle. I hadn't been privy to all the information, but Silas had made it clear I was more of an asset than the others had thought. He was the one who had insisted that I came on this mission, standing toe to toe with my brother and demanded my presence. I would aid him if my brother didn't want me around.

Even if that meant I had stayed at the cars from the moment we got here.

Things had been different since Cassie took over Asgard. Most of our family moved on to Asgard. However, I couldn't help but feel like my place in the pack wasn't needed as if I was meant for something so much more. Even if my wolf whined at the idea of us leaving my family home.

At the end of the day, I was nothing more than the Alpha's little brother who only survived as a child because his sister saved him.

Something I would forever be grateful for, but also something that left me completely confused growing up. I couldn't understand why Cassie had wanted to save me.

A re crackled in the distance as tree branches danced with the glow of ames, falling to the ground one after the other. The burst of power from whatever my family faced had caused so much damage—a reckoning unlike anything I had ever seen.

"Lux!" I called, stepping from the trees into a brightly lit clearing. In its center was an old wooden cabin, ames reaching for the sky though the cabin didn't actually seem to catch a blaze. Magic must protect it, but the forest had been fair game.

"Lux!" I yelled as panic lled my chest. My eyes searched the surrounding area for my brother whose gure was currently the only one I couldn't really recognize.

With heavy smoke in the air, and the sounds of screaming and howls of injured wolves, it was hard to tell which direction to go into. Bodies of all sizes scattered around the ground, their agony resonating through the air.

As much as I wanted to stop and help them, I couldn't. The urgency to nd my family was higher than the need to help others. Perhaps, that made me selsh but it didn't matter. At least not to me, not in that moment.

Shielding my eyes, I searched through the smoke and ames. I maneuvered around the crying gures of hunters and dead wolves who weren't part of my family's pack. My heart raced, my breath short and chest heavy—I simply prayed to the goddess none of the faces I saw would be of someone I knew.

I wasn't sure what the hell happened, but from the looks of it, s**t didn't go as planned.

"Tate! Get out of here!" My father, Talon, yelled at me from across the clearing. My mother's fallen form in his arms caused the ache to hurt even more. I ran towards them hoping what I was seeing wasn't real.

"What happened?!" I screamed above the cries of others, dropping to my knees beside him. His eyes lled with tears as he shook his head, seemingly unable to formulate the right words.

"It doesn't matter. We have to be strong right now. Fate deemed it her time, and it won't be forever." Turning, his stern gaze captured my own as he let out a heavy breath. "Remember that...it won't be forever, Tate. We will see her again."

I wanted to ght against what he was saying, but I knew it was true. We would see her again, eventually, but it didn't make the pain hurt any less.

She will be waiting for me, I repeated in my head, trying to keep my heart together. "I need to nd Pollux."

"No, you need to get out of here, Tate. Go back to the cars and get the f**k out of here."

Shaking my head, I tried to ignore the itch to help my father. My brother was the Alpha of the pack now, and our people needed him to guide them into the future. Making sure our Alpha was safe was the only priority I had.

"I can't...I have to nd Pollux."

Rushing towards the cabin, I searched through thick smoke for the face I needed to see most. The burn at the back of my throat caused me to cough as I weaved in and out of debris towards the familiar voice of his beta. Their bodies came into view the moment I rounded the far side of the cabin, where they stood looking down at something at their feet.

"We have to get out of here," Sam, my brother's beta, called out as I approached the circle of people surrounding none other than my brother and the body of a woman.

"This wasn't supposed to happen..." Pollux's words fell short, my eyes cast towards the middle of the circle formed by my brother's pack members. Their eyes were glued to the middle-aged woman adorned with tattered clothing, scars, and soot upon her body. An angry gaze crossed his eyes as he sneered, looking up at those who surrounded him. "Who killed her!"

Silence. It was all that followed his question as if every single person was either too afraid to speak up or didn't actually know.

"I-I don't know," Sam nally replied. "There was so much light, and then the re and smoke. I didn't see what happened until it all cleared."

My brother's eyes lled with anger and fell to the woman in his arms. I wasn't sure what was going through his head but as he laid her lifeless body on the ground—golden hair tattered with dirt and blood—I knew he would be out for revenge.

"It was Moria. That stupid f****g b***h did this! She betrayed us all!" Pollux roared, the rage of his hatred owing through the pack link like a devastating re threatening to burn us all. "I should have f****g known she would be here!"

"Alpha, there is nothing that can be done now. We have to go," Sam repeated, seriousness laced in his words.

"Where's the other woman?" Pollux seethed, glaring at his beta. "Where did she go?"

Sam's eyes widened as his mouth dropped open, shaking his head. "I don't know. The moment the light cleared, she was gone."

I wasn't sure who they were talking about, but by the desperate look that seemed to cross my brother's eyes, it was clear that he hadn't planned for this to happen. When we left the pack lands to come here, they acted as if this was going to be easy. As if whatever they were coming to do wasn't going to take long, but Silas had still insisted on back up.

Pollux hadn't thought it a good idea, at rst.

My brother was notorious for being the best there was when it came to tracking supernaturals. He and my sister-in-law Trixie helped so many targeted by the human hunting organization Elite Humanity, but this was the rst time one of his operations had gone south.

Dead hunters and shifters littered the ground. A sight forever imprinted in my mind no matter how hard I tried to forget it. Everywhere I looked, signs of the battle that had taken place surrounded me.

No longer would saving people be easy. This event would attract more attention from Elite Humanity, and with the losses we took today that itself was going to be problematic for us.

"We have to go."

I had remained silent since I arrived, but when I spoke all eyes turned to me. I was the baby of the family—the child treasured above all others by a queen who saw greatness in my future. A treasure my brother was sworn to protect.

"What are you doing out here?" Pollux snapped, standing to his feet and stepping towards me. "You were supposed to wait in the car."

I rolled my eyes, crossing my arms over my chest. "With an explosion that big? Yeah, that wasn't going to happen."

He didn't waste time snatching my arm, dragging me back through the chaos towards Silas, who stood by Talon. He had no idea just how bad things were until he stopped in his tracks, our eyes sweeping over our mother's lifeless body in Talon's arms.

"No—" he gasped, dropping his grip on me. "Mom..."

My father's eyes met ours as he tried to remain composed. "The blast hit her. She died instantly."

"What caused the explosion?" I nally asked, hoping for clarity. At my question Talon, Silas, and Pollux all looked at each other as if keeping a secret they didn't want me to know.

"It doesn't matter," Pollux snipped, "she's gone."

The care and concern he had just shown moments ago was gone, and with it, a void of hatred had replaced it. Whatever they were dealing with they didn't want me to know the details. And realizing that irritated me only further. My sts clenching and unclenching at my side as I tried to keep my cool.

Silas stepped forward, placing a hand on my brother's shoulder, catching his attention. "She's with your sister now. Don't let this become a loss. Fate deemed it her time to go, and you know she was ready to join the others."

The others. He was speaking of my father's Damian, James, and Hale. Damian had gone to be with Cassie years ago, and James and Hale ventured only a few years after when another operation had gone wrong—gas-like poison ended up taking them both.

"I know," he snapped, his jaw stiff and teeth clenched. "It was what she wanted."

Shaking his head, Silas dropped his hand before. "It was, and now it is time for Tate to fulfill his destiny."

Destiny?

"What the f**k are you talking about?" I murmured with confusion, my eyes glancing between Silas and Pollux. "What destiny?"

Pollux was quiet, his eyes locked onto our mother's body as a heavy sigh escaped his lips. "Things aren't as great as they should be, Tate. We're slowly losing our reign and Pandora as well as Faeryn are in danger because of their powers. Trixie is taking Pandora as we speak back to the kingdom of Tver."

"What?!" I gasped, my eyes wide with shock. "Why the hell didn't you tell me?!"

His eyes locked with mine, brows narrowed as anger lled his gaze. "When the hell was I supposed to do that, Tate? You never take anything seriously, and I don't have time to hold your hand while you play mommy's favorite!"

"Enough," Silas snapped, "we don't have time for this bullshit. The Hallow is lost to us again, and Tate is our only hope in nding it."

Pollux scoffed, rolling his eyes as he ran his hand through his hair, pacing around the clearing.

"He isn't ready, Silas. He's just a kid."

"Go f**k yourself, Lux. You don't know me," I snapped at him, crossing my arms over my chest. I didn't have a clue what they were talking about, but I wasn't going to let my brother stand here talking s**t about me when he didn't even really know me.

Especially with my father standing nearby with my mother's dead body in his arms.

"Enough of this," Silas snapped at us both. "Right now isn't the place."

It didn't matter that Silas was trying to get us on the right path. It was as if Pollux hadn't heard a word as he stopped in his tracks and spun to face me, irritation and anger in his eyes as he clenched his sts at his side.

"Oh, don't I? You have no idea what's been going on, and with Deidra dead because of Moira...the chance of us nding the Hallow is slim."

"Don't say that," Silas replied. "Tatum can nd the Hallow. It's been deemed so."

Pollux rolled his eyes. His lack of condence in me was getting on my nerves. I didn't know what this Hallow thing was, but if they believed I was meant to nd it, then I would.

Over the years, Pollux had never really taken the time to get to know me. He always acted like I was nothing but a burden to him, and because of that, I did act out every now and again. Though, maybe had he taken the time to make things right with me and the rest of our siblings, then perhaps we would have respected him more.

Maybe, we would have made things right and followed him like we were supposed to.

After all, I was the only one who had stayed in the pack out of us all.

The rest got out as soon as they were old enough. Pollux had just been too hard to live with.

Silas turned to me, his jaw clenched and eyes closed as Pollux and I stared at each other with so much hatred. He attempted to step towards me, his shoulders rising and falling, only for Silas's arm to thrust out, stopping him.

"Don't touch me," he snapped, shrugging Silas off.

"Well then. Don't act f****g stupid," Silas snapped back. "Now he says he is ready, so he's ready."

A maniacal laugh escaped Pollux as he stared at me with amusement dancing within his eyes. A darkness that seemed to nd joy in the idea of me taking on whatever task it was that they needed me to do.

"I hope you are, brother, because in order for you to help at all, you have to die and hope that fate selects you."