

The Edge of Reason

By Michelle Torlot

Chapter 1

Ember

I sit on the edge of the cliff, my legs dangling. All I can hear is the sound of the waterfall crashing onto the jagged rocks below.

The humans call this place lovers' leap. A place where broken-hearted lovers throw themselves off when the pain and heartache get too much.

A voice in my head urges me to jump. My wolf. She's taken our rejection badly. We both have but her the most. Gone is the happy-go-lucky wolf. Now she mostly just whimpers in the back of my mind. If it was up to her, she'd end her miserable life and mine along with it. After all, a wolf needs her mate. I do too, but I'm not quite suicidal.

I just come here because it's peaceful. Away from the whispers, the pity and the sight of my mate with his arms wrapped around another.

A tear trickles down my cheek as I try to push the thought away. I can push the thoughts away, but it doesn't take away the tightness around my chest. Squeezing my heart like a vice. Mates are supposed to love one another. The male is supposed to protect and provide for the female, not humiliate them and cast them aside.

I'm snapped out of my reverie as a deep voice shouts my name.

“Ember? What are you doing?”

I turn my head to look at my brother. Panic masks his face. I force a smile, but he can tell it's forced.

“Don't worry, Oliver. I may be weak, but I'm not that weak.”

I don't tell him that if my wolf was in control, we would have jumped already.

He sighs and shakes his head.

Oliver walks over and offers me his hands. I take them and he pulls me to my feet.

He wraps his arms around me.

“You're not weak, Ember. One day you're going to be a fantastic pack healer. You have a gift.”

I sigh. One day, but not now.

I'm smaller than average and so is my wolf. My mate, or should I say ex-mate, is the exact opposite.

He's one of the pack warriors; some say the best. The only ones that can best him are the Alpha and the Beta.

Even my brother, who is one of the best, can't take him down, although I know he'd try on my behalf. I don't want him to, though. It's bad enough one of us being humiliated without both.

My brother sighs and presses a gentle kiss to my head.

“The Alpha wants to see you.”

I look up, tears pooling in my eyes.

“Is he going to...” I swallow nervously, “banish me?”

My brother shakes his head.

“No. Of course not. You haven’t done anything wrong.”

He sighs again.

“If anyone needs banishing, it’s fucking Noah.”

Just mentioning his name makes my heart crush a bit more.

Even though Noah is in the wrong, I know everyone will take his side. Compared to Noah, I’m nothing. Worthless.

My brother seems to think I’ll become a pack healer just because I help out at the hospital. That will never happen. Even if Noah hadn’t rejected me, I wouldn’t have been given that honor, gifted or not.

The Alpha is old school. Females of the pack are only any good for one thing. Cooking, cleaning and producing pups.

Without a mate, I’ll be useless. Worse than useless.

I sigh and break from my brother’s embrace.

Time to find out what fate awaits me.

I walk back towards the pack house and surrounding buildings. It takes about half an hour. If I’d shifted, I could have made it back in five. I don’t because once she takes control, anything might happen.

The cliff above the waterfall is in no-man’s-land. Right on the edge of human territory. It’s dangerous to stray out of the pack’s territory, but right now, I really don’t care.

I don't want to be around my pack at the moment. People avoid me like I'm carrying some plague. I guess in a way I am. No one wants anything to do with someone whose mate has just rejected them.

I walk towards the pack house, my head down and my arms wrapped around my body. My long blonde hair curtains my face to hide my shame.

I can feel my ribs through the clothes I'm wearing. I haven't eaten much since Noah rejected me.

I wish I didn't have my wolf's senses, but I do. Even though people avoid me, I can still hear their whispers. I try to block them out. No good ever came from eavesdropping.

Once I'm inside the pack house, I head towards the Alpha's office.

I tap lightly on the heavy oak door and wait.

His gruff voice bids me entry with a monotone, "Come."

He sits at his desk. Paperwork is strewn across it. I stand in front of the desk, head down, and fingers interlocked behind my back, awaiting his command.

He sighs heavily.

"Sit, Ember."

I sit in the lone chair that is almost placed in the center of the room. It's a power play, which in my case isn't needed. I feel worthless enough as it is.

I place my hands on my lap and stare at my feet. One wrong look at the Alpha and he will look upon it as a challenge.

“Your situation has become increasingly awkward,” he begins, “so it’s up to me to resolve it.”

I swallow nervously. Here it comes.

“The treaties we have with other packs require us to send them pack members from time to time. Usually, we ask for volunteers, but because of your situation, I have decided it will be in the best interest of the pack if you are transferred.”

I feel the bile rising in my throat. I want to scream at him ‘Why me?’ but I don’t. He’s made up his mind. I think I always knew that this would be how it would go. He would never transfer Noah, he’s too valuable.

I risk a glance up. His expression is hard and businesslike. As though he’s just traded some goods for something more worthwhile.

“When?” I whisper.

I hear him stand.

“You have one hour to say your goodbyes and gather any personal belongings.”

I stand. My legs feel like jelly.

“Where? Which pack?”

He clears his throat.

“The Dark Moon Pack.”

My head starts to spin and my legs almost give way beneath me. I quickly bow.

“Yes, Alpha.”

I turn and leave his office as fast as I can.

Once I’m outside his office, I run to the back door of the pack house.

There’s little in my stomach to come up, but what’s there gets ejected onto the soil outside.

I drop to my knees and the tears begin to flow.

I hold my head in my hands.

What did I ever do to deserve this? If my wolf wants us to die, she will probably get her wish.

Rumors abound of the Dark Moon Pack and the warmongering Alpha Damon Scopus. Even his name sends a shiver down my spine.

The reason his pack is the largest is because he forces the other packs to send him wolves, usually warriors. It keeps his pack strong and weakens the others.

He is known to have a short temper and those that anger him usually end up dead or so badly injured they are never the same again.

If my wolf wanted us dead, she will probably get her wish.

I head back to the house I share with my brother. It’s only us who live there. Our mother died several years ago, and our father died soon after, pining for his mate.

Oliver sits on the porch, his head in his hands.

As I walk towards him, he lifts his head.

That's when I realize. He knew. He knew what the Alpha intended.

I glare at him.

"You knew. You knew, and you didn't tell me. How long?"

Oliver sighs.

"It's not as bad as you think. It'll be a fresh start."

My mouth hangs open at his words.

"You know where he's sending me?"

Oliver frowns and shakes his head.

"Just that he was arranging a transfer. It's not like we won't be able to see each other. Most packs allow family visits. I know ours does."

I stare at him and shake my head.

"This is goodbye, Oliver. He's sending me to the Dark Moon Pack."

All the color drains from my brother's face. He jumps up and rushes over, wrapping his arms around me.

I want to push him away, but I don't. This might be the last chance we get to spend together. Goddess knows what fate awaits me. The truth is, I'll probably never see him again.

"When?" he whispers, his voice cracking slightly.

"About an hour," I whisper.

He sighs and squeezes me a little tighter.

“I just thought we’d have more time.”

I don’t answer. I just let him hold me as the tears trickle down my cheeks.

Perhaps I should have let my wolf throw us off the cliff, after all.