

And Then There Were Four by Lilith Carrie

Chapter 21: Meeting Caleb

Days quickly passed, and with Hale and James gone, I fell into a familiar rhythm with school. I knew very well that with winter approaching, it was going to mean that semester exams would quickly follow and that was something I wasn't ready for. In fact, I wasn't ready for a lot of things but I had to keep focused.

"Ivy, did you pick up the notes from Zebak?" Bree asked as we
the University.

I sighed shaking my head, "no-". There was a lot I still had to do, and because I had missed Caleb's class a few days ago, I still needed to get the printed notes from the lesson. Caleb had been more than happy to gather the notes together for me and that was something else that made me feel uneasy "Girl-* Kate added looking at me shocked, "are you sure you're feeling okay? You have been like a space cadette the last few days, and that isn't like you."

"I know, I know." The mumble stumbled out of my mouth as I closed the textbook in front of me, and piled all of my belongings into my backpack. "I will stop by there now before Thead home"

Kate and Bree looked at each other with concern as I forced a smile upon my face. "Do you want me to come with you?"

"Absolutely not. You have Calculus homework to do," I grinned, causing Kate to groan. "That she does." Maddy mumbled, causing everyone to laugh but Kate. It was moments like these that made me remember why I-loved the life I had, even if it was more than complicated at times

"It's not my fault the shit's impossible!" The protest that filled the table caused me to giggle before I waved goodbye and left their heated debate on how math was unnecessary.

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I enjoyed the last few days spending every afternoon with the girls studying. I had informed my father the day we decided to do it just in case Damian tried his crap with me again. I didn't want him-constantly snooping, and with my father knowing I was going to be late everyday, it seemed to keep Damian away "Ivy!" Caleb called out with a smile as he set his glasses on his desk and stood to his feet: "I was wondering when

you were going to stop by. Are you feeling better?" Guilt filled me for lying to him, but I pushed it aside, giving him a smile as I nodded, "Yes, I am much better now thank you."

Thad missed his class because I had claimed to be sick, but the truth was I had been reeling with everything that was going on at home and didn't want to face going to school with my mind a mess.

"That's wonderful. Oh, let's grab those papers."

Caleb turned from me, and made his way towards his desk, picking up a yellow packet that had been laying at the corner. I watched him hesitate for a moment before his eyes cast up towards me, and he took the steps to close distance slowly holding the package out. "I added a few extra things in there for you as well to help with the upcoming exam." "Oh-" I was shocked at how kind he was, and as my eyes lifted to him again, I smiled. "Thank you so much. I really do appreciate this, Caleb." He stantly thank me, Ivy. I don't just consider you a student, but also a friend. If you ever need anything from me all you have to do is ask."

I felt like there was another meaning behind what he said, and as he stepped even closer towards me, I felt a wave of emotions that built up between the gap that still separated us. "Caleb=" I whispered out softly. "I appreciate your help."

I had to change the subject and diffuse the situation. There was a chance Caleb was misreading the situation with

me I couldn't afford to have that happen. Yes, he was incredibly hot, and under any other circumstances would have done a lot of naughty things with him, but he wasn't James, Hale, Talon or Damian.

Those were the only men I wanted.

"I really should be going." I replied softly as the tension between us became almost unbearable. "I need to get home to work on all of this."

Shifting from foot to foot, I turned from Caleb, but not before he grabbed my upper arm stopping me in my tracks. "Be careful out there, Ivy. A girl like you shouldn't be alone."

Something about the way he said what he had made me feel very vulnerable at that moment. It was like his words were a warning, but also something far more dangerous.

"Thank you."

The words left my lips before I had a chance to think about saying anything else. I moved with a speed that surprised even me as I left his class, and headed out into the courtyard of the school. My heart raced within my chest and I wasn't sure why.

As my hand lifted to touch the necklace Hale had given me, I considered taking it off just so I could try to reach out to him or James. I missed our conversations, and since they both had been gone, I hadn't had the chance to speak to either of them.

It was as if they had gone radio silent and were off the grid.

All of which didn't sit well with me, but I wasn't accustomed to the life that they led being werewolves. I didn't know pack traditions or policies, and at times, those facts made me feel like a foreigner in my own home.

Pulling my phone from my back pocket, I quickly checked to see if the messages I had sent to Hale had been read. Disappointment filled me though when I saw that they still sat unread as they had two days before.

You would think that because I was their mate, they would be more interested in checking up on me. Sighing, I pushed my phone back into my pocket and pushed forward towards my car to head home.

All I wanted was their comfort, but it seemed like it would be another night of simply studying and going to sleep alone.

Chapter 22: Talon and Zane

My brothers were turning into fools for this girl, and the most annoying part of it all was that Hale expected me to accept her as well. She may have been a lot of things fiery, smart, and gorgeous-to-look at with hips that enticed a man. But at the end of the day, she was exactly what Damian had stated-a complication. "Talon, have you heard from Damian?" Zane asked as he stepped into the doorway of my room, with concern on his face.

Shaking my head I sighed, "no sir, I have not. He is supposed to be here by now, but you know Damian- he tends to do what he wants."

Zane, Ivy's father, was an aging man with many different complications of his own. He had once been human, but when he mated with Allison, my godmother, it unlocked a dormant werewolf gene that laid within him passed-down through generations."

That was one of the reasons why we didn't mate with humans. Our-pups had a chance to be more human than wolf and with repeated mating, the werewolf gene always stayed dormant unless a wolf mated with them and unlocked

"Thonestly don't understand him. He is supposed to lead this pack once Allison and I step down and he doesn seem to act like he wants to do it."

"I know, but with Damian being the oldest of us, it's rightfully his throne." I replied, reminding him that even though we don't all agree Damian should be the next Alpha, we respected him too much to take that position from him.

"Talon-" Zane replied, giving me a look that let me know what he was going to talk about how are things with Ivy?"

I hesitated in my response. Ivy was a topic Damian didn't want us talking about, and I couldn't tell Zane that Ivy had already mated with James or Hale. If Damian found out, it would and could be disastrous.

"That isn't a conversation to be loosely had. I replied in a very soft and subtle tone as to not bring attention to unwanted ears.

Zane looked around the area, and nodded before gesturing for me to follow him. It was obvious he wasn't going to let this conversation go. Why would he?

Ivy was his only child. With Allison unable to bear children after an accident with a rogue when she was younger, Ivy was all that they had.

Allison had made it obvious on many occasions that she didn't care for Ivy, and growing up I remember Zane never having a problem with that, until he learned Ivy was our mate. Then that changed things.

It gave him more power and hold- at least that was my opinion,

I followed him without question through the house until we were safely behind the closed doors of his office.

"Tell me." His voice was firm and authoritative, and I knew that even though he wasn't of Alpha blood, he was a wise man you didn't want to cross.

"Ivy has mated with both James and Hale."

There it was, the actual truth finally slipping free. Zane's eyes widened in surprise, but a smile crossed his face as he nodded. "Good. What about you?"

"What you are asking for isn't a good idea, Zane." I replied, not wanting to talk about mating with Ivy. "She doesn't deserve to live a life like this."

Zane's face darkened over as an evil glint settled within his gaze. "That isn't for you to decide. The moon goddess

selected her for the four of you, and that never happens, Talon. I know that your past is what keeps you from accepting her, but this must be done. Once you join that mate bond, Damian won't be able to say no to her."

Anger filled me as I thought of our previous conversations. The day that Zane found out that Ivy was Damian's mate, he was determined to get his daughter here. He hadn't cared about her before that moment, and in fact, had often discussed how he had messed up earlier in his life by having her.

Now he sat here acting like a caring father, but the thing was all he cared about was the power he would have with her being our mate. I knew that if Ivy could see how her father was, she would be disgusted by him. But Damian made us promise and swear to never discuss the issue of her father with her.

Eventually, Ivy would see exactly what kind of cold hearted monster Zane really was.

"We still have time, Zane. I will do what I want on my own time, and that is final."

Zane didn't like what I had to say, but I far outranked him in strength and power. There was nothing that he could do from a wolf's perspective, because he didn't amount to what I did. The only reason why I tolerated the man in front of me at all was because of Damian and Allison.

Allison took us in when my parents were killed, and raised us as her own. There wasn't any way I was going to hurt her mate after the way she had helped us, but slowly, every day, I was changing my view on that.

"Don't forget what the end game is, Talon. Our pack was selected by the goddess to hold the power we do, and we have to show unity in order to head all of it. I may be working to make Damian smart in all aspects of business, but each of you have gifts that make you different from others."

Zane's words were like a jab in my heart. We all did have gifts, and I was the one they called upon when it came to war. I was the brother who was more animalistic than reasonable, and it was the biggest reason I kept my distance from Ivy.

"Understood,

There was no point in arguing with Zane, and getting away from him right now was for the best. Zane nodded his head, and quickly I stood to my feet, making my way from his office, slamming the door behind me. If he didn't know I was pissed off before, he surely knew now.

"Talon, I was looking for you. Damian replied, coming down the stairs with a curious look upon his face. "What were you talking to Zane about?"

Jesus, christ. Can I not get a break with all the questions?

Sighing, I pinched the bridge of my nose and inhaled slowly. "Update from Hale and James. Nothing new. They should be back tomorrow."

Damian stood staring at me, his brow raised in question. I knew he knew I was lying, but I didn't want to continue the conversation with him and Damian knew when it was a good idea to let it go and not push the issue.

"Very well." His reply came slowly, and as I went to pass him, his hand reached out stopping me. "Have you seen Ivy today?"

"Fucking hell!" I yelled, about fed up with everyone looking at me like I was her babysitter, "no I haven't fucking seen her. I'm not her keeper! Y'all go out and fucking check yourselves!"

Damian stood with a shocked expression on his face as I pushed past him towards the back door. I needed to run and let off some steam before I did something that was going to be questionable. I didn't want to end up hurting someone, and if I kept on the road I was going down—

That is exactly what would happen.

Chapter 23: Visit from Dad

Ivy POV

"I overslept, Kate."

My mumbled words into the phone expressed how exhausted I was. Never in my life had I overslept for school and this was a first. My exhaustion though was due to the all nighter I had pulled in order to submit papers on time, and also to study for my upcoming final.

"I will get all your work, don't worry girl. I was just worried when I didn't see you this morning or in Lani's class. I would advise not missing her class next week. She has been in an evil mood lately, and our exam is coming up."

I groaned in protest thinking about the exam. Lani's class was the agricultural economics class that was taking with Kate, and the old woman was a brute when it came to the work she assigned. As much as I wished, I didn't — have to be in her class. I knew that it was important for my degree.

"Yeah, I know! I will come by this weekend, and get everything. Maybe we can get coffee on Sunday or something." Considering Thad slept the day away, I had missed all my Friday afternoon classes.

"Sounds good. I will text you Sunday morning."

Hanging up the phone, I stared at my ceiling wondering once again what James and Hale were doing considering! I had not heard anything from them. It was the start of

another long weekend, and even though Damian had been keeping his distance, I could still feel him watching me.

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“Ivy.” My father’s voice called, followed by a knock on my front door. I wasn’t too sure why he was here, but the fact that he came to visit me instead of just texting me to come to the main house didn’t make sense. Sliding from bed, I pulled on my robe and walked to the door opening it.

“Hey. Sorry I’m just getting up. I replied with a smile as I stepped aside and let him in.

“Are you feeling okay?”

I watched as he moved towards the sofa, and took a seat. “Uhm, yeah. I’m fine. Is everything okay?” “Do I need a reason to visit my daughter?” He chuckled as his eyes watched my every movement.

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“No, but I just didn’t expect you to come here.”

Hesitating for a moment he nodded, “yes I can understand why you would think something was wrong then. In all honesty, I just wanted to come check on you since I was notified you didn’t attend school today.”

“Oh-” I replied shocked, “yeah, I pulled an all nighter and was exhausted this morning.”

There was an uncomfortable silence between the two of us before he stood again. I wasn’t sure if his reason for coming was actually truthful, but something about him at that moment seemed off.

“I understand things here are different for you, Ivy. But I want you to remember that no matter how difficult things may seem, you can always come talk to Allison or I about it.”

The mention of my step-mother made me scoff, and my father’s eyes widened in shock and unhappiness due to my response. “I will not tolerate disrespect towards her.”

“I wasn’t being disrespectful, but I will have to admit she isn’t being very kind in order for me to like her.” I replied quickly, crossing my arms over my chest as I watched him.

“Ivy, enough. You will learn to like her one way or another, and I would rather you do it sooner than later. She is your mother.”

“No, she isn’t!” I snapped back harshly, unable to believe he would say Allison was my mother. “She isn’t, and will never be anything other than your wife.”

I hadn't expected the slap to come, but I should have. The noise echoed through my tiny cottage, and as it did my hand instinctively went to the side of my face where he had hit me. My eyes wide staring at my father in shock, and sudden realization filling him.

"Don't you dare ever speak that way of her again! Do you understand me?" He growled, and the silver spark in his eye showed the true nature of my father...

He was one of them.

Before I could say another Word, my father stormed from my cottage, leaving the door wide open. I wanted to cry more than anything, but at the same time, I couldn't bring myself to do it. My father had struck me over his mate.

All because I refused to see her as my mother.

"Ivy-* Talon's voice called from the front door as he stood panting, staring at me as if he had run all the way here. 'Are you okay?'

= "I'm fine."

**You don't look fine. He replied, stepping closer towards me. "Did he hit you?"

"Does it honestly matter?" snapped back, "there is nothing that can be done

"You are our mate

Spinning around, I stared at him, he is James and Hales' mate, Talon. You don't even want me, and neither does Damian. I am nothing to either of you."

The moment the words left my throat, I felt guilt over saying it. I didn't mean to lash out at Talon or to make a statement that would make him feel like he was nothing. But in my moment of anger, I did, and the hurt was evident on his face. "Talon="I replied softly stepping towards him, "I didn't mean it=" "Oh, no. You made yourself quite clean, Ivy."

Spinning on his heels, he turned and walked off towards the woods like he always did. Tears threatened to spill, but not because I was sad. But because I was angry and frustrated. That's how things were becoming, and more than anything, I wanted to be happy with them.

== However, that seemed impossible anymore. I could barely get to really know them because I was so caught up in trying to hide things from Damian. Quietly. I stepped towards the door and closed it. A million and one things flowing through my mind.

I need to talk to Hale and James.

Grill

As my fingers played with the chain around my neck, I pulled out my phone, and tried to text Hale and James again.

'Hale... James.. I need you.'

The group text I made with them had me praying that things would work out, and they would reply. But as the minutes counted on, i felt doubt in my ability to speak with them.

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'Ivy... what's wrong?' Hale finally replied, causing me to let go a sigh of relief.

'Everything. When are you guys coming home?'

Tomorrow. Did something happen?'

I sighed thinking of how to tell him what happened, but I didn't know how to begin to explain it because what I said to Talon wasn't fair and I was in the wrong.

'My dad hit me. We were arguing and he slapped me.'

No reply came, but a howl in the distance resonated and sent worry through me. I wasn't sure where it had come from, but something inside me was telling me it was nothing good.

Chapter 24: Prey

Damian's POV

Something was going on around my home, and I was tired of feeling like I was the last to know. My brothers were acting more than suspicious, and I had no doubt that they were trying to get to know Ivy behind my back. It angered me, but then a part of me wanted to be okay with it because my wolf called out for her.

It wanted to be with her, and I was the one preventing it.

You need to start being the Alpha that's required of you!"

Hale's voice yelled through the mind link causing me to growl at him.

Watch your tone.' I warned, not sure what he was talking about.

Watch my tone? Zane just hit our mate on your watch. You may not want her, but you should still protect her.'

A howl of anger left my lips at his words. Ivy had been assaulted on my watch and in my home. I knew that Zane was adamant to press certain issues, but never did I think he was capable of something like that.

My wolf fought against the barrier in my mind, demanding to be set free.

I was going to make Zane pay if he really touched her.

Father or not... I had to make sure she was okay.

Ivy POV

I wasn't sure what the howl had been, but I didn't want Talon to be mad at me. I felt terrible about how he came to check on me, and the only thing I did was yell at him, which wasn't necessary. Taking a moment to think over-things, I put my phone on the table and slid my shoes on, making my way out the front door.

I knew going into the woods wasn't the best of ideas, but I had to fix things with Talon. I had to apologize and explain to him that I didn't mean what I had said. It was just words said in anger with no meaning behind them.

"Talon!" I called from the edge of the woods as I stood there trying to grasp the courage to go into the forest. James had made it clear that wasn't the best idea, and yet I never seemed to listen to what people told me.

"Damn it, Talon," I grumbled, before pushing forward onto the path in front of me. "If I get killed I will never forgive you."

The darkness within the woods was far more drastic than I had imagined the first time around, and seeing everything now, I had to admit that it was beautiful in a scary way.

It didn't take long for me to find myself in the place I once had been in when Talon's wolf approached me before, and from behind the brush, it appeared once again. The massive size of the beast caught me off guard, but as it snarled at me- I wasn't scared.

"I am not afraid of you, because I know you will not hurt me."

The confidence in my words was met with a growl and a snap as if he was determined to change that view. For a second my heart lurched in fear, but something within the wolf's eyes made me feel comfortable.

*You know it isn't fair that you can understand me, but I can not understand you."

Slowly, I walked toward the wolf, and watched as it stared at me with uncertainty. I was just as confused and curious myself, but I tried to act as if my heart wasn't about to jump from within my chest.

Another snarl, and I halted in my pace. "Would you wish me to do as you command?"

Each of them was far different from the next, and I wanted more than anything to have them all, considering I didn't feel right without them near. The wolf-seemed to take into consideration what I was asking, and before I knew it, the cracking of bone sounded and the wolf turned back into a man.

"Didn't you learn last time not to come here?" Talon's snarl took me by surprise, but I didn't dare ba him. There was no need, and I needed him to see how sorry I was for going off on him.

"Talon=" | replied slowly."I am sorry for what I said." – Laughter filled the air following my comment, 'sorry? Why are you apologizing? You made it clear what I was.

"I didn't mean for it to come out as it did, Talon. I'm sorry. Please let me make it up to you." "Make it up to me? You mean like a whore on heç knees... is that what you want? To let me use you like my brothers did?!" His words stabbed deep at my heart, and tears welled within my eyes.

I didn't understand why he was speaking to me that way. I knew that he was angry to an extent, but still, how he was acting was completely baffling. "That's a bit harsh don't you think..." I replied, feeling hurt and ashamed to even be in front of him for a moment, "I was honestly coming to apologize. Not to sleep with you." Turning away from him, I shook my head, unsure of why I bothered to even try to explain anything to him. There was no point.

"Stop." His words wrapped around me, and small grasps of his hand upon my arm caused me to stop in my tracks. I had forgotten what it felt like to be touched by him, and as I slowly turned back to face him, I saw a primal hunger

lurking beneath his eyes.

"If you want to apologize for what has happened between us... you will run for me."

I didn't understand what he meant when he said I would run for him. The confusion was clear upon my face, and as the smile crept across his face the sound of cracking bones resonated through the air.

I knew what he was asking then."

He wanted to hunt, and I was his prey.

Chapter 25: Caught in the Act

Running.

Never had I expected to run for my life-hunted by a wolf that was sworn to protect me

My feet moved swiftly across the ground, and as Iran,) knew he was gaining on me. The thought of his breath across my cheek the first time we had met caused my heart to race, and I kept my feetgoing no matter how much wanted to stop.

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I was prey running for its freedom, and the wolf behind me was hungry.

Oh God, was he hungry. The roar of his fury pushed forward, and before I knew it, I found myself unable to continue on. The cuts on my skin seeped with my blood as the branches and sticks cut against me.

The panting of my breath against the cool air of the forest caused my breath to come out in small faint clouds of smoke. I wasn't able to stop long before I caught sight of the massive wolf moving toward me.

He could have caught me many times, and yet he seemed to toy with me.

"Talon..." I whispered as I watched him with wide eyes stalking towards me.

I knew I had no choice. Turning, I tried to run again, but a massive body quickly knocked me to the forest floor and was pinned beneath the massive wolf that quickly changed into a man.

Talon's hands took my own and pinned them above my head as I lay on my belly. His free hand quickly pulled up my skirt as his breath fanned against my ears. "Mine." He growled, causing wetness to settle between my legs.

"Talon-" The whimper did nothing but to arouse him further, and he spread my legs. It didn't take long before his hard thick erection was forcefully shoved into me from behind.:

Most women may not have enjoyed this type of forceful aggression, but I did. I cried out in pleasure as he pulled me to my hands and knees, wrapping arms around my waist as he hunched over me, thrusting hard and fast. I didn't expect my first time with Talon to be like this, but now londerstood this was how he wanted me.

He was more animal than human at times, and as I kissed him over my left shoulder, I saw the gold rims of his eyes

shining back at me. He may have been in human form but this dominant side of lust was all his wolf.

“Mine!” He growled against the vibrations rumbling through me as the thick swelling of his knot took place.

“Yes-” I cried out, “yours... all yours.”

His head snapped to something in front of us, and as my eyes followed his direction. I saw a massive black wolf breach forth in the forest, growling with eyes staring straight at us. However, there was no stopping what was happening.

Talon’s knot had taken hold, and until we were done, it wouldn’t release,

Something about the wolf watching felt familiar, but it was Talon who drew me back to his chest, leaning into my ear. “If he insists on watching then perhaps we should give him a show.”

“Talon-” I pleaded, crying out again, “we can’t...”

His fingers came down and rubbed circles across my clit, making my head fall back as I screamed in pleasure. I rode out the wave of pleasure he was creating in me.

Pushing me forward, he laid on top of me as he stilled, spilling his seed into me. His teeth sank into the back of my

neck as I screamed out in a mixture of pain and pleasure.

A howl and growl of displeasure came from the wolf in front of us, and I wasn’t sure what was going on. But when the wolf shifted. It was Damian. I knew my secret was up.

Damian POV

I heard Ivy running, and I wasn’t sure why. The last thing I had expected was to see Talon chasing after her. Pushing myself forward, I broke through a small clearing only to see him shift, and pin her to the ground.

I knew what he wanted.

My brothers all had wanted it, and yet she didn’t resist him.

She wasn’t scared of the fact he was a werewolf, and instead, she welcomed it.

As I stepped through the clearing, I watched as Talon took her, and while he did anger coursed through me. I should have expected this to happen.

Hell – I should have known they wouldn't listen.

But what upset me the most was knowing that she was okay with it, and I didn't get to have her first. I couldn't stop the growl that erupted from me, showing mine and my wolf's displeasure.

I could run over there, and yell at them both. Make them fear me for their betrayal, but honestly, what would that accomplish. Spinning on my paws, Iran, anger coursing through my veins back towards the main house.

It made me wonder if Talon had taken his moment with her as the others had as well. It was known that keeping mates apart was hard and that eventually a wolf's lust takes over and makes the mating ritual happen.

It still didn't mean it was fair though

I was the Alpha!

Yet, they keep defying me... my own brothers.

As I let the shift take over, I walked through the back door to the kitchen and just in time to see Hale and James laughing with each other as they came to face me. They were always close when they were younger, and in a way, Hale, looked out for James more than I ever had as the eldest.

"Did you both handle things?" I stated flatly causing them both to look at me and nod.

"Yes, it seems that the Silver Crest pack has had the same issue of rogue attacks that we have on the northern side of our territory. It doesn't make any sense though for them to be trying to come here. Something isn't adding up..."

I had been thinking the same thing as Hale for the past few months, and as the attacks grow more frequent, i couldn't help but admit that something seemed more strategic about them. "We have to get to the bottom of this.."

As much as I wanted to focus on work, I couldn't stop thinking about Ivy and Talon. That anger was still close to the surface, trying to escape. As the back door opened, I heard the laughter filtering through the opened doorway, and knew that it was Ivy's.

"That's not true.." her voice called out before Talon laughed, "... be quiet... finish the meeting, and then go back... stop it, Talon..."

Her taunting and playful tone made my blood boil.

She was supposed to be like that with me.

As her body moved through the opened door into the kitchen, I could smell Talon all over her. Their scents mixed from their mating, and even though she couldn't smell it, I knew that Talon was well aware of what he was doing.

"Oh-" She replied, staring at me with wide doe-like eyes, "I'm sorry... I didn't mean to interrupt. Just going to my dad's office."

Nodding my head, I gritted my teeth as I watched her move slowly through the kitchen. All three of my brother's couldn't keep their eyes off of her, and it was more than obvious that my question on whether they had mated with her or not had been answered.

The way all of them looked at her made my own heart clench.

Hale and James wanted to touch her more than anything, and through our own bond as siblings, I could feel their yearning

Once her small petite frame had moved from our view, they turned to face me, and my brows narrowed. It was then that Hale's eyes widened in shock having realized that I knew the truth.

"Damian... I can explain."

I was done with their false explanations and lies.

It seemed that there was nothing but betrayal everywhere I turned, and my words as their Alpha meant nothing to them anymore.