

## Chapter 36 - Unscutable

Piper POV

Heard a chair's legs scrape back away from the table quite violently and turned to see it was Izzy, knew instantly what the problem was, pushed her own issues away. Edwards' eyes had moved to another during the meal. Izzy hated that, saw her angry and hurt expression. Though it was not directed at Piper, she knew Piper would never hurt her like that.

This could really break her bond with Edward. The man's eyes moved right to Izzy as she stepped away from the table, slashed angrily right at Edwards' hand as it landed on her arm, to remove it from her skin, he would not be able to charm her, couldn't use that gift on his own Mate, they were immune to it.

Saw her stalk away, saw real confusion in the man's eyes, he didn't even know what he had done, wouldn't in all likelihood even be able to guess at it. He knew nothing about his human Mate. "Stay here," she told Brandon softly, and got up, put her hand out to Edward as he also stood up and shook her head at him, then she hurried after Izzy, who'd actually not left the hotel suite, just banged right into Edwards room.

Walked right in there after her. "Izzy?"

"They're all the same you know!" she grated out, there were tears already filling her eyes, she was bonded to him already, her pain was very real right this minute.

What she had seen, was just Edwards' natural instincts kicking in, but she couldn't understand that, how could she explain this to her without telling her the whole truth, of what the man really was, what his actual job inside a pack was.

Piper sighed softly, walked right over to her and hugged her "It's not like that, Izzy. I promise."

"Yes it is, I heard it. How much concern just now, for you...I hate men." she whispered "I thought he was going to be different, he...feels different and you..." a sob broke out of the woman.

“I didn’t lie to you Izzy. He wants no other, not ever.” she tried to reassure her friend “I know this, it’s just...complicated.” she hugged her tightly. Piper might not like wolves herself, but Izzy had the right to be happy.

“I don’t want complicated Piper...I just want one man, whose eyes never wander, why is it so hard to get.”

Piper knew that every single one of them out there would be using their wolf’s hearing to listen to this conversation, nothing private would be allowed, though it was probably a good idea that Eddie knew what was going on in here. He’d unwittingly hurt Izzy, had not meant to, did not even know what he’d done, had looked very confused and not only that, he could not come in here and just charm her into calming down either and he knew it.

“I don’t know Izzy.” she sighed again, and she didn’t.

Her own Mate had never even known she existed, so she understood all too well the pain of the one you want, wanting another and right before your very eyes, had seen it herself, the way Brad had looked at Bianca, just like Izzy had when Phillip cheated on her, caught him in the act.

“He’s not ever going to cheat on you Izzy, it’s not in him...I didn’t lie about that.”

“I...I”

“I understand, it will all get explained to you, it will. Just complicated, Edwards job...” how did one do this? Piper pulled herself away and looked down at her. “Sit, I’ll try to explain what I can, I’ll be a bit confusing, but will you listen?”

She saw Izzy nod her head, she likely wanted to hear anything at all to help her believe it wasn’t that Edward wanted someone else, needed to hear it. Her bond with Edward was already strong, it seemed, likely because she had been Mated by both Edward and his Wolf, likely she had Mated him right back at some point. Probably with his wolf this morning, but it could have been with both of them she didn’t know.

They sat on the bed. Piper brushed the tears from the woman’s face and sighed “Drake Industries, is a very private company, not just anyone is allowed inside the headquarters, it’s a...very close-knit, tightly guarded gated community and Edwards job, is not some CEO, which is how if you looked him up..” saw Izzy nod her head to acknowledge she had already done that

“he would look, he has a very specific role to play...Kind of like...a counsellor or shrink I guess. He can read emotions, very well. Like, um...an empath you could say.”

“They’re not real Piper.” Izzy frowned at her.

“They are actually.” she nodded “It’s Edwards’ job, to read people and try to calm them when upset.” she was not going to tell her it was only the women he worked with, likely send Izzy running right out of the hotel room. “I...he felt something from me, that was all. Automatically went into work mode.”

“So he’s not interested?”

Piper laughed softly. “No..”she shook her head. “No-one in that room out there is at all interested in me, only Brandon.”

Saw Izzy frown right at her “That might not be true Piper.”

“It is, it’s okay.” she shrugged “I never belonged there, that’s why I left. I told you this before.”

“But Bradley said to me.”

Piper cut her off. “Stop, he just wants his son Izzy. Likely will say anything to get him inside that gated community he owns.”

“He owns a whole community?”

“Yes.” Piper nodded “Edward.” she changed the subject. “is going to take you there.”

“What? But I’ve got a store to run here!”

Piper looked right at her and sighed again a little on the heavy side now.

“Likely not anymore, I’m sorry. He won’t let you live half way around the world from him, and Izzy? Honestly...do you like him?”

Saw the girl bite her lip nervously.

“It’s okay Izzy, I can see that you do.”

“But Piper.”

“Don’t worry about it, I’ll promote Devon. You hired him knowing he’s capable. Hired him so he could run the store when you were away with me at bridal shows and fashion shows, remember...You’re not letting me down Izzy.” she reassured her.

“I don’t even know him.”

“I know, but you really like him, don’t you.” was actively encouraging her best friend, a woman she considered to be her only family to go and be with a wolf. Piper wondered if she was certifiably crazy, because this was going to cost her, her only true friend.

“I think I do.”

“You think?” Piper half snorted “Can you tell me, has any man ever made you feel like he does? Bet you can’t say no to him, don’t even want to.” she gave her a little playful shove.

Saw Izzy smile “No and No.”

“See, you’ll be just fine. I’m pretty sure Edward has no idea what he did wrong, he looked so very confused. I’m betting he’s already itching to apologise even though he has no idea, what he did. I’m betting he’s prowling around out there, terrified he’s going to loose you.”

“I doubt it, men never do that.”

“Those from Drake Industries, are a whole different breed, they can be very open about what they want. Will usually just state how they feel. Hasn’t Edward already done that?” she asked, knowing full well the man had laid his claim on her.

“What?”

“Come on Izzy, the man told you, you were his, didn’t he?” she prompted.

Heard Izzy giggle softly and then nodded “stated ‘Mine.’”

“See, you’ll be fine...just try to remember, he has that weird job. So sometimes he’ll want to comfort others. It’s just his job, not how he feels about anyone else. I promise you that.”

“Just his job...” Izzy nodded, though didn’t sound totally convinced.

“Yes, I’ve seen it in action, quite a bit when I was there.” she sighed softly  
“Once his job is over, he wanders off, lets it go, not a care in the world, just a job, you’ll have to remember that, keep it in mind, for oh, a month or so, I’m guessing.”

“A month? What happens then?”

“You’ll get married, I’m guessing that man out there, will not want to wait on getting you down the isle.”

“What? That’s too soon.”

“Not inside Drake Industries, people there are known to get married the day they meet, kind of weird, and they have no divorce rate either, always loyal to each other.”

“That is just weird.”

“It’s just how it is, you’ll understand, get to understand, you’ll like it there, fit it.”

“Then why’d you leave?”

“I...I didn’t fit in Izzy. Never could, it’s hard to explain.” she shrugged “I never will.” she sighed “But don’t worry about me, just be worried about you, about how you feel and let yourself love him, I know you want to, you’re just scared. But you don’t have to be. He’s never going to hurt you, he already loves you.”

Watched Izzy screw her face up in a ‘yeah right.’ gesture.

“Oh, and he just flew half way around the world for no reason, then did he? Men don’t do that.”

“Piper...Bradley Drake came too.”

“And so did all his other men. He came for his boy Izzy.” she stated flatly  
“Now, you feeling better?”

Izzy nodded her head.

“You can come in, Edward.” she stated calmly. The door opened instantly saw Izzy’s shock and smiled, leaned over and hugged her one more time. “It’s weird I know, you’ll get used to it. He’ll always know where you are.”

“Always?” she whispered.

“Mm, hmm. Not a moment’s rest from the crazy beast you have found yourself.” Heard Edward chuckle softly at her word use.

“Thank you Piper.”

Piper looked right at him, said nothing, just walked out of the room and closed the door so they could talk privately. No-one was likely to tune into their conversation. Yes, she had helped him, and in more ways than one she supposed, but she didn’t do it for him, did it for Izzy, that woman deserved to have a man who would love and cherish her. Unfortunately, that man was also a wolf.

Found herself under everyone’s gaze, she sighed and walked back over to the table and sat down, looked at Brandon “She’s alright sweetie.” she told him.

“Thank you Piper.” it was Harrison, Edwards' brother.

She looked at him. “I did it for her, not for him.”

“I know that, but still thank you.”

“Seeing as Izzy will likely be staying here from now on, Brandon and I will go now.”

“Piper please.” Bradley stood and looked down at her. “Stay and talk to me, I want you to come home, where you belong.”

“I don’t belong there, never did.” she stated emotionlessly “Come on Brandon.” she reached for his hand as she stood up.

“Piper, you do belong there, I want you there.” he moved to reach out and touch her.

She took a step back away from him. “No, it’s not my home, never was I now realise, go back, leave us be, please.”

He was suddenly right in front of her, blocking her way from leaving the suite. “Piper, I know your life inside the Pack, was not nice. I do. I’m really sorry, but please, have dinner with me, privately, so we can really talk. Cooper and Harry or even Izzy can watch Brandon, it’s just one dinner, is that really too much to ask?”

“Yes,” she stated flatly, it was, he had no idea about her life in the pack. “I do not want.”

“Enough.” he suddenly snapped, cutting her off “I don’t want to hear it. Don’t do it Piper, it hurts.” and then he just turned and stalked away and banged right out the hotel suite.

“Piper, did you not just hear him, begging you, and Alpha begging you to just hear him out, hear his pain at all, as you ignore him at every turn.”

“He doesn’t know what pain is,” Piper muttered.

Heard Cooper sigh as he got up from the table himself, “Actually, yes he does.” she stated as he headed for the door, “you nearly killed him once Piper, and he didn’t even know what the hell had happened to him.” Then he was gone out of the room.

Piper frowned, nearly killed him once? She highly doubted that, was the other way around, in fact. The last time she had seen him he had been alive, asleep in his very own bed.

“Piper.” it was Harrison, her eyes moved to him. “Bradley felt your rejection of him.” she blinked in shock, they could not know that she had uttered a rejection to the man. None of them, including Bradley himself, even knew what she had been to him at the time. “It gutted him. He didn’t even know what was wrong with him, when the pain hit him, he woke up in agony. None of us knew what the hell was wrong with him.” he shook his head “rushed him off to the pack hospital, except Eddie, who felt it. Understood what it was.” Harry sighed and stood up. “ Then when you left and rejected the Pack completely, the man tried to rip his own heart out, had to be sedated by Dr Samuel, it nearly did kill him.”

She was just standing there staring at him now, didn’t know what to say at all, didn’t even know if she believed it to be honest. “Let him talk to you Piper, give him that much. It’s one dinner. Izzy can watch young Brandon, in your room. Just Izzy, none of us will be there, if that makes you more comfortable.”

Piper didn’t know what to think at all, the man sounded completely sincere to her, but there was no way that any of them could know about the Mate Bond she had with their Alpha, only she’d ever known, not even Bradley himself had known, not even after being with her, touching her, not even then had he known.

She was invisible to that pack, to all packs. Always had been, so how could they know? Especially who she actually was? It did not make sense at all. And how could her words hurt him now? It had been 8 years, he'd continued on in his life, she'd not felt one single pain of betrayal since she left, her rejection was in effect.

She was more than confused right this minute, nothing made sense to her at all.

"I'll walk you and Brandon to your room. I'll pick you up at 6 for dinner. Please, it's one dinner, just an hour of your time. It's not that much to ask, not really in the grand scheme of things, our lives are very long."

He escorted her and Brandon back to their room on the 6th floor, reminded her at the door he'd come and collect her at 6, then he just turned and walked away. She stood in her room still very confused.

"Mum?"

"I don't know Brandon." she answered him honestly, because she didn't.

She knew that he had heard everything that both Cooper and Harrison had said in that room, as well as Bradley, before he stormed out. Had no idea what he made of it all, she couldn't even comprehend it herself. Her son likely had no idea at all. She couldn't even explain it to him, because she was as confused as he was.

## **Chapter 37 - Unscentable**

Bradley POV

Bradley was more than concerned with Harper's reaction to his Beta, it was uncalled for, he thought, and she was right there on the surface out in the open for any human to see, if they walked passed or came out of their hotel room to see what all the noise was about.

Bradley had been prowling around inside his hotel room. He was worried that though she was on her way up here she was going to just demand that he hand Izzy over and leave the minute she had her. It was a completely possibility this would happen. She did not seem to want to give him a moment of her time.

His head had whipped around at the sound of a wolf snarling “Don’t touch me.” He had known she was on her way up here with Cooper, the man had already mind-linked him to let him know, also mentioned that Brandon appeared afraid of his presence.

Bradley had not been expecting any aggression on either of their parts, Piper or Brandon’s, for that matter, not with the boy displaying fear. He had shot out of his room into the hall to see what the hell was going on out there, it had been all of two and half minutes and everything seemed to have gone off the rails.

Cooper was actively backing away from them, his hands raised so that she could see his was no threat to her, or the child she was carrying in her arms. Noted it was not just Harper on the surface, but his boys’ wolf Aspen was right there with her. Something had made the pair of them perceive Cooper as a threat to them, and in the space of two and a half minutes.

Demanded his Beta tell him what the hell was going on, needed to know to help calm the situation if he could. Cooper told him he’d just touched her to guide her to the room. It didn’t make sense that was not a gesture of threat at all, yet here she was and not just her all aggression, Brandon too. A low growl was still being emitted from Harper as well. She was very unhappy, it seemed. This was not a good thing.

He’d seen the way she had taken a step back from Benson earlier this morning, when he’d reached out to touch her, now this, a full threat to rip his hand clean off, if he touched her again. It was pretty damned clear she did not want to be touched at all. Must have been the actual touch itself that set her wolf off.

It concerned it greatly, set his brain on fire at the possible reasons why she would react to such an ordinary thing for a Beta to do, it was just an instinct on Cooper's part, he imagined, certainly would not have been a threat in any way. Made Bradley wonder if at some point that pendant had come off of her and she’d been hurt. He hoped not. Though if it was after her leaving he would have felt it himself, so unlikely. He also knew he had been her first as well.

Something else was going on, he just didn’t know what. Needed to find out, he guessed.

Waved her passed him, even took a half step back so she could walk passed him without the issue of them coming into contact, noticed that Aspen receded almost at the exact same time as Harper did, wondered if his young Alpha wolf was deeply connected to his mother, if he could actually feel her push forward and recede without looking at her it was possible.

He could always tell when his mother's wolf had looked at him, even before he'd gotten his wolf. She'd died when he was just 12, but could still recall always knowing when her wolf was right there on the surface, even if he wasn't looking at her. Aspen may have that himself.

Thinking about his mother, she was an early shifter he realised, gotten her wolf Hallow at 10 herself. Perhaps this was why Aspen was early.

He could tell right away that Piper was more than annoyed to hear that Izzy was in Eddie's room and likely thought the man was keeping her in there for his own gain, then to hear Brandon ask if all wolves scared everyone all the time, actually hurt a little and not just him but Benson too.

It was clear from that one statement that the only interactions his son had ever had with any of his own kind, were all bad. He'd never had a single nice interaction with the exception of his own mother. He did not like that at all. Not all wolves were nasty, mean, scary creatures, in fact, unless you ticked one off, they were usually just happy going about their own business.

And out in the human world, they were usually well mannered and polite. Their human counterparts knew better than to antagonise anyone, or get into a fight. And if he had ever seen the inside of a pack he would know that. Saddened him a little too.

So told him no they did not and corrected him told him it was an accident that he had growled at Izzy, just like it was out in the hall when Harper growled at Cooper. Only to be told point blankly that was no accident. He did not like that, Harper had meant every word, and her threat to his Beta was real. Would have to work on that.

It was nice to see Izzy and Brandon interact, clearly very close, watched her hug the boy, so it wasn't that touching him was a threat, touching his mother was seen as a threat. Very protective indeed, just like Timothy had stated. Hoped that was not going to be a problem in the future.

Frowned when Piper stated Izzy was injured, and then outright threatened his Gamma with Harper, in front of Izzy. He did apologise, it had actually escaped him that Izzy was injured. He'd seen Eddie carry that woman right into this hotel room, she'd looked fine to him, just tired and if she had been injured by Eddie or his wolf they would have known about it and done something, so he'd not even smelled the woman looking for signs of injury.

Turned out to be a light scratch on either side of her hips, Timbers claws used to remove her underwear. Eddie had mind-linked him. It was nothing serious, a small amount of blood and it would be fine. Told the man to be more careful in future.

Watching as they ate, the bond between Izzy and Brandon was nice, she was obviously comfortable in this room, with all of them and they were all here, he and his whole unit. Hadn't looked at him with fear when she'd come out of Eddie's room, seemed she was all good. Playing with Brandon, trying to get him to eat her vegetables. Clearly, he did not want to at all, this was normal it seemed.

Watched as Brandon was relaxed at the table, swatting Izzy's fork away and shoving at her, he could tell this lot ate together on a regular basis. The boy interacted with her as though she was a normal member of his family. Looked at her like an Aunt, a good thing he thought.

Even got to see that Piper smiled at the antics that were going on between the two of them, shook her head a few times, used to seeing it. Wouldn't surprise him if, in a better setting, she would play back in the same manner.

Pipers' very poor introduction of him to Brandon when he asked her to introduce them, seeing that it was clear she was not going to, "Brandon your father." waved a hand in his general direction, was very disrespectful and he didn't like it. Then told him that Brandon already knew who he was, that she had not lied to the boy about who he was.

That was a good thing, but telling her that was not a proper introduction, didn't get him anywhere at all either. She simply looked at him with a raised eyebrow and stated she couldn't exactly follow protocol now could she? She had him on that, but a nicer way of doing it could have been done.

All he had really wanted was for her to state 'Brandon, this is Bradley, he's your father.' Was that really so hard a thing to ask? He didn't think so. What

he wanted and what he was getting were two very different things. Then she simply told him to introduce himself.

Both he and Benson were getting more than annoyed with her attitude, and reluctance to assist in the current situation, they were both just staring at her, though Benson was not on the surface, couldn't be with Izzy right there.

Had likely been a rogue for far too long, used to doing what she wanted, when she wanted, how she wanted. Damn near huffed, West had warned him about this, his Mate had lived on her own out in the world away from his pack and didn't take kindly to orders, used to doing as she pleased. Piper was going to be the same.

Though he was certain Piper had a slight advantage over Jo-anne's position, Jo-anne had been one of West's pack members and had to follow orders. Piper here was a rogue and knew it, also knew he could not actually make her, she did not have to take orders from him. It was likely she also knew he was going to have to keep his Alpha temper reigned in, around Izzy, a human and his son, who he'd just met today and thought all wolves were mean and nasty.

Brandon's reply to him introducing himself was as cold as his mother's "I know mum told me already, when I asked." it sounded unemotional and very dismissive, almost as though the boy did not care at all that he was his father. It was entirely possible the boy was 7 and had been raised in the human world, likely had friends who didn't have dads out there. He'd not had a father all his life. He had no idea if the boy's wolf considered him family at all, even though they understood what he was to them, could well not care, considering all other interactions with wolves.

Told him it was nice to meet him, hoping for something from the boy at all, even smiled right at him, he was genuinely happy to meet him, spend time with him and be in the same room with him. Still itched to touch the boy, would love to get that father to son hug, but from everything or lack thereof, it was unlikely he was going to get that hug anytime soon.

Was barely a minute later when he heard Piper draw in a long deep breath and suddenly Eddie's Gamma's southern drawl rolled right out of him. "Piper, it's okay." he only now realised that something else was going on. His eyes moved right to her, he had been focused on Brandon till this point. No longer.

She looked impassive to him, almost devoid of all emotions, but he knew that was only on the surface. Eddie's reaction spoke volumes. Her hands were stilled above her plate, as though she was focused on it, something else was going on inside her mind.

"You touch me Edward, you'll lose that hand." he heard her mutter. A moment after his Gamma had spoken to her, trying to use his Charm on her, to ease whatever it was she was feeling right this minute, had very good control of her facial expression he realised, she was unreadable to him. But not to Eddie, couldn't get passed that man and his instincts.

He also noted that Piper did not so much as even look in Eddie's direction, felt his aura roll right out of him, Bradley supposed, she might no longer live as wolf did, but had lived inside the pack most of her life, knew what a Gamma was, how they worked. He realised she knew he was going to try and touch her, not that Eddie had moved at all.

Izzy was suddenly up and stalking away from Eddie, yanked her arm right out of his hand when he latched on to her to see what was wrong. It was clear the man had no idea what was going on, and to be honest, neither did Bradley. As far as he could tell, Eddie hadn't done anything wrong.

Watched as Eddie stood, so did Piper for that matter, told Brandon to stay here, and then halted Eddie with a simple hand gesture, then turned and went after Izzy. It was clear Piper knew what had just happened, without a doubt, she also knew it was Eddie who had just upset her friend.

The poor man looked more than confused, as he watched his human Mate slam the door to his bedroom behind her, looked right at Bradley for clarification, he shook his head, saw the man look to all of them in turn. Neither of them knew. Which only confused him even further. On the bright side, Izzy didn't leave the suite, and set Timber off. Just stalked into Eddie's room. Bonded to him likely in some way, that was good.

He noticed that Brandon was looking right at the closed door, his mother had just followed Izzy through, his head was tilted ever so slightly to the right. Made Bradley smile, his boy was using his wolf's hearing to hear what was going on in that room, so very protective and now he realised not just of his mother.

Wondered if Aspen fancied himself as the Alpha Wolf to his very tiny pack which included just the three of them. It was very possible. He did display all the markings of an Alpha, trying to protect what was his.

Realised that Piper had left Brandon alone in this room with him and his entire Alpha Unit, a little trust, it seemed, had been granted. A good thing.

Tuned his hearing into the room where both Izzy and Piper were, as he knew everyone else in the room was doing, none of them understood what happened and were all curious.

Heard Piper try to console Izzy, who had apparently taken Eddie's use of his Gamma Charm as he was looking at Piper in more than a normal way, she actually thought the man was interested in Piper, couldn't be further from the truth. Sighed when he heard her sob, saw Eddie move instantly head right for the room himself.

'Leave it.' Bradley shot down the mind-link at him 'Piper knows her better, let her calm Izzy.'

'She thinks I'm going to cheat on her.' Eddie shot right back. He clearly wanted to go in there and sort it out.

'Because you have done this all backwards, just wait, let Piper help her.' he had a feeling this was not new to Piper, that she had seen this before with her friend, dealt with it before. Piper also knew that Izzy was Eddie's Mate.

Eddie was prowling back and forth, listening to Piper try and explain Eddie's job to her.

Bradley's eyes moved to Brandon. He was focused on that room, listening intently, it seemed, likely this would be the first of any type of explanation of anything for him.

Piper was in there trying to make Eddie's job relate as best she could to the human world. That made Bradley smile a little, she was actually helping to sway Izzy to be Eddie's Mate. Which was a good thing, not just for Izzy and Eddie, but it allowed him to see she wasn't totally against a Mate Bond.

She was actively encouraging Izzy to go to the Pack with Eddie, wanted her friend to be happy, it seemed.

Though it hurt to hear her say no-one out there cared about her, or looked at her like that, sighed heavily to himself, when he heard her state that he only cared about his son and nothing more. Found Brandon's eyes right on him, accusingly so at that. There was a full flicker of Aspen right there. He too was mad about that statement.

"That's not true," Bradley told them both softly.

Could tell the boy and his wolf didn't actually believe him and his statement spoke volumes "I won't live with you. Not without mum." the boy told him and there was anger in their words. His eyes were flickering between his wolf and his own, they were both in agreement.

"I'm not going to take you away from your mother. I want both of you to come home...to be a family." he told him. Perhaps having the boy understand might help the situation.

Didn't want to use him like this, but it was clear to Bradley that Brandon understood their situation, or Piper had told him that Bradley could just come along and take him away, anytime he liked, because he was the Alpha of a Pack.

Saw the boy's eyes turn back to his plate, did not want to talk to him anymore, so like his mother he was, but what else could he expect she was the one raising him, he would of course, take after her, only had her to look up too. This could be more difficult than he thought.

Heard Eddie thank Piper for her help, and watched her come out of Eddie's room alone, left Izzy and Eddie in there to talk he supposed. She glanced at them all, they were all watching her. Mostly because they were all shocked that she had just helped Eddie keep his Mate, and none of them had really expected that from her. She had in all likelihood talked her friend into marrying the man.

Watched her as she reassured Brandon that Izzy was alright, heard Harry thank her for her help. Not that she cared, told him that she hadn't done it for Eddie. She wanted her friend to be happy, even if that meant losing her herself.

Remarked that Izzy would likely be staying there from now on, then just told him she and Brandon could leave. She had only come here as he suspected. For Izzy.

Trying to get her to stay, even saying please. Didn't work, just elicited a comment of "I don't belong there, never did." from her. That hurt him, she did belong there, had always belonged there, with him.

Tried again to tell her that she did belong there, told her he wanted her there, reached out to touch her, wanted her to realise their Mate Bond was still intact. He knew she could smell his scent, that was a given, but it had been a long time since she'd left and not once would she have felt any pangs of betrayal. Would have likely convinced herself that her rejection was in effect, easy enough to come to that conclusion for her. But smelling him would also be confusing for her.

Watched her actively take a step back away from him, from his out-stretched hand. This was not the first time either. He was not certain if she didn't want any wolves touching her, or just him. She had warned both his Beta and Gamma about touching her, told them both they would lose their hands in fact. So perhaps it wasn't just him.

Told her 'No' to 'go back' 'to leave' even used the word please. As much as he wanted her to come home, she didn't want to. He couldn't walk away from her, stepped right in front of her, careful not to touch her, didn't want to set Harper off and he got the impression it would.

Tried to tell her he understood, that he did know her life inside the pack was not nice, apologised to her for it. Was practically begging her to have dinner with him. Not something he had ever had to do, most wanted to have dinner with him, he'd never had to beg for anything in his life, he was the Alpha, always got what he wanted.

Now here he was an Alpha begging a rogue female for just one meal, to allow them to sit down and talk privately, to sort everything out. He didn't want to have this conversation in front of their son. That was why he was asking for a private dinner.

He was going to lose her, now that Izzy was going to be part of the pack, had no leverage to get her back here to talk to him.

"yes." she stated flatly, right to his face, believed it was too much of him to ask of her. "I do not want."

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Bradley did understand how her life had been, but he had also suffered. For 8 long years he'd had a Mate who'd run away from him, through no real fault of his own. They had not known who she was to them, and how could they, with that damned pendant around her neck.

He wanted nothing more than to go back down there and rip the damned thing right off her neck, claim what he was damned certain was his, Make her forgive him and drag her home. Mate her right into submission until she accepted him and his wolf as her Mate. Left not just the room but the damned floor to stop himself from doing just that.

His father had told him, not to take her pendant off under any circumstances, and especially not around his unit. Bradley already knew it was because they would all likely turn on her, it's what that contract stated. Also, what Alpha Timothy had said, worried about her being raped, in fact, so Bradley was certain 'turn on her' meant that they would all be trying to get a piece of her, regardless that she was their Alpha's Mate.

Found himself out on the roof stalking around, his fists balled trying to calm not just himself down but his wolf, he'd ignored his Beta's mind-link, shut it off and pushed it away, needed more than a minute to himself.

Though it didn't take Cooper long to find him, likely used his tether to his Alpha to locate him. The man stood just watching him for several minutes then sighed "Its going to be alright Brad, just take a breath, calm down."

“What the hell do you think I'm trying to do up here?” he snapped, calm down. Yeah, telling someone to calm down really works “Not even Brandon, wants to come home.” He shot at his Beta.

“He’s little and he’s scared, never likely had to deal with wolves prior to Alpha Timothy, and right now we’re not exactly putting our best foot forward. Are we?”

Bradley glared at the man. He was trying his best.

“Brad, Eddie took Izzy. You heard what Brandon said he was scared we’d hurt her. Yelling at his mother? Not a good idea either...” raised his hands at Brad to halt the yelling that was about to burst out of him. “I understand you’re upset, that’s why you yelled.”

“I begged her Coop and still nothing.” Bradley grated out.

“I know,” The man sighed, “you knew this was not going to be easy Brad...a long road to getting her, even longer to getting her inside the pack itself. You knew this, coming here.”

Bradley closed his eyes and tilted his head skyward, took a breath in, he did know this, right from the beginning. This was just day one of his pursuit of his Mate. He was just so used to getting his own way all the time, that he obviously had no idea how to deal with not getting his way.

Shook his head, Izzy was right! He was arrogant and did expect everyone to just fall at his feet, was used to people just doing what he wanted when he wanted without so much as a flicker of an eyelid. Piper was never going to be like that.

If he was this angry and annoyed by her resistance on just the first day of trying to get her to come home, how was he going to cope every other day she tried to, or managed to tell him she didn’t want him or anything to do with him or his pack.

“I know, Coop.” he finally sighed “I just...”

“Breathe Bradley.” his Beta sighed “Just breathe, Harry is taking her back to her room, dinner will be at 6.”

That got his attention, his eyes moved to Cooper. “What?...how?” he couldn’t wrangle a dinner with her, how had his Delta managed to do it?

Saw Cooper look at him a little on the guilty side. “Well, that’s actually mine and Harry’s fault.”

“Fault? Tell me you did not threaten her?” he was going to kill them both if they did.

“No of course not...I told her,” saw the man look very apologetically at him. “that she nearly killed you once, sorry. And well, Harry has reported to me that he followed on from my lead. Told her you’d felt her rejection. How you reacted to it. Including nearly ripping your own heart out. Then he escorted her and Brandon back to their room.”

Brad sighed, not much he could do about it.

“Harry didn’t want to go direct to you, thought it was better coming from me. He mind-linked me while I was waiting on you to calm down, told piper he would pick her up at 6. Apparently she looked very confused, Harry said he thinks she might actually believe us.”

Stood staring at the man, his men it seemed had taken matters into their own hands, it was something he had wanted to discuss with her over this dinner. Tell her he’d felt it, had refused to accept it, try to start sorting it out, apologise for not knowing all that time and causing her so much pain. Now he guessed most of that was done for him.

Would she have dinner with him now? “Did she say anything?”

“Not that I am aware of, you might want to go and talk to Harry. Be mindful Brad, that both of us were just angry along with you, at her disrespect and dismissing of you and your plea. We were just trying to help you.” kind of sounded like he was trying see about punishment for over stepping their bounds.

“I know this.” Bradley nodded “I’m not particularly angry with either of you.”. And he wasn’t, kind felt a bit calmer about his situation actually, they had reduced his stress and his wolfs it seemed “I would have preferred to do it myself, but...it’s out now, so...”

“Thanks Brad. I don’t think Harry or I want a beating from you.”

Bradley’s brow furrowed as he looked at the man, then realised he was just trying to lighten the mood. “Another time, huh. I’m sure you’ll trip up somewhere.”

“Hmm, might have already done that. You’re just unaware of it.” he murmured, but wouldn’t look at Bradley.

Gained Bradley’s attention “Alright what did you do?”

Cooper shook his head “discuss it another time, back in the pack. It can wait. Come on, you still got Izzy to sort out.”

“Izzy’s fine, Piper practically convinced that woman to marry Eddie, we’ll need bloody ear plugs every night now.”

Cooper snorted “you could just order him not to do that.”

“Yeah and I’m sure that would work.” Bradley muttered, his bloody Gamma had no control, he was certain, even with an order on him, that man and his wolf would find away around it somehow.

Looked at his watch, it was barely 2pm, dinner was at 6. “ Where for dinner?” he asked.

“Our suite, the rest of us will make ourselves scarce, with exception of Eddie of course.”

“Alright.” Bradley nodded “I need a suit. Let’s go and get some decent clothes.”

## **Chapter 37 - Unscentable**

Bradley POV

Bradley was more than concerned with Harper’s reaction to his Beta, it was uncalled for, he thought, and she was right there on the surface out in the open for any human to see, if they walked passed or came out of their hotel room to see what all the noise was about.

Bradley had been prowling around inside his hotel room. He was worried that though she was on her way up here she was going to just demand that he hand Izzy over and leave the minute she had her. It was a completely possibility this would happen. She did not seem to want to give him a moment of her time.

His head had whipped around at the sound of a wolf snarling “Don’t touch me.” He had known she was on her way up here with Cooper, the man had already mind-linked him to let him know, also mentioned that Brandon appeared afraid of his presence.

Bradley had not been expecting any aggression on either of their parts, Piper or Brandon’s, for that matter, not with the boy displaying fear. He had shot out of his room into the hall to see what the hell was going on out there, it had been all of two and half minutes and everything seemed to have gone off the rails.

Cooper was actively backing away from them, his hands raised so that she could see his was no threat to her, or the child she was carrying in her arms. Noted it was not just Harper on the surface, but his boys’ wolf Aspen was right there with her. Something had made the pair of them perceive Cooper as a threat to them, and in the space of two and a half minutes.

Demanded his Beta tell him what the hell was going on, needed to know to help calm the situation if he could. Cooper told him he’d just touched her to guide her to the room. It didn’t make sense that was not a gesture of threat at all, yet here she was and not just her all aggression, Brandon too. A low growl was still being emitted from Harper as well. She was very unhappy, it seemed. This was not a good thing.

He’d seen the way she had taken a step back from Benson earlier this morning, when he’d reached out to touch her, now this, a full threat to rip his hand clean off, if he touched her again. It was pretty damned clear she did not want to be touched at all. Must have been the actual touch itself that set her wolf off.

It concerned it greatly, set his brain on fire at the possible reasons why she would react to such an ordinary thing for a Beta to do, it was just an instinct on Cooper's part, he imagined, certainly would not have been a threat in any way. Made Bradley wonder if at some point that pendant had come off of her and she’d been hurt. He hoped not. Though if it was after her leaving he would have felt it himself, so unlikely. He also knew he had been her first as well.

Something else was going on, he just didn’t know what. Needed to find out, he guessed.

Waved her passed him, even took a half step back so she could walk passed him without the issue of them coming into contact, noticed that Aspen receded almost at the exact same time as Harper did, wondered if his young Alpha wolf was deeply connected to his mother, if he could actually feel her push forward and recede without looking at her it was possible.

He could always tell when his mother's wolf had looked at him, even before he'd gotten his wolf. She'd died when he was just 12, but could still recall always knowing when her wolf was right there on the surface, even if he wasn't looking at her. Aspen may have that himself.

Thinking about his mother, she was an early shifter he realised, gotten her wolf Hallow at 10 herself. Perhaps this was why Aspen was early.

He could tell right away that Piper was more than annoyed to hear that Izzy was in Eddie's room and likely thought the man was keeping her in there for his own gain, then to hear Brandon ask if all wolves scared everyone all the time, actually hurt a little and not just him but Benson too.

It was clear from that one statement that the only interactions his son had ever had with any of his own kind, were all bad. He'd never had a single nice interaction with the exception of his own mother. He did not like that at all. Not all wolves were nasty, mean, scary creatures, in fact, unless you ticked one off, they were usually just happy going about their own business.

And out in the human world, they were usually well mannered and polite. Their human counterparts knew better than to antagonise anyone, or get into a fight. And if he had ever seen the inside of a pack he would know that. Saddened him a little too.

So told him no they did not and corrected him told him it was an accident that he had growled at Izzy, just like it was out in the hall when Harper growled at Cooper. Only to be told point blankly that was no accident. He did not like that, Harper had meant every word, and her threat to his Beta was real. Would have to work on that.

It was nice to see Izzy and Brandon interact, clearly very close, watched her hug the boy, so it wasn't that touching him was a threat, touching his mother was seen as a threat. Very protective indeed, just like Timothy had stated. Hoped that was not going to be a problem in the future.

Frowned when Piper stated Izzy was injured, and then outright threatened his Gamma with Harper, in front of Izzy. He did apologise, it had actually escaped him that Izzy was injured. He'd seen Eddie carry that woman right into this hotel room, she'd looked fine to him, just tired and if she had been injured by Eddie or his wolf they would have known about it and done something, so he'd not even smelled the woman looking for signs of injury.

Turned out to be a light scratch on either side of her hips, Timbers claws used to remove her underwear. Eddie had mind-linked him. It was nothing serious, a small amount of blood and it would be fine. Told the man to be more careful in future.

Watching as they ate, the bond between Izzy and Brandon was nice, she was obviously comfortable in this room, with all of them and they were all here, he and his whole unit. Hadn't looked at him with fear when she'd come out of Eddie's room, seemed she was all good. Playing with Brandon, trying to get him to eat her vegetables. Clearly, he did not want to at all, this was normal it seemed.

Watched as Brandon was relaxed at the table, swatting Izzy's fork away and shoving at her, he could tell this lot ate together on a regular basis. The boy interacted with her as though she was a normal member of his family. Looked at her like an Aunt, a good thing he thought.

Even got to see that Piper smiled at the antics that were going on between the two of them, shook her head a few times, used to seeing it. Wouldn't surprise him if, in a better setting, she would play back in the same manner.

Pipers' very poor introduction of him to Brandon when he asked her to introduce them, seeing that it was clear she was not going to, "Brandon your father." waved a hand in his general direction, was very disrespectful and he didn't like it. Then told him that Brandon already knew who he was, that she had not lied to the boy about who he was.

That was a good thing, but telling her that was not a proper introduction, didn't get him anywhere at all either. She simply looked at him with a raised eyebrow and stated she couldn't exactly follow protocol now could she? She had him on that, but a nicer way of doing it could have been done.

All he had really wanted was for her to state 'Brandon, this is Bradley, he's your father.' Was that really so hard a thing to ask? He didn't think so. What

he wanted and what he was getting were two very different things. Then she simply told him to introduce himself.

Both he and Benson were getting more than annoyed with her attitude, and reluctance to assist in the current situation, they were both just staring at her, though Benson was not on the surface, couldn't be with Izzy right there.

Had likely been a rogue for far too long, used to doing what she wanted, when she wanted, how she wanted. Damn near huffed, West had warned him about this, his Mate had lived on her own out in the world away from his pack and didn't take kindly to orders, used to doing as she pleased. Piper was going to be the same.

Though he was certain Piper had a slight advantage over Jo-anne's position, Jo-anne had been one of West's pack members and had to follow orders. Piper here was a rogue and knew it, also knew he could not actually make her, she did not have to take orders from him. It was likely she also knew he was going to have to keep his Alpha temper reigned in, around Izzy, a human and his son, who he'd just met today and thought all wolves were mean and nasty.

Brandon's reply to him introducing himself was as cold as his mother's "I know mum told me already, when I asked." it sounded unemotional and very dismissive, almost as though the boy did not care at all that he was his father. It was entirely possible the boy was 7 and had been raised in the human world, likely had friends who didn't have dads out there. He'd not had a father all his life. He had no idea if the boy's wolf considered him family at all, even though they understood what he was to them, could well not care, considering all other interactions with wolves.

Told him it was nice to meet him, hoping for something from the boy at all, even smiled right at him, he was genuinely happy to meet him, spend time with him and be in the same room with him. Still itched to touch the boy, would love to get that father to son hug, but from everything or lack thereof, it was unlikely he was going to get that hug anytime soon.

Was barely a minute later when he heard Piper draw in a long deep breath and suddenly Eddie's Gamma's southern drawl rolled right out of him. "Piper, it's okay." he only now realised that something else was going on. His eyes moved right to her, he had been focused on Brandon till this point. No longer.

She looked impassive to him, almost devoid of all emotions, but he knew that was only on the surface. Eddie's reaction spoke volumes. Her hands were stilled above her plate, as though she was focused on it, something else was going on inside her mind.

"You touch me Edward, you'll lose that hand." he heard her mutter. A moment after his Gamma had spoken to her, trying to use his Charm on her, to ease whatever it was she was feeling right this minute, had very good control of her facial expression he realised, she was unreadable to him. But not to Eddie, couldn't get passed that man and his instincts.

He also noted that Piper did not so much as even look in Eddie's direction, felt his aura roll right out of him, Bradley supposed, she might no longer live as wolf did, but had lived inside the pack most of her life, knew what a Gamma was, how they worked. He realised she knew he was going to try and touch her, not that Eddie had moved at all.

Izzy was suddenly up and stalking away from Eddie, yanked her arm right out of his hand when he latched on to her to see what was wrong. It was clear the man had no idea what was going on, and to be honest, neither did Bradley. As far as he could tell, Eddie hadn't done anything wrong.

Watched as Eddie stood, so did Piper for that matter, told Brandon to stay here, and then halted Eddie with a simple hand gesture, then turned and went after Izzy. It was clear Piper knew what had just happened, without a doubt, she also knew it was Eddie who had just upset her friend.

The poor man looked more than confused, as he watched his human Mate slam the door to his bedroom behind her, looked right at Bradley for clarification, he shook his head, saw the man look to all of them in turn. Neither of them knew. Which only confused him even further. On the bright side, Izzy didn't leave the suite, and set Timber off. Just stalked into Eddie's room. Bonded to him likely in some way, that was good.

He noticed that Brandon was looking right at the closed door, his mother had just followed Izzy through, his head was tilted ever so slightly to the right. Made Bradley smile, his boy was using his wolf's hearing to hear what was going on in that room, so very protective and now he realised not just of his mother.

Wondered if Aspen fancied himself as the Alpha Wolf to his very tiny pack which included just the three of them. It was very possible. He did display all the markings of an Alpha, trying to protect what was his.

Realised that Piper had left Brandon alone in this room with him and his entire Alpha Unit, a little trust, it seemed, had been granted. A good thing.

Tuned his hearing into the room where both Izzy and Piper were, as he knew everyone else in the room was doing, none of them understood what happened and were all curious.

Heard Piper try to console Izzy, who had apparently taken Eddie's use of his Gamma Charm as he was looking at Piper in more than a normal way, she actually thought the man was interested in Piper, couldn't be further from the truth. Sighed when he heard her sob, saw Eddie move instantly head right for the room himself.

'Leave it.' Bradley shot down the mind-link at him 'Piper knows her better, let her calm Izzy.'

'She thinks I'm going to cheat on her.' Eddie shot right back. He clearly wanted to go in there and sort it out.

'Because you have done this all backwards, just wait, let Piper help her.' he had a feeling this was not new to Piper, that she had seen this before with her friend, dealt with it before. Piper also knew that Izzy was Eddie's Mate.

Eddie was prowling back and forth, listening to Piper try and explain Eddie's job to her.

Bradley's eyes moved to Brandon. He was focused on that room, listening intently, it seemed, likely this would be the first of any type of explanation of anything for him.

Piper was in there trying to make Eddie's job relate as best she could to the human world. That made Bradley smile a little, she was actually helping to sway Izzy to be Eddie's Mate. Which was a good thing, not just for Izzy and Eddie, but it allowed him to see she wasn't totally against a Mate Bond.

She was actively encouraging Izzy to go to the Pack with Eddie, wanted her friend to be happy, it seemed.

Though it hurt to hear her say no-one out there cared about her, or looked at her like that, sighed heavily to himself, when he heard her state that he only cared about his son and nothing more. Found Brandon's eyes right on him, accusingly so at that. There was a full flicker of Aspen right there. He too was mad about that statement.

"That's not true," Bradley told them both softly.

Could tell the boy and his wolf didn't actually believe him and his statement spoke volumes "I won't live with you. Not without mum." the boy told him and there was anger in their words. His eyes were flickering between his wolf and his own, they were both in agreement.

"I'm not going to take you away from your mother. I want both of you to come home...to be a family." he told him. Perhaps having the boy understand might help the situation.

Didn't want to use him like this, but it was clear to Bradley that Brandon understood their situation, or Piper had told him that Bradley could just come along and take him away, anytime he liked, because he was the Alpha of a Pack.

Saw the boy's eyes turn back to his plate, did not want to talk to him anymore, so like his mother he was, but what else could he expect she was the one raising him, he would of course, take after her, only had her to look up too. This could be more difficult than he thought.

Heard Eddie thank Piper for her help, and watched her come out of Eddie's room alone, left Izzy and Eddie in there to talk he supposed. She glanced at them all, they were all watching her. Mostly because they were all shocked that she had just helped Eddie keep his Mate, and none of them had really expected that from her. She had in all likelihood talked her friend into marrying the man.

Watched her as she reassured Brandon that Izzy was alright, heard Harry thank her for her help. Not that she cared, told him that she hadn't done it for Eddie. She wanted her friend to be happy, even if that meant losing her herself.

Remarked that Izzy would likely be staying there from now on, then just told him she and Brandon could leave. She had only come here as he suspected. For Izzy.

Trying to get her to stay, even saying please. Didn't work, just elicited a comment of "I don't belong there, never did." from her. That hurt him, she did belong there, had always belonged there, with him.

Tried again to tell her that she did belong there, told her he wanted her there, reached out to touch her, wanted her to realise their Mate Bond was still intact. He knew she could smell his scent, that was a given, but it had been a long time since she'd left and not once would she have felt any pangs of betrayal. Would have likely convinced herself that her rejection was in effect, easy enough to come to that conclusion for her. But smelling him would also be confusing for her.

Watched her actively take a step back away from him, from his out-stretched hand. This was not the first time either. He was not certain if she didn't want any wolves touching her, or just him. She had warned both his Beta and Gamma about touching her, told them both they would lose their hands in fact. So perhaps it wasn't just him.

Told her 'No' to 'go back' 'to leave' even used the word please. As much as he wanted her to come home, she didn't want to. He couldn't walk away from her, stepped right in front of her, careful not to touch her, didn't want to set Harper off and he got the impression it would.

Tried to tell her he understood, that he did know her life inside the pack was not nice, apologised to her for it. Was practically begging her to have dinner with him. Not something he had ever had to do, most wanted to have dinner with him, he'd never had to beg for anything in his life, he was the Alpha, always got what he wanted.

Now here he was an Alpha begging a rogue female for just one meal, to allow them to sit down and talk privately, to sort everything out. He didn't want to have this conversation in front of their son. That was why he was asking for a private dinner.

He was going to lose her, now that Izzy was going to be part of the pack, had no leverage to get her back here to talk to him.

"yes." she stated flatly, right to his face, believed it was too much of him to ask of her. "I do not want."

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“He’s little and he’s scared, never likely had to deal with wolves prior to Alpha Timothy, and right now we’re not exactly putting our best foot forward. Are we?”

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“Brad, Eddie took Izzy. You heard what Brandon said he was scared we’d hurt her. Yelling at his mother? Not a good idea either...” raised his hands at Brad to halt the yelling that was about to burst out of him. “I understand you’re upset, that’s why you yelled.”

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If he was this angry and annoyed by her resistance on just the first day of trying to get her to come home, how was he going to cope every other day she tried to, or managed to tell him she didn’t want him or anything to do with him or his pack.

“I know, Coop.” he finally sighed “I just...”

“Breathe Bradley.” his Beta sighed “Just breathe, Harry is taking her back to her room, dinner will be at 6.”

That got his attention, his eyes moved to Cooper. “What?...how?” he couldn’t wrangle a dinner with her, how had his Delta managed to do it?

Saw Cooper look at him a little on the guilty side. “Well, that’s actually mine and Harry’s fault.”

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“No of course not...I told her,” saw the man look very apologetically at him. “that she nearly killed you once, sorry. And well, Harry has reported to me that he followed on from my lead. Told her you’d felt her rejection. How you reacted to it. Including nearly ripping your own heart out. Then he escorted her and Brandon back to their room.”

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Would she have dinner with him now? “Did she say anything?”

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“Thanks Brad. I don’t think Harry or I want a beating from you.”

Bradley’s brow furrowed as he looked at the man, then realised he was just trying to lighten the mood. “Another time, huh. I’m sure you’ll trip up somewhere.”

“Hmm, might have already done that. You’re just unaware of it.” he murmured, but wouldn’t look at Bradley.

Gained Bradley’s attention “Alright what did you do?”

Cooper shook his head “discuss it another time, back in the pack. It can wait. Come on, you still got Izzy to sort out.”

“Izzy’s fine, Piper practically convinced that woman to marry Eddie, we’ll need bloody ear plugs every night now.”

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“Our suite, the rest of us will make ourselves scarce, with exception of Eddie of course.”

“Alright.” Bradley nodded “I need a suit. Let’s go and get some decent clothes.”

## **Chapter 38 - Unscentable**

Piper POV

Piper was just staring out the window of her hotel suite. She still did not know what to make of all she’d heard from Cooper the Pack Beta or Harrison the Pack’s Delta. She had no idea at all if any of the words that either of them had stated were true. Though both of their demeanours had matched their words. Concern for their Alpha, she had heard that.

But how could they really know that she had uttered a rejection at all? There was no way that they could know that. So why would either of them say such things if they didn’t know? It didn’t really make all that much sense to her. Bradley had not known who she was at the time, so how could it have possibly affected him at all?

She herself had not even known at the time if her rejection would work at all, not with only one of them knowing what they were to each other. Piper had known that for a rejection to work normally, both parties had to not only know who they were to each other, had to be face to face and the one hearing the rejection had to verbally accept that rejection.

School had classes on the Mate Bond, so everyone understood who it worked, the meeting of your mate, the scenting of them. How it was supposed to go. The acceptance or rejection of your Mate and the formality if a rejection was made, name and title to be stated along with that rejection though it was frowned upon, most would be encourage to accept their bond.

There however, was only one lesson about rejecting one's Mate. Because most wolves did not reject each other, they were drawn to each other, and couldn't or didn't want to rip that feeling of being with your other half, apart. It was stated it was painful. And it had been.

There had been examples of it. Though usually to do with those two wolves having horrible pasts or hating each other already prior to finding out they were Goddess-Gifted Mates, even then some would begrudgingly accept each other and allow their bond to grow and flourish and it was said they could overcome their history and love each other, their Bond strong enough to bring them together.

"Mum?"

Piper turned her eyes on Brandon. "What's wrong sweetie?" she asked him.

"Is what they said true?" he asked her, clearly having been thinking about it himself, he had been right there to hear both Cooper and Harrison's words.

"I don't know to be honest." she sighed. She would not lie to him, she did not know, was actually very confused about the situation right this minute.

He was looking up at her, frowning himself, watched her for a long quiet moment. "That man...he told me, he wants us to be family, all of us, you, me and him, altogether."

It was Pipers' turn to frown now, "When did he do that?" she asked. She had not heard Bradley say that.

“When you went in with Aunt Izzy and told her, he only wanted me, not you. He told me, that’s not true, that he wanted us both.”

She sighed, they’d obviously talked while she was in the Izzy, she’d missed something. “What else did he say?” she asked him.

“That he won’t take me away from you.”

Piper had heard Bradley say that before. This was not the first time he’d said that, “That is good to hear.” she acknowledged. If Bradley had told Brandon that, he wasn’t likely to go back on his word, it would only lead to the boy accusing him of being a liar in all likelihood.

So perhaps he did actually mean that he wouldn’t take Brandon from her, but she could not see him wanting to leave the boy out in the human world with her, and she did not want to go back to being invisible inside a pack. No, not again. Being constantly bumped into and blamed for not watching where she was going. She’d had enough of that.

She and Harper would end up, right back where they had started, alone, living in a room all by themselves, to stay away from it all, once more completely none existent. She felt pain touch her at just the thought of it, they did not want that at all. Couldn’t deal with that again. It had made for a very lonely childhood and teenage years, not to mention adulthood.

She was likely going to have to work out some sort of agreement with the man. She knew he was going to want Brandon within the pack, his child would be safer inside it. Or at least he would think so.

Wondered now how’d he even known who she was? What she was to him? If he had figured it out, how had he? Piper knew that he could not scent her at all, no-one could. It didn’t make any sense to her. She sighed and sat down, she was going to have to have dinner with him, even if only to sort out some sort of custody agreement, where Brandon was concerned.

Looked right at her son, he was restless once more. “What do you want?” she asked him.

“I don’t understand.” he frowned at her.

“Do you want to get to know him, your father? Go and live with him?” those words hurt, but he did have the right to live inside a pack. It was how wolves normally lived.

“I don’t know?” he shrugged.

“Might want to think about that,” she offered up.

“It’s what he wants isn’t it?” Brandon stated.

“I believe so.” Piper nodded.

“We live in Portland, where does he live?”

“In Montana.” she answered simply.

“That’s a long way from our home.” he frowned again.

“It is.” Piper nodded. The man had already gone so far as to try and pack up her house and move it to his Pack. Not only was it very rude and arrogant of him. It was bloody weird.

“Can I go and look at what a Pack looks like?”

“Yes, in all likelihood.” she didn’t think Bradley would say no, he was not likely to decline the boy’s request, simply because it meant that the boy was not only curious, but also maybe open to the idea of going to his Pack full-time.

“Will you come?” she could see the worry in his eyes. He knew she didn’t want to. She had told him as much. But the pack did back onto the edge of a human city, she could stay there she supposed, get some agreement out of Bradley to make sure the boy was returned to her.

“I don’t exactly know how to answer that Brandon.” she told him truthfully.

“You don’t want to.”

“Not particularly, but I guess if it was just for one day. I could suck it up.”

Saw him stare right at her for another long minute before asking “Was it really so bad there?”

This was a very hard conversation, it was very bad there, for her. Not for others, he might not be like her, he might fit right in and love it there. Then what was she going to do, if he did? She wouldn't be able to take him away from that, if they could scent him and he could be recognised, he would probably really love it inside the Pack.

"Only for me, not for everyone else." she finally answered him in the end. "Honestly, Brandon, you might like it there, fit in. which is something I never did."

"Are you worried?...about the other woman?"

Piper sighed, there would always be another woman, she knew that, hated it in fact, but it was how it had always been. "There will always be someone else for your father, Brandon." she admitted, heard the pain, couldn't actually hide it all when saying it out loud.

"But he said."

"I know what he told you..." she looked at him sadly "It is difficult. He loves you..."

"But not you?" she heard the sadness in her own child's voice, wondered if that was more Aspen's thoughts. Wolves were born with the knowledge that they had a Mate out there.

"Mm." she shrugged, didn't want to voice that one out loud, but it was all she had ever known at the same time. Bradley had never recognised her, never loved her, he had enjoyed one night with her, and moved on, as she had to.

"Aspen is very confused."

"I'm sure he is." and Piper did not doubt that for a second, his wolf was likely wondering, why his wolf parents weren't together. Wolves mated for life, usually only produced off spring to their actually Mate. He might be young but, he was born with the knowledge of having a Mate.

"What is a Mate Bond?" Brandon asked her a few minutes later, shocking her a little.

That had to be Aspens' thoughts on the subject and Brandon wanted to understand, "It's when two wolves are drawn together, and belong to each other, they will Mate for life."

"It's broken isn't it?"

"What's broken?" she asked in return.

"You're Mate Bond...Apsen says its broken."

"Yes, it was..." she looked right at him. "Aspen." she asked his wolf to come to the surface, better just to talk to the wolf himself, saw him push forward. Smiled a little sadly at him. "My bond was one-sided only. Cursed by the moon goddess herself, to suffer. Only I could feel it, he could not. Can not even now. So broken is actually a good word for it."

"He not know who you are?" his gravelly voice asked.

"No, never did, very painful for me, for many years. So I left. Harper and I were slowly dying, left to save ourselves."

Saw him tilt his head "But me?"

Piper huffed, he wanted to know how he came about, what did she tell him? What was acceptable to a young wolf? she was not going to tell him he was an accident. Would hurt him, hurt Brandon too.

"I spent one night with him, before I left," she said simply, it was the truth.

"Still he not know?" his wolf not dumb, it seemed, really wanted answers.

"No, a one-sided bond Aspen, only I knew."

She watched as his wolf receded, saw Brandon look right up at her, he looked so very confused "It's very complicated." she sighed and he just nodded without saying anything else. Probably overwhelmed as well as confused, he would have his own thoughts and then he would also hear Apsen's thoughts. He was too young for this kind of knowledge.

She had explained it as best she could without putting either her or Bradley in a bad light, or at least she hoped that was the case. Bradley was not about to just go away, she knew very little of him herself. But no Alpha was about to give up an heir, she knew that much.

“Brandon, why don’t you look him up on your phone, he’ll have a human profile, might give you some information about him, I have no knowledge of him. I left him well enough alone.”

Piper saw him nod his head slowly, but didn’t see him do it. Other things on his mind, she supposed.

“I will have dinner with him and try and sort something out, where you’re concerned, if you want me to?”

He nodded again, but still said nothing.

Piper encouraged him to play one of his PS5 games, to take his mind off of the situation at hand. It would have been better if the Beta and the Delta had kept their mouths shut with Brandon in the room.

Izzy came into the suite at 3pm, Eddie stopped at the door when he dropped her off, didn’t come inside, glanced at Piper for only a moment, then looked down at Izzy, smiled right at her, leaned down and kissed her gently on the mouth and told her he would see her later, then stepped away. She watched as Izzy closed the door and came right into the room.

“Hi.”

“Didn’t expect to see you,” Piper commented.

“Edward thought it would be better if I were here with you and Brandon.” Shook her head. “told me he would miss me every second I was not with him, but knew you and Brandon were worried about me.”

“We are,” Piper acknowledged as Izzy sat next to her “You might want to go and shower, you smell like Edward.”

“Oh.” she stood “I didn’t realise.”

“It’s normal,” Piper shrugged.

Brandon was looking up at Izzy, she leaned down and ruffled his hair ‘Hey kiddo.” he smiled up at her, happy to see her, to it seemed.

Piper did note that when Izzy came out of her room, she did not bring a suitcase with her, she was expecting her to stay up in their suite from now on, with Edward.

“You’re going to stay here? Not with Edward?”

“I barely know Edward. I told him I'd date him, but I have to have my space too.”

“Bet he wasn’t happy about that.”

“Not the space part, he frowned right at me, like he didn’t understand why I needed it.”

“He doesn’t,” Piper informed her.

“What is it with them?”

“That is for Edward to explain, Bradley maybe, considering the circumstances.”

“What circumstances?”

“Izzy, they have certain protocols when bringing people to Drake Industries Gated Community. Edward has followed zero of them from my knowledge, supposed to wait for the full moon, then ask you out, date you properly, dinners, movies, you know the regular kind of things, then introduce you to his parents, to Bradley himself. Invite you to stay at their home and see if you like it, and then go from there. Usually takes 1 to 2 months, depending on the relationship and how you progress.”

“Oh, so I’m like.”

“You’re fine, but Edward is rushing everything. I imagine his boss is not too pleased with his behavior, you however are not to blame, and no-one will say you are.”

“He already talked about getting married.” she shook her head. “It’s too soon, I told him, he pouted right at me and then.”

“Enough.” Piper shook her head “I can well imagine, how he tried to sway you.” she had been able to smell Edward on Izzy, seduced her or tried to, in order to get his way.

“He’s so weird, Piper.”

“Hmm, only to you. From what I am seeing, where I grew up, it’s normal. It’s just how it is...he’s your weirdo now.” she half smiled “So you’ll be sleeping in our suite?”

Saw Izzy nod “yes.”

“Alright, I don’t really want him in this room overnight.”

Saw Izzy laugh “I’m okay with that.”

“He might not be.” Piper shook her head. It was very unlikely that Edward was going to want to sleep in bed by himself, when his Mate was in the same building. It was very clear the man couldn’t keep his hands to himself, or any other part of himself for that matter.

## **Chapter 39 - Unscentable**

Piper POV

It was 6pm and as if on queue, there was a short sharp rap on the door. She took a deep breath. Brandon did actually want her to go and have dinner with his father. He’d voiced it about an hour ago, it had been softly spoken but she knew it was important to him, so she stood up and walked over to answer the door.

Piper had not bothered to get changed, she always dressed nicely, and she was not going to dress up for this man. She was not going because she and Harper wanted to go. No, she was going because of Brandon. Though Izzy had tried to talk her into putting one of her newly purchased dresses on.

Piper had just raised an eyebrow at her, and stated flatly “It’s not that kind of dinner.”

Izzy however, did not seem totally convinced about that, made her wonder if Edward had asked her to try and convince her to wear something nice. They had been texting back and forth all afternoon.

Brandon was currently sitting on the lounge with Izzy. He and Izzy had both eaten already, the pair of them apparently starving by 1700. Had ordered room service, they were now just hanging out together watching TV.

She had already told Brandon, that she likely wouldn't be gone all that long, it was just dinner to find out exactly what Bradley wanted, and once she did she would come home, he had just nodded at her. She didn't exactly know what the boy or his wolf wanted from this meeting. They had not voiced anything so far. Not even so much as any questions they wanted her to ask of the man.

Harrison stood on the other side of the door, no surprise there, he had been the one who'd told her to come to dinner and that he'd be the one to collect her as well. He smiled right at her and nodded in greeting, moved his eyes briefly over her outfit, she'd noted the slight frown as she had closed the door behind her.

"Unhappy Harrison, that I did not dress up for your Alpha." she stated in a board tone, and saw his frown deepen instantly, "He's lucky I have any decent clothes at all, I am a rogue you know. Not many of us with that status get to have nice things."

"Hmm. I suppose you have me on that, and you can call my Harry, Piper." he told her as he pressed the elevator button.

"I probably could." she acknowledged.

"Could you lessen the attitude just a little?" he stated calmly.

"Could you go away?" she replied and heard him sigh, but he said nothing further.

Walked her all the way to room 1008 and swiped them into the room, but he did not follow her in. She frowned at him, he said nothing as she walked passed him, saw Cooper heading out of the room himself as well.

"Try and have a nice dinner, Piper." Cooper commented as he walked past her and then closed the door behind him.

That just left her with Edward and Bradley. The man himself was standing by the table, they'd had lunch at. He had changed from his jeans and button up short sleeve shirt, to a dark charcoal grey suit, and a crisp white dress shirt under the jacket, she did note his hair was nearly combed back, and he'd seemed to have gone and shaved, no an ounce of 5o'clock shadow on his face.

Apparently showered and dressed himself up for this dinner, she didn't understand him.

Edward was casually sitting on the couch. She knew he was texting Izzy and had been bugging her all afternoon. She also knew why he was here, the Gamma here to try and control her if she got angry, she thought. Felt Harp bristle a little at the thought of that man touching them.

"Welcome Piper." she heard Bradley say, even heard the smile in his voice, wondered why Cooper and Harrison had left the room altogether, was he trying to appear less of a threat, though she was certain those two had not gone far, likely just outside the door or down the corridor, perhaps to her floor.

Turned her eyes on the man briefly after looking at Edward, and then walked over to the table, saw him turn to Edward and sat herself down as he asked his Gamma to please retire to his room. Edward simply got up and went, just like he was told. Did as the Alpha bid, just like all wolves did.

"I would have gotten your chair for you Piper." she could hear the frown in his voice.

"I know how to sit down." she told him with a shrug.

Heard him sigh, he sat himself across from her "I am glad you came. I wasn't actually sure that you would."

"I'm just here to discuss Brandon and the current situation he and I find ourselves in." she told him honestly. "Brandon asked me to come."

"I would like, than to discuss more then just Brandon, Piper. You seem..." watched him tilt his head slightly, unlikely his wolfen senses would pick up anything about how she felt. Quite honestly, she'd been surprised that Edward had been able to pick up anything during lunch. "Annoyed, I'm guessing, you're a hard woman to read, unless angry. That comes across loud and clear."

Piper's eyes rolled before she knew it, why wouldn't she be annoyed at being forced to do as he wanted her to? He'd been doing nothing but trying to make her do as he wanted since the minute he had walked back into her life. "Say what you have to say." she commented.

"Would you like a glass of wine? Before dinner gets here."

“No! I don’t drink wine, but if you want one, go ahead.” she was not going to let alcohol dull her senses, and who knew if he’d brought wolfen strength alcohol with him, it was possible.

“Perhaps something else for you then?”

“No.” she shook her head slightly. “What I would really like, is to just get down to business.” and she would, she knew how to handle a wealthy arrogant man, did it all the time, in fact. The only difference between him and them was what he actually was, a wolf. And what he had once been to her and the scent he was somehow still putting off, she did not understand how she could still smell him.

Likely just one more thing, the moon goddess wanted to throw at her, punish her with it, for whatever she had done to deserve such a thing, still had no idea about that. It wasn’t enough, it seemed, to not have her own Mate, not scent her back, or to have to have put up with years of pain. No, she also had to keep this man's scent nice and strong for her as well.

The woman was probably up there in her realm, fully amused with herself, laughing her ass off, at this new torture she’d thought up for her, just had to bring this man right back into her life, to make her suffer all over again.

“This is not a business dinner Piper, I assure you. This is personal only.” There was knock on the door “Excuse me, that will be dinner.” He stood and went to get it. Brought the tray right to the table himself, placed a meal in front of her “It’s crispy sesame beef, with rice and steamed vegetables.” he told her as he placed it on the table.

It did actually look nice and smelled delicious as well.

“I also got you a Mocha cheese cake for dessert, I hope that is okay.”

“It’s fine.” she answered him, she did like both chocolate and coffee, never actually had a mocha flavoured cheesecake before, was curious about how it would taste, she didn’t mind drinking a mocha coffee herself.

Saw him sit, actually did know it was rude to eat before he sat, likely should wait until he actually ate his first bite, she was certain that there was some sort of proper protocol to be followed here, and she didn’t know what would tick him off. Might very well be completely disrespectful if she just ate without waiting on him to eat first.

She could feel his eyes on her as she sat and waited on him to start his meal, her eyes were actually on her meal, it was well presented, raised an eyebrow at him after about 30 seconds of feeling it.

“What’s wrong Piper, do you not like the food?” he asked her.

“It looks fine, smells nice even.” she admitted.

“Then what is wrong?” he asked, a frown on his face.

“You have to eat first I believe. That would be correct protocol of an Alpha to a rogue.” she shrugged, that a rogue had no status and was eat last if at all. If she was inside, a pack would likely be in a cell or on the floor somewhere.

“I’m be expecting you to worry about such protocol’s, please eat, we are equals at this table right now.”

She frowned right at him, but then picked up her fork to eat her meal. She had also been hungry when Brandon and Izzy had had dinner delivered, both of them had gotten massive burgers and fries, and Izzy had refused to allow her spoil her appetite and pick chips off either of their plates.

“How is Brandon doing, did I scare him? I didn’t mean to.”

“No, he doesn’t seem to be scare. He is confused.” she answered him honestly.

“Good, I don’t want him to be afraid of me or Benson. Or the unit in fact.”

“Mm,” she was certain that he didn’t want that at all. “What sort of custody agreement do you want from me?” Piper asked, getting right down to the point of this dinner.

There was silence for a long time, and when she finally looked up from her meal, to him. He was frowning at her once more, his hands were poised over his meal, seemed her direct question had halted him. Wondered if he wasn’t used to people questioning him.

“I don’t want shared custody Piper. Wolves don’t generally do that. If that is what you are asking? Is it?”

“It is.” she clarified, knew he would not particularly want an agreement, knew he would want Brandon all to himself. Inside his pack. “I have a life,

businesses to run and your Gamma is about to take away my full-time business manager, I believe. Izzy actually runs the entire company most of the time. I was about to promote her to a full partner with this move. She is invaluable to me, to my businesses. So I am already losing something to you. I am not about to go give up everything to you. So I guess, shared custody, though not traditional, is the option here.”

“Not it’s not Piper, I want you and Brandon both to live with me, be part of the pack once more.”

“Not going to happen. Harper and I have no interest in living inside a Pack, period.”

“Can I hear that from Harper herself?”

“You could, if she wanted to come forward. She does not.” and her wolf did not have any interest at all. Right this minute, Harper was actually at the very back of her mind, curled up in a ball, trying not to look or listen, or smell the man who still smelled like her Mate to her. A man that would never acknowledge her as such, she was actually in pain right this minute, from just being in this room with him.

Would only surface if there was a threat to them, or they tried to touch her. She did not want to be anywhere near her old Mate, didn’t want to be around any wolf at all, let alone the one that would never look at her the way she had had always wanted him too.

This man was the very reason for their pain, for all those years, this man was the very reason she no longer wanted to be a wolf herself.

“Is Harper alright?” he asked quietly.

Piper raised an eyebrow at him now. “What concern is my wolf to you?” she really just wanted to yell at him, ‘you never cared before.’ but she did not. It was really hard being in this room with him, all her walls were up, but still, after hearing what his Beta and Delta had said, she too was confused. But it was just her. Harper would not be a part of this.

“Benson is very worried about Harper. He’s hardly seen her, and when he has...” he sighed “she is all aggression all the time...is she alright Piper.”

“No, she does not like being around wolves, and you’re currently forcing her to be,” she stated flatly.

“I don’t mean to be Piper, we, Benson and I...” he sighed again, and she watched as he put his knife and fork down and looked right at her. “We believe you are our Mate.”

That got her attention, “Really? Do you scent me?” she asked, barely kept the bitterness out of her voice, she knew they could not, knew the answer even before he said it.

“No.” he shook his head “But there are tell-tale signs, and with you being a Whitlock, it’s difficult, apparently all Whitlock’s are unscentable. Alpha Timothy states there is a Whitlock way, to see if I am you’re Mate.”

“Well, good for him. He’s an ass-hole, done nothing but threaten me and my son.” she snapped right at him. “threatened to sick the wolfen council on me in fact. To have me sent to wolfen prison, to separate me from my son. So I wouldn’t go putting any stock into what that Alpha says.” She got up from the table and walked away, didn’t want to talk anymore.

Saw him block her exit, used his wolf's speed to do so. Also saw Edward step right out of his room, it was likely her agitation at what Alpha Timothy wanted, had brought him out of his room, and she knew she was not going to be able to out muscle Bradley who was blocking her exit.

Stared right at him, her jaw tight, then just turned and walked to the other side of the room very annoyed. He was not willing to let her leave. She now realised he was not going to until he was ready, likely till he got what he wanted. His own way.

Regardless of what he'd said, she knew that no wolf would claim another without scenting them. Harper knew this, his words tonight, had not brought her wolf forward, only made her tuck her head further into herself.

Didn’t, it seemed, want to know what he thought, thought’s did not count. Nothing but him actually scenting her out would and even Piper had no idea what Harper would do if he did actually find away to scent them out. If Harper would come forward, acknowledge him, their bond, if that was still in tact, that was.

“Piper, please sit down...Alpha Timothy, went about this all the wrong way. He’s actually your cousin, a Whitlock himself.”

Her eyes moved to him “and how would you know that?”

“His pack, is affiliated with mine. There is actually a very old agreement, which I knew nothing about until after you and I had our first encounter in Portland. Some very old rules around you and your mother in fact.”

“My mother is long dead.” she commented.

“I’m aware, when you were 10 I believe. It’s also when you vanished from the pack.”

“Vanished?” she shot right at him “I didn’t vanish, you all abandoned me. To fend for myself, even took my home away from me.” she snarled at him “I don’t want to talk about it.” she yelled, and she did not, didn’t need to recall how much hurt, or how alone she had felt for all those years.

“Piper please calm down, we need to talk about this, to sort it all out. I only know very little. I do however, know, you need to come home. Talk to the Whitlock Elders, let them explain things to you. They want to talk to you.”

“Oh, do they, they abandoned me as much as your pack did. Why the hell would I care to see them?”

“Please calm down.” she watched him walk towards her, his hands were up slightly, out stretched as though he was going to touch her.

Felt Harper’s attention be drawn by the thought he was going to touch her, looked like he was going to, lifted her head and turned to look out of Piper’s eyes to see just what the situation was. Her ears were suddenly flat back on her head, she too did not like the way he was approaching them.

“Piper, everything is going to be okay...” he told her softly, as he walked towards her.

Her eyes flicked to Edward, she could feel his aura being rolled right at her, he was also closer than he'd been before, she now realised.

“I warned you once Gamma.” she shot right at him, feeling Harper walk forward inside her mind, her tail was low and her hackles were up, she did not want to be touched by either of them.

“Piper, honey, just calm down, I’m right here...look at me.” his southern drawl rolled right out of him, as he reached out a hand toward her.

Felt Harper bristle inside her mind and a low growl was emitted from her, for all to hear, she was letting them know herself she was unhappy with the situation, that she herself did not want to be touched by him.

Watched as Edward stilled in his movement, she knew as well as he did, that without touching her, and with her rogue status, he was very unlikely to have any real effect on her or Harper, he would actually need to lay his hands right on her to get that gift of his to work, if it would at all.

“Piper listen to me, you know you want to, please calm down...just focus on me.” Edward was still trying to work on her, his drawl was thicker now, pushing more of his Gamma charm at her, Harper snarled right at him.

Then he moved, using his wolf speed to try and get a hand on her, so damned quick, but it seemed Harper was actually expecting it, she shot forward and snapped their foot right into his abdomen, with everything she had. A massive snarl ripped out of her at the same time, all her rogue aggression unleashed upon him. Rogue’s were fierce and all primal instincts, she was no different to any that would attack a pack not really. Just way more well presented.

Saw him actually stumble backwards. Clearly had not been expecting her to attack him, or maybe he thought he would simply be faster than she was, but they knew nothing of her wolf’s power or speed, nothing at all, didn’t even know what she actually looked like. There had been no-one around to take Harper’s photo for the packs database.. They had a brief description just what she had written herself.

“Don’t touch me.” Harper roared at him, fully on the surface, didn’t realise he wasn’t the only one on the move, had been so focused on Edward and his Gamma Charm coming at them, him trying to put his actual hands on her to make it work, that they had taken their eyes off of Bradley altogether.

They had turned completely to face Edward, to deflect anything he was sending their way, and they found Bradley suddenly right behind them, he had one of his arms around her waist, and she was lifted completely off the ground

and pulled away from Edward who was already getting up, felt his other hand slide right up her neck, to hold her against him.

Gasped out loud at the sudden sensations his bare hand brought to her skin, "No." she cried out, as she realised their bond was still in full swing. Felt Harper flee in an instant, whining in pain, at the touch of her own Mate. As Bradley held her in place up against him, his hand was on her neck and jaw, though it was not tight or forceful, she realised he was trying to use his own touch on her to calm her down.

"Shh...I have you Piper." his voice was soft and right in her ear, his lips brushing the outer skin of her ear.

She could feel her own heart racing inside of her chest "Stop it." she gasped as she felt his arm tighten around her, felt that hand slide down her neck slowly, could feel all the electric tingles of their Mate Bond, at his touch, everywhere his hand moved, reached up to pry his hands off of her, felt it tighten "let me go."

"I'm not going to let go." he told her, his voice was suddenly deeper. "Goddess Piper." there was suddenly a real roughness to his voice "You feel so damned hot," his mouth touched her neck, and panic shot right through her. She couldn't go through this again.

"Bradley." she heard Edward suddenly yell, heard the warning in his voice, and Bradley suddenly let go of her and backed away.

Piper staggered away from him, her eyes moved to him, he was looking at his hand, the one that had been on her neck, then his eyes moved right to her "I'm sorry Piper, I..I. touching you, I can't...our bond is still intact Piper. We are Mates. I know it."

"No." she shook her head, it couldn't be, it wasn't possible "I rejected you."

"I never accepted it." Bradley told her, looked right at her. "I will never accept it."

Her eyes widened at his statement, she could feel Edwards' aura pushing over her, he'd not stopped using it, looked to see where the man was, and he was right there, his fingers a light feather touch on her the side of her hand, skin on skin contact "Shh, focus on me Piper, just me...nothing else..." his southern drawl so very deep, she knew he was using all he had, everything in

him, every damned ounce of that Goddess Given Gamma Charm on her, shook her head, even as a rogue, it seemed he could draw her into him, didn't want this, felt his fingers slid across the back of her hand, "Listen to me Piper...calm down honey...you know you want to"

was just standing there staring up into his eyes, drawn to him, trying desperately on the inside to fight him, fight that bloody charm, but seem at the same time to be enthralled by him and couldn't even look away, let alone step away. He was too strong. Felt his arm slid around her, then just pull her gently into his chest. "Shh...I got you. Everything is going to be okay."

"No it's not." she whispered back "It never is." and a sob escaped her. She knew it wouldn't be, regardless of his words, of the comfort he was trying to bring to her, it would never be alright. She was cursed to live a life of pain and suffering. But she'd never had anyone to comfort her before, and it felt nice to have that, right this minute. Knew it wouldn't last, nothing ever did.

But just allowed herself to stand there, to feel his comfort wash over her, couldn't even recall the last time anyone held her like this. Didn't exactly know for how long she stood there and let her tears fall, "Finally," he murmured softly, "I can find you."

"I...I don't understand."

"I know, there is a lot going on. Let me walk you back to your room. We can talk tomorrow. All of us. You, Bradley and I we will all sit down."

Piper didn't know what to think. She had rejected Bradley, she'd had no pains of betrayal since that day, how was that possible it had been 8 years. "I don't understand," she murmured.

"What, don't you understand exactly?" Edward asked. His hands were still on her arms, the man seemed to know better than to just let go, there was still a slight drawl to his voice.

She frowned up at him, and then her eyes moved to Bradley, he was standing on the other side of the room right now, watching them, watching her she realised, his attention was not on his Gamma, but directly on her. Though as far as she recalled, he hadn't said a single word since Edwards' hands had found her. "Him." she stated.

“You don’t understand Bradley?” he questioned her as though he didn’t understand her now.

Piper shook her head. “No pains in all the time I left. I know it worked because of that.” she looked at Edward.

“Oh...Brad, would you like to explain that one to Piper.”

Her eyes moved back to him as well, though she felt her own hand actually reach out and grip onto Edwards' arm, didn't know if she wanted to hear what Bradley had to say, if she was honest with herself.

“When I found out, what happened, Piper. I never touched another. Not one...incase, it hurt you, I might not have known who you were, or why you rejected me, but I had no idea if the rejection was complete or not. I knew deep down, I would not accept it. Couldn't not without knowing who you were, or why? So I have not touched another she-wolf in all that time, worried it would hurt you, I didn't want that for you.”

Piper was just staring at him, didn't know if she believed that, but his touch had been what it was before she left, and she'd put up with a lot of pain, knew because their bone was active when he was with another before, being several states away wouldn't have stopped the pains of betrayal, it never had when he was outside the pack before.

“It's a lot to take in Piper...I'm sorry, I touched you like that, I didn't mean to loose control like that just now.” saw him look right at his hand “you feel...hot, burning hot to me and it...sets of my need to...Mate you. I might not be able to scent you, but I can't control myself when I touch you, that is the bond I'm guessing, how I feel it on my end.”

“She doesn't feel hot to me.” Edward commented. “Just very confused.”

“Good.” she heard Bradley state “I'd likely rip your head off, if you touched her like that.”

Blinked at his comment.

Heard Edward snort, fully amused “So possessive already.” Then his hand touched her face, so she'd look at him, and she did “Come on, I'll walk you back, I think you've had about as much as you can handle.”

Piper nodded he was right, allowed him to walk her out of the room, he chuckled softly as they walked down the hallway “and you think I’m possessive, Brad is not going anywhere, he’s been looking for his unknown mate for 8 years.”

“How can you find something, you don't even know about.”

“Indeed. All he knew, was how damned hot you felt to him.”

“So he just went around touching everyone then?” Piper asked, even more confused.

“Pretty much, shook every she-wolf's hand that he met, or allowed the back of his hand to brush against them, looking for that hot feeling. Never found it though. Because you ran along way away.”

They arrived at her hotel door, she sighed “I probably look like a mess.”

Saw his eyes move over her face. “Not that bad.”

“Brandon will get upset. If he thinks I’m upset.” she worried.

“Tell him we yell at each other, you and me, you kicked me good and proper, it’s the truth.”

“Might work, but then Izzy might get upset that I hurt you?”

Saw him chuckle “Izzy will be fine, probably think it's funny.”

## **Chapter 40 - Unscentable**

Bradley POV

He was going to have to touch her skin on skin, but she was covered a long sleeve silk blouse and slacks, had no choice but to slide his hand around her neck, prayed that she did not see it as a threat, but Harper was angry and about to take on Eddie, had already kicked the man. full rogue aggression was poring out of her wolf.

It was his only option left open to him. He couldn’t have them going into a full rogue fight or flight and that was exactly what he was seeing, he knew it was

going to happen, but if, as he suspected, their Mate Bond was in tact, his touch should actually be able to calm her.

The minute his hand slid along her neck, he knew he was right. She was so damned hot to touch, just like before, just like that night in his bed, he could already feel his own heart rate increasing, hearing her gasp “No.” he knew she too was realising they were still bonded to each other. There was no doubt anymore.

He and Benson felt Harper practically vanish, Piper’s whole body felt different to him, all the coiled tension was suddenly gone from her body instantly. “Shh...” he shushed her, wanting her to calm down, did not like seeing or hearing the pain she had as a child, and teenager surface. It had also triggered her instantly into an angry, aggressive response, “I have you Piper.” he told her softly.

But already his eyes were closed, touching her was starting to affect him, like it had done that night. He could also hear her heart rate as it tripled in speed, reacting to his touch or to her own fear of it. He wasn’t sure which it was, pulled her tighter to his body, wanted to be closer to her, “Stop.” she’d gasped, but he couldn’t slid his hand slowly down her neck, his finger tips tracing along her carotid artery, feeling her heart rate.

Felt both her hands on his arm to try and stop him from touching her, but he couldn’t, didn’t want to, every part of him wanted to touch every part of her, “Let me go.” he heard her.

“I’m not going to let go.” he sighed softly, didn’t want to ever let go, “Goddess Piper.” she was like a bloody drug, and just one simple touch and he was hooked, desperate for more. Benson pushed forward, drawn to her as much as Bradley was, as much as he had that night to “You feel so damn hot.” they both told her, speaking together, and then his mouth was on her neck, a soft but firm kiss, she tasted so damned good to them.

“Bradley.” it was Eddie yelling right at him, his eyes flicked right open and only then did he realise what he was doing, the liberty he was taking, he let go instantly and stepped back away from her, his breathing was quickened and his hand felt like it was on fire, but didn’t burn him.

His eyes moved from his hand, so very hot from her touch, looked right at her, he’d screwed up and royally so, lost damned control of himself and she was

freaked out he could see it in her expression, in the way she was staring at him.

“I’m sorry Piper.” he apologised, not only did he know he had to, he wanted to, he knew she didn’t like being touched, that she was not at all ready for that, trying to explain it to her, how she felt to him, he couldn’t even find the words “Our bond is still intact Piper, we are Mates I know it.” he finally managed to get out.

“No.” he watched her shake her head, and he wondered for a moment if this was what every man felt touching her, is this what Timothy meant, why the threat.

“I rejected you.” she said quietly.

Relief flooded right through him, as he heard her actually say those words, it should have hurt but it didn’t, because it confirmed to him that she was his actual Mate, his Goddess-Gifted Mate, she openly admitting to rejecting him, confirmed everything.

“I never accepted it.” he told her and he meant it. He never had, how could he, when he didn’t know who or why? “I never will accept it.” he corrected his statement, and he was not going to. She was his Mate and their bond was still solid, still in tact. He could win her over, just needed time and he had plenty of that on his side.

Saw Eddie’s hand reach out to touch her, just his fingertips. He was on the move very slowly, trying, Bradley believed, not to attract her attention while she stood staring at him, his finger tips to the edge of her hand, the southern drawl that was produced by Eddie was deep and rich, the heaviest accent that Bradley had ever heard come out of the man. He was using everything he had on her, wasn’t going to risk her getting away from him this time. Watched as the man's hands slid right into hers and she stood staring up at him, he had her. Finally, his Gamma actually had control of her.

Pulled her right into his chest a moment later, looked relieved to Bradley to finally be able to not only locate this woman, but ease her pain and fear. To hear her sob right into him as he just stood there.

Hurt Bradley and Benson more than a little, they knew why she was in pain. Because of them, their screwed up Mate Bond. It was likely she’d never

allowed anyone to touch her, not ever. Certainly not a wolf and he understood why. She didn't think everything would be okay.

Was a little jealous to see his Mate in the arms of another man, but did not interrupt. She needed this moment, was in all likelihood actually bonding in some way with Eddie, her actual Gamma. Bradley was not at all surprised to hear real relief in Eddie's voice. "Finally I can find you." the man had searched high and low for this woman. Had thought that he was broken as a Gamma, it was likely that deep down, Eddie was worried Piper would always elude him.

She was very confused, admitted it, Eddie wanted to take her back to her room. It was likely he knew she was overwhelmed, but at that same time she seemed to desire answers about her confusion. Watched as Eddie looked down at her, take the slightest of steps back but kept his hands on her arms, kept that contact. There was less southern drawl in his voice, but it was still there only slight now. She was calm or as calm as Eddie needed her to be.

Asked her exactly what she didn't understand and he saw her eyes move right to him, he'd stayed on the other side of the room, there was currently a lounge between him and her, he didn't want to lose control with her again. Needed to keep his hands to himself.

Just one word, he'd been expecting his name to come from her lips, but yet again it did not "Him." and then to clarify her statement about not feeling any pains of betrayal, that's why she knew her rejection worked, it would likely seem that way to her.

Saw her eyes move back to him, when Eddie offered for Brad to explain that to her himself, it was better for her to hear it from him. He did want to be the one to tell her that. So he explained it to her as best he could. That he'd never touched a single she-wolf since she left, because he didn't want to cause her anymore pain, didn't want to risk it, and he had not.

She just stood staring at him, trying to decide if she believed him probably. Though no pain of the past 8 years should speak for itself, especially now that she herself knew their bond was still there.

"It's a lot to take in Piper." he told her and he knew for her it was, she had run from him already. Hurt by the sight of Hadley on his arm, was likely still trying to believe if that was true in itself. "I'm sorry I touched you like that, I didn't mean to lose control like that." he looked right at his hand, that had been on her neck, the sensation was gone now, and already he missed it "You

feel...hot, burning hot to me and it..." how did he explain it to her, he felt intoxicated just by touching her "Sets off my need too..." damned near sighed, but managed to hold it in, he'd wanted to Mae the hell out of her and if Eddie had not been in the room, yelled right at him in that warning tone, that he had lost control and was scaring her, he likely would have "Mate you." he finally said, it was the truth and she needed to hear it, and he honestly wanted to tell her. So he simply did, told her what he believed.

"I might not be able to scent you, but I can't control myself when I touch you, that is the bond I'm guessing, how I feel it on my end." he was damned sure it was too. He'd never experienced anything in his life that even came close to how she made him feel, maybe that's how you knew you were a Whitlock Mate.

"She doesn't feel hot to me." Eddie commented, and Bradley was actually glad to hear that. Another thing that led him to believe she was his Mate, openly admitted he'd rip the man's head off if he touched her like that.

Heard Eddie's very amused tone "So possessive already." and his man was not wrong about that. Even though he let Eddie take her from the suite, he already knew, that yes he was going to be very possessive, so very protective of her, she'd been through so much, and he needed to make sure that she was looked after, now.

Had to find away to stop her from being invisible inside the Pack, she did not want to go back to being invisible, like she had been. When he sat and really thought about it, who she was now? Piper Harper led a very public life, was known by lots of humans, Izzy had not been wrong, Piper Harper had never hidden herself. Had been out there in the human world, creating a life where people recognised her and all of the time. She did interviews, both in magazines and on TV, for all to see, likely socialised with the very wealthy was known not just in the States, but all over the world. She was not invisible to the humans, and that comforted her, she fit into their world, much better than into her own.

Felt like everyone in her world had abandoned her, not just the Pack, but her own family, she didn't seem to care for the Whitlock's at all, claimed they had abandoned her. Bradley frowned, suddenly curious about that.

His father had thought that Piper had gone back to her mother's pack, but clearly she had not, surely someone in the Whitlock family would have felt

Jewel sever from them and die, been on the look out for Piper, called his father and asked after the child. Why hadn't they?

Alpha Timothy had recognised Aspens eyes, but had not recognised Piper herself. She was his cousin, but there was no family bond, but cousin could mean twice or thrice removed, it could mean anything. Could literally state she was his cousin because she was simply a Whitlock and so was he, who he claimed to be? Bradley was going to have to ask him, himself.

He had no idea what he was going to do about his past with her, could only try and start a fresh he guessed. She hadn't fled the room, likely a good thing, and she had walked out more or less in a calm state, but that could have been Eddie keeping her that way, he didn't know not really.

Eddie strolled back into the room and he nodded at Brad "She seems confused, but there is not much I can do about that. Worried Brandon was going to see her upset state. When we got back to the room."

"She's worried it will set Aspen off?"

"Yes." Eddie nodded "and you think I have control issues. You were gone in less than 10 seconds of touching her."

"Mm," Bradley nodded "kind of feels like...she's a very intoxicating drug. The minute I touch her." he shook his head "I'm going to have to watch myself."

"Yes, I don't think she is ready for that Brad." Eddie agreed with him.

"I know, not for a while."

"How'd Benson feel?"

"Hungry...I guess you could say."

"Did he want to Mark her?" Eddie asked, sounded more curious than anything else.

"I don't know, he definitely wanted us to Mate her." he sighed "He's quiet, worried about Harper."

"That's a whole other issue. Her wolf." Eddie shook his head "I don't know, I could sense her, but I don't think I could reach her, likely retreated all the way back inside of Pipers mind."

“You can normally feel the wolves?”

“Yes, they actually have less resistance than the human counterparts, to my charm. Are the first to feel calm and drawn, want to roll over and submit. Not Harper, barely sensed her. It’s odd.”

“Going to take a while is all.” Bradley nodded.

“But at least she admitted she was your Mate, and I can tell you she felt the Bond. The minute you touched her, Harper left like a shot and she freaked right out. Feeling all that tingly goodness. They really did believe their rejection was in effect, came as a hell of a shock that it wasn’t.”

“Still need to get her home though.”

“Yes, don’t rush it, might not be willing yet.” Eddie commented quietly.

“I know she’s not. But we can’t stay out here forever.”

“I wouldn’t advise pushing her, might see yourself rejected again.”

“I’ll not accept it like the last time.” Brad shrugged “I’m not giving up my Mate without a fight.”

“It’s probably going to still be a fight, though hopefully now not a physically one.”

“Did seem like Harper was spoiling for a fight.” Brad frowned “She’s all aggression, and I know that bothers Benson a lot.”

“Her wolf was in as much pain as Piper was.” Eddie sighed.

“How are you feeling Eddie...you looked relieved yourself to finally get a hold of her.”

“You have no idea, it is a relief, that woman turned me inside out, but now I got her. Kind of weird, can’t use Timber’s senses on her at all. Have to actually look at her.”

“I know, it’s what I’m doing. Switch off all my wolf senses to focus on her, hard to do, when its such a natural thing to do, that its automatic, have to actively focus on not using them.”

“Yes, agreed.” Eddie nodded “So what now?”

“Do you think she’ll bolt?”

“Not likely, she has both Brandon and Izzy to consider, they're her family. Now she knows about your bond, likely hole a few days, can't run, she knows that you and I will just track and hunt. There's no point in running.”

“Can't hide from me anymore.”

“What type of watch do you want on her? There's not enough of use to do rotating shifts on all the exits?”

“Do you think Izzy, could be convinced to report any movements?”

Watched Eddie as he really thought about that question “I don't know to be honest, they're really close. Like sisters, I'd have to say. You could try talking to her, but..”

“I know Benson scared her.”

“Hm, and she saw you're eyes change colour.” Eddie commented with a nod.

“Maybe 6 hour shifts at the front of the hotel entrance, would do.” Bradley sighed and wondered right this minute if he should have taken West up on his offer of extra men, though that plane only seated 9 comfortably, so would have only been able to accept 2 men.