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CHAPTER 31

The Alpha blinks rapidly in disbelief, like he is trying to process what I just said. While he stands there speechless, I get up on my knees, letting him take in the full view of my nakedness. I'm nervous as hell and I'm not quite sure what I'm doing, but I know that this is what I want. I want him to be the one to have my most prized possession. He's the only one who deserves it. I will worry about my mate later, when the time comes, but for now, just for tonight, I'm Alpha Decans.

He takes a step towards me, and then stops. I can now see the lust in his eyes, and his wolf, Duke, has come forward as well, but he doesn't say anything. All of a sudden, he turns and leaves the room, leaving me kneeling on the bed shocked. I'm not sure how long I remain in the same position, but as soon as I come back to me senses, I sit back.

The door opens once again, and Declan rushes through, locking it, before he comes over to me. He looks sheepishly at me as he holds up a handful of condoms. Relief that he isn't rejecting me, washes over me, and I want to chuckle now that I think about how fast he left, just to

grab some condoms.

"Are you sure, Quinn?"

I nod. "Yes..."

He throws the baby blockers on the stand beside the bed and climbs up onto the mattress. Pulling me into his arms, he gazes down at me, "I've wanted this for so long. I know we aren't mates, and I know that what you are giving me is a gift. I don't want you to feel as though you need to do this, Quinn."

"It is a gift, my most prized possession, but I want to gift it to you. You are the most deserving of it. It's all that I can give you of myself after everything that has happened. I know I shouldn't, and it will probably be torture later on, but I want a taste of what could have been had we been able to choose each other."

Declan's eyes darken with want before cupping my cheek and taking my lips. I open automatically for his tongue's invasion. Without breaking the kiss, he lays me down slowly and situates himself, so he's between my legs. I can feel his hardness growing against me, making my core throb even more. I let him stay in the driver's seat, though, since I've never done this before. Sure, we've **, but I' m fairly sure that this is slightly different.

He breaks from my lips only to kiss his way down to my jaw, and then down my neck. He hesitates a moment, "I wish I could mark you, Quinn. I would do anything to be able to cover this brand that you now have."

The brand of belonging to the Desert Sand pack, aside from the few small scars that Tala couldn't heal, it's the only thing that still remains fully intact. Because it's where my mate mark is supposed to be, I'm hoping that once I am marked, it will no longer show, but I'm willing to cut that part of my flesh in order to remove it if I have to.

"Please, let's not ruin this thinking about the things that can't be changed. Let's not think at all." i grab his head and bring it to my breast as I arch my back to meet his lips.

Tingles shoot through my body as he sucks and licks one nipple while rolling and pinching the other with his fingers. He then switches places with his hand and his mouth gives my other nipple the same attention. Moving on once he has his fill, he slips lower, his lips caressing my skin all over as he descends. Grabbing each of my thighs, he spreads me open wide so he can admire my offering to him.

His deep brown eyes meet my blue ones as he lowers his head. His tongue darts out to attack my **first, and my hips buck, but he holds me in place as his tongue continues to torture me. His eyes never leave mine the whole time he makes love to me with his mouth. As I get close to my climax, I grip the sheets and close my eyes.

"Eyes on me, baby. I want to watch you as I make you come undone." He growls softly.

My eyes snap open just as my first ** hits, "Oh Goddess!"

"That's it, sweetheart, let me taste you." Declan coaxes.

"Oh Declan. please!" I try bucking and moving away from his torturous tongue, but he never let's go and doesn't stop until I'm coming all over his tongue as it ** me. "AH...!"

"Mm," he groans as he laps up every drop. He smiles up at me, his face shiny with my arousal, as he slips a finger into me, "** you're so wet now." He inserts another finger, helping to stretch me out.

I feel him scissor his fingers inside of me right before he curls them, and with a devilish grin, he steals another ** from me, biting his lower lip as he watches me come undone.

"That's right, baby, I'm going to make you come for me as much as I can. I want you screaming out my name, so you remember what it is that I can do for you." He doesn't slow the aggressive movement of his fingers until the last of my climatic waves subside.

*Declan..." pant, not even knowing what it is that I want to say

*Shh, I've got you, baby." He reaches over and grabs a foil packet, tearing it open with his teeth.

I watch in both fascination and desire as he lowers his shorts and pulls them off. His ** springs forward, an angry purplish color, and harder than a rock. When he goes to slide the rubber on, I stop him.

"Can I?"

He grins and hands me the condom, "Have at it."

I roll it onto his very girthy **, slowly, as I lick my lips. I glance up at him and notice him watching me with a deep affection. I don't let go right away once I've rolled it all the way on. Instead, I give it a few slow strokes, causing it to jerk at my touch.

Declan closes his eyes, "**, Quinn..."

I use the same words on him. "Open your eyes, Alpha. I want you to watch."

His eyes snap open and he growls as I smirk back at him, "You're treading dangerously, Alpha Quinn. I plan on being gentle at first, but you' re making it so I'm about to lose control. If Duke takes over, there is no taking it slow. He

will break you in fast and hard." I see a glint of Duke pass over his eyes, and I know that he's right at the surface, just waiting.

"Duke can wait," I whisper, "I want you to be the one that takes me first. Please, Declan..."

Reaching down and stroking his fingers through my folds, "Tell me what you want, Quinn."

I explore his face with my eyes, memorizing the look that he is giving me in this moment, "I want you, Alpha Declan. I want you to make love to me"

He wastes no time crashing his mouth against mine as he moves in between my legs. When he breaks the kiss, he kneels up and lifts my right leg while he lines up his **at my entrance. He then lifts my other leg, spreading me wide open as he pushed into me slowly. He watches himself enter my **, biting his bottom lip in the process. Pulling back a little, he slowly pushes in again, going a bit further this time. He does this a few times until we both feel him hit the barrier.

Glancing back up at me, his face is strained, but he still asks, "Are you sure, Quinn? Are you sure that you want this, want me to do this?"

"Yes, Declan. It's all yours if you want it." I reassure him.

"**yes, I want it and so much more..." He drives into me, taking what I have gifted him.

I squeak at the slight pinch when he bursts through my hymen, but then the pain disappears as he remains still. He takes my mouth in a deep and passionate kiss while he waits until I'm ready to continue.

"Thank you," he whispers against my mouth, "You feel so much better than I ever thought possible."

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CHAPTER 32

DECLAN

When Quinn dropped that towel, it was as if my world had exploded. Never have I seen such a beautiful sight like the one before me. It takes a little bit for her words to sink in. Quinn wants me! She wants to give herself to me and I have no words at the moment. Duke comes forward, 'Go to her! Take what is ours!" he growls at me, but I ignore him.

The first coherent thought that I have is to go grab condoms, because the last thing I want to do is knock Quinn up. Not that I wouldn't be thrilled for her to have my pups, it's what I had wanted to begin with, but I can't do that to her now that I can no longer have her as my Luna.

Grabbing a handful from the nightstand in my room, I rush back to her, only to find her looking hurt as I close the door and lock it. It was dumb of me to leave like that without telling her where I was going. I hold up my hand and show her the condoms.

"Are you sure, Quinn?"

"Yes..."

After a few more words, and reassurances, I give her the first **of the night with my mouth. Her arousal tastes divine as she soaks my tongue with it. It's my new favorite flavor, almost reminds me of apple**. I continue to lick up every last drop, savoring it as long as I can.

I want to make sure she is completely ready to take me since I'm unusually big, not that I'm bragging or anything. Using my fingers, I open her up some more, stretching her walls as much as I can and taking her to climax, unexpectedly, a second time. I love how she cries out my name when she comes. I've never felt such an ego boost as I do right now, knowing that I'm the one who is giving her what she needs and she's enjoying it.

She's the one that rolls the condom on my rock-hard **, giving it a few strokes as she does. I close my eyes, loving the feel of her hand wrapped around my **. I just wish that I could ***her bare, but I'm not going to complain about that, "**, Quinn..."

"Open your eyes, Alpha. I want you to watch." She uses my own words against me, only I find it way sexier when she says it.

Once I threaten her for teasing me, I run my fingers through her wetness, "Tell me what you want, Quinn."

"I want you, Alpha Declan. I want you to make love to me."

Her words hit me deep and I can't help but to take her mouth possessively as I move into place between her sweet thighs. Reluctantly, I pull away and kneel back so I can line myself up at the entrance of the one place that I've been wanting. Spreading her thighs nice and wide, take a moment to enjoy the gorgeous view. I wish this could be my view for the rest of my life, but I'm not going to think about that right now. I begin to push in slowly, not stopping until the tip is all the way in.

Pulling back, a little bit, I watch in fascination as her **takes me in a little more. I bite my lower lip, fighting to keep myself in check when all I want to do is plunge into her sweetness and drown myself. After a few more small thrusts, I feel the barrier that I need to push through that will make her mine, at least in a small way. We may not be able to be mates, but I will always own a small part of the woman below me, and that will have to suffice.

As much as I want to shove myself through, I hold off enough to get her consent one last time, *Are you sure, Quinn? Are you sure that you want this, want me to do this?"

"Yes, Declan. It's all yours if you want it." She smiles at me as she grants me her consent.

* **yes, I want it and so much more..." I don't hesitate as I plunge myself deep inside of her heat. I hear her little squeak as I tear through her hymen, so I force myself to remain still until her body adjusts to my intrusion. Taking her lips once more, I kiss her in a way that will show her just how much this means to me. I feel as though I should say something as I wait to continue, so I mumble softly, against her lips, "Thank you. You feel so much better than I ever thought possible."

She doesn't say anything, but I don't expect her to. She does begin to move against me, though, making me growl and bite her lip. I bring her leg up and rest it over my hip as I begin to slowly thrust into her. It doesn't take too long before I'm picking up the pace, because she signals in little ways that she wants more.

"*" she feels so* good, "You're so tight, baby." I grind out through clenched teeth. I lift her other leg and place both of them against my shoulders as I drive into her over and over.

* Jesus Declan…" she moans and grips the sheets with her hands. Her breasts bounce every time I slam into her, "Oh Goddess.please!"

Taking my thumb, I press it to her *and rub circles on it, pinching it every so often until her body tenses, and she screams out my name as she comes for the third time. Waiting until her *ends, I then pull out and flip her around, so she is on all fours. The blood smears on my wrapped *, sends me and my wolf into a frenzied state of ownership and we take her once again.

Duke is at the surface but hasn't fully taken over. He's just along for the ride and wants to see Quinn in all of her glory as we *her into an abyss, and that's exactly what I plan on doing. I'm not stopping until we are both completely satisfied and passing out.

"Can't you *her harder, human?' Duke asks excitedly.

"Dude, I'm going as hard as I can now shut the *up.'I curse at my wolf.

Pfft, I can do better?

I shove him back to his little corner; the last thing I need is my wolf telling me how to *. Wrapping her auburn hair around my fist, I bring her up, so her back is against me. I grab her throat with one hand and play with her *with the other, and I hammer into her like a jackhammer.

"Come for me, Quinn. I'm about to explode and I want you to come with me."

"That shouldn't be a problem." She tries to say but her words are shaky from me *into her so hard.

"Oh *! Come for me baby come now!" i thrust a few more times and then I'm blowing my load into the rubber. As forceful as that felt, I should probably make sure the condom didn't rip.

"DECLAN-OH GODDESS!!"

I continue thrusting throughout her climax, and then I pull out and fall down beside her. After catching my breath, I get up and remove the fully intact condom, tossing into the waste basket in the bathroom. Wetting a washcloth, I go back to the bed and spread Quinn's legs.

"What are you doing?" I smirk because she doesn't even open her eyes when she asks.

"I'm cleaning you up. Thankfully, I was wearing a rubber, or else you would have been really messy." I chuckle.

She opens her eyes and studies me, "Does it feel different when you don't wear one?"

"Honestly, I don't think I've ever not worn one, but I would think it would feel great being skin to skin." i kiss the inside of her knee.

Quinn has an unusual look on her face. I tilt my head and observe her for a moment. I can tell the wheels in her head are working overtime. She bites her lip in consternation as she stares out at nothing in particular. She's making the cutest faces, but now I'm curious.

"What's on that pretty little mind of yours, baby?"

"Huh?" she pulls herself back and looks at me questioningly.

I chuckle, "I was just wondering what you were thinking about."

"Oh, well," she pauses and looks away.

I toss the wet cloth to the floor and move over so I'm beside her. I pull her into my arms and lift her head up by her chin, "Talk to me, Quinn." Now I'm getting a bit worried. Did she not enjoy it as much as I did? "I'm sorry if it didn't feel as good as it should have; it was your first time and some..."

"No! The sex was amazing!" she smiles at me.

I furrow my brows, "Then what is it?"

"I don't want to ruin the moment, but I have to ask are those condoms the ones that Lila brought you?"

I pull back just a little bit, surprised that she's mentioning that she-*name at a time like this, "No. I got them from a box that I bought myself."

"Is there any way that she could have tampered with them?"

"No. As far as I know she hasn't been in my room since the last time that her and I were together, and I just opened the seal on the box when I went to get these."

"Oh, okay." She blows out a sigh of relief.

"What's going on, Quinn?"

"Declan, I hate to break it to you, but I thought we already discussed this. I'm pretty sure that not only did she stop taking the meds, but that she poked holes in the condoms that you used with her. It's the only thing that makes sense. I was just hoping that we didn't just use a tampered one."

Now it makes sense. I guess I don't blame her for being weary, but to be perfectly honest, I wouldn't be all to upset if Quinn were to get pregnant with my pup. I would figure out some way to denounce Lila as Luna and then mate with Quinn, but I doubt the Alpha in my arms would feel the same way.

"You have no worries, Quinn. I checked the rubber when I pulled it off, just in case." i kiss her temple.

She smiles and nods, "I just don't want things becoming more complicated for you."

Huh? Does that mean that she wouldn't be all that upset to get pregnant by me? Not that I'm going to do it, but at least I feel a little better.

"Don't worry your pretty little head about it. I will be careful, baby." I feel my *start to stir once more, "How about we stop talking and I show you another way I like to **?"

"Mm, that sounds like trouble, but a whole lot of fun..."

There's a knock on the door, "Quinn, are you okay? I thought I heard you screaming." groan and turn my face into Quinn's neck; my * mother.

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CHAPTER 33

Amelia is on the other side of the door while her Alpha son is in my bed. I *the little giggle that erupts when Declan let's out a small groan. We were just about to start round two when she knocked on the door. I don't dare open it, because as werewolves, we have a great sense of smell, so she will smell her son and the fact that we just had sex if I were to open that door.

"I'm okay Amelia," i call out, "It was only a nightmare, but I feel much better now, thank you." i look over at the naked Alpha beside me, "Are your rooms not soundproof?"

"Uh, yeah, they're supposed to be." He chuckles.

"Apparently, not the door if I can hear what she's saying." I *my brow amusingly.

"Are you sure, Quinn? I can go make you some warm milk, sweetie." Amelia continues.

"Thank you so much, but I just want to go back to sleep right now, Amelia. I appreciate the offer, though." | grin at the man that is now placing kisses on my shoulder as his hand slides in to massage my breast.

"Alright, but come and get me if you need anything, honey." The former Luna offers.

"I will, thank you!"

The last is said in a slight gasp as a pinch to my nipple sends ripples of pleasure through me. The Alpha grins as he takes the same nipple into his mouth, making me forget all about his mother. My thoughts are only for what's happening in the here and now, and what's happening is that I have a hot as *Alpha wanting to go another round with me, and I'm only happy to oblige.

After a night of unbelievable pleasure with Declan, I stay in bed until well after lunch time. Being Alpha, Declan had duties that needed attending and so, reluctantly, he left my bed a little after seven in the morning. When I finally decided to join the rest of the world, I made sure to soak in a nice long, hot bath, where I added lots of scents to mask the Alpha's scent. It shouldn't be too hard to hide, since he wore a condom each time he took me, but I want to play it safe. After all, I don't want to be known as the Alpha's **or mistress.

I no sooner step down from the last stair, I am being mauled by a petite shewolf who looks a lot like my best friend, except she looks worn out and tired. I wait for her to get her fill in as she hugs me tight. Returning her hug, I bring my mouth to her ear and speak softly.

"I'm okay, Cici, I'm home now."

.

"I didn't think I would ever see you again," she finally pulls away and slaps me in the arm, "How dare you let someone get the best of you, Quinn?"

I flinch at what she says because it's the same thing I've been asking myself since the day Jasper took me, "I know, I'm sorry! All I can say is that I won't let it happen again, I promise."

"You better not, or else I will come find you myself, and then you better run and hide because I'm going to beat you like a red-headed stepchild!" She looks adorable when she's upset, and she stands with her hands on both her hips like she's doing now.

I wiggle my brows at my friend, "Sounds like a good time, why would I hide?"

Cici stares me down for a few seconds before bursting out laughing, "*it, Quinn, I'm trying to be serious here!"

I shrug. "I am too."

My friend tugs on my hand, "Come on, you missed lunch, lazy *, but I think we can sweet talk someone into making something for you."

I let her pull me to the kitchen, but there is nobody around to make anything, and the little she-wolf huffs in annoyance, "Well, isn't this just great? Guess you will have to make do with a cold meat sandwich."

I chuckle, "That is perfectly fine with me anyway because I'm not all that hungry at the moment."

"Uh huh. I heard about your diet while you were vacationing at La **Alpha's Resort," she muses, and I can see with my own eyes that you haven't eaten much, so as your best friend, it's my job to fatten you up again."

"Again?" I quirk my brow, "I didn't realize I was fat before..."

Cici rolls her eyes. "You know what I mean, stop being so dramatic." "Whatever, you just want to fatten me up so you can win the next time we race." I go to the fridge and pull out the *turkey and Swiss cheese

My friend shrugs, "Hey, you can't fault a girl for trying."

I shake my head and giggle, "Can you hand me the bread?" Pointing to the bread box beside Cici before reaching into the cupboard for a paper plate

"All I'm saying." she hands me the half loaf of bread, "is that you need to regain your strength, babe. It's all in the healing process."

I walk back to the fridge to grab the mayo that I had forgotten, and return to finish making my lunch, "I didn't realize that you went to school while I was away and got your degree in the health field." I wink as I bite into my sandwich.

"Ha ha, very funny! I'm being serious, and it doesn't take a brainiac to know these things, Quinn."

"Okay, okay! Grab me the chips and I'll fatten myself up, geesh!" I laugh.

Cici glares at me, but still grabs the Doritos and hands them over, "So, you ever going to tell me why I'm smelling the Alpha mixed in with your scent? She smirks as she raises a questioning brow.

| quickly take a bite, so I can give myself time to come up with an excuse as I chew. Luckily, Beta Carter comes walking into the kitchen and points to his sister, "Mom is looking for you. She's **that you have been here for two days now and haven't stopped by to see them."

My friend sighs, "I will go and see them later, I'm talking to Quinn right now."

"No, you will go now because I'm tired of her blowing up my phone since somebody keeps ignoring her own phone." Carter takes his sister by the shoulders and leads her out of the kitchen.

*This conversation isn't over, Alpha Quinn Night!" my friend calls over her shoulder at me.

I breathe a sigh of relief.

It's a gorgeous day out and after being held captive inside for over a week, I want to spend the next few hours outside. Walking over the grounds, I make my way to the training field where I find Keenan watching the afternoon training session.

His smile is big when he spots me heading his way, "Quinn.oh, my bad, it's Alpha Quinn now, isn't it? How is my favorite kick-**she-wolf doing?" He drags me in for a quick hug.

Keenan is the one that trained me from the beginning, he's the only one that Declan allowed to do so, until he finally gave in, and I started practicing with the others. Keenan was always there for me, though, and also gave me private lessons.

"I will feel much better once you drop the whole 'Alpha' **with me." I grin.

"My apologies, Alpha-I mean Quinn." He chuckles and winks. His face then turns serious, "But really, how are you doing?"

Putting my hands on my hips, I squint when I look up at him because the sun is to his back, "My ego has taken the brunt of the whole ordeal. Apparently, I need more work. How can I keep a whole pack safe if I can't even keep myself safe?"

"Don't beat yourself up over it, Quinn. A lot of people let down their guard when they think they are somewhere safe. It will take a while before you get used to being on guard at all times, even when you go in to take a **." The warrior jokes.

I slap his chest playfully. "Yeah, well, my trainer should had warned me how dangerous bathrooms could be, so I blame him."

Laughter erupts from Keenan as he holds his gut, "It's okay, little Alpha, I've got broad enough shoulders, so just lay it all on them if it makes you feel better." All joking aside, he asks, "Were you needing something?"

"Actually, yes, I'm going a bit stir-crazy and since the warden wants me staying at least one more night, just to be sure that I'm okay, I need something to do. Do you mind if I join in on the training sessions today?"

Keenan crosses his arms in front of his chest and grins at me, "Tala is back and acting normal, correct?"

I look at him confused, "Yes..."

"Well then, I don't see why you would need to stay another night. Oh wait, probably because he wants to stare at a pretty she-wolf a little longer."

"Keenan, do you want me to kick your **now or later?" I ask.

"Okay, gosh," he holds his hands up. "It was a joke, no need to threaten with bodily injury."

Rolling my eyes, I send the warrior an annoyed look, "So, are you going to let me join or what?"

"Of course, just don't be sending anybody to the infirmary this time."

"Oh, my Goddess, one time, Keenan! It happened one time!"

"Hey, all I'm asking is for you to keep it to that one time." He starts to walk away, "Night! Join in with Marco and Tommy." He throws over his shoulder and I have to grin, because they are two of his best fighters.

I start pulling my hair back and putting it into a messy bun, 'Sorry Keenan, I say to myself, 'but someone may be going to the infirmary because I am not going to go easy on either one of them.

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CHAPTER 34

"*it. Quinn! They are not your enemy, so why are you fighting them as if they are?" Keenan lectures me because I just threw Marco over my shoulder and slammed him to the ground with a resounding **to something.

"What am I supposed to do when you put me against, not one, but two of your top fighters? I assumed you wanted me to give it my all!" | ask while throwing my hands in the air.

"Yes, but **, did you gain strength while you've been away or what?" The trainer looks me over, "You were good, but not this good."

I smirk and then wipe imaginary dust off my shoulder, "What can I say, I'm becoming the best."

"You're not **joking!"

I stare at the warrior a little bit stunned, "Really?"

He nods in disbelief, "Uh, yeah, really."

It's a proud moment for me, and I turn back to poor Marco and reach my hand out to help him up off the ground, "Sorry, buddy. I'll go easy on you next time." Tommy chuckles and I give him a fake glare that shuts him up right away.

After this little incident, I decide to call it good and say my goodbyes, thanking Keenan for letting me join in today's session. I'm just walking through the back door to head up and shower, when I run into my all-time favorite person.

"Umph! Do you ever watch where you're going? Why the **are you still here anyway?" Lila sneers.

"Oh, I hadn't realized they had let you out of your cage," I give her a fake smile, and step in close so she can get a good whiff of me, "Declan didn't mention to me that he was letting you out, while he took care of me throughout the night." ***it! Why do I let her bring the **out in me? I shouldn't have said what I just said, but it's too late to take it back now.

The Luna's nostrils flare and she turns beet red. Her next words, though, they hit me hard, but I make sure I hide my true feelings, "You can be the Alpha's *all you want, but you will never be his Luna, and you will never carry his heir." She flips her hair and walks out of the room.

As much as I hate to say it, Lila is right. If I let this go on, I'll only be his *and never his Luna. I can feel a stinging in the corner of my eyes, but I push it back, straighten my spine, and hold my head high as I continue on to my temporary room. I think it's time that I put everything behind me, including the handsome Alpha. I've repaid him, and don't owe him anything else.

I shower and dress in one of the outfits that Cici brought over for me. I then sit at the desk and pull out a pad of paper and pen. It takes me awhile to write everything that I need to say, but I eventually get the letter all written out. Sliding the piece of paper in an envelope, I write Declan's name on the front

and set it on one of the pillows. I run my hand over the bed and inhale deeply, taking in the faint scent of the man that I have come to love.

Thankfully, Cici placed my car keys with my belongings, so I grabbed the little bit that I had here, along with my keys and head out by way of the back stairs. Nobody sees me as I make my way to my car and throw my bag into the passenger seat. At least I didn't think anyone saw me, but when I look in the rearview mirror, I see Lila in a window on the second floor, smirking as she watches me leave the only home that I've known for the last three years, for good.

I've been home for a couple of hours now and my phone has been ringing constantly for the last hour. Declan is wanting answers, 1 assume, but I've said everything that needs to be said within the letter that I left for him. I turn my phone to silent and place it face down on my desk, so I don't have to see his name every time it lights up.

Soon after, there is a knock on my office door, and I call out for whoever it is to enter. To my delightful surprise, it's Summer. I jump up from my chair and circle around the desk as quick as I can just to throw my arms around her. We both almost tumble over, making her giggle.

"I'm guessing that you're happy to see me?" Summer's chuckle is sweet and feminine.

*That I am! I want to thank you for what you did for me, Summer. It was brave of you; you could have been punished severely if you had been caught switching out the drug."

"If it weren't for me overhearing his conversation with Jasper about how you were now the Alpha of Dark Moon, I probably wouldn't have chanced it." She looks a little guilty, but it doesn't matter.

"Summer, you have nothing to feel bad about. How would you know if a shewolf like me would be worth chancing Luther's wrath for, had you not learned what you did? i'd probably do the same thing. Let's just celebrate on the positive, okay?"

She smiles. "Yes, Alpha."

I growl at the she wolf, "I better never hear you call me that again. You have earned your right to call me by my name, Summer."

"Okay. Quinn."

"So, I was told that you were organizing things back at Desert Sand?" I ask as I walk back to my chair.

"Oh, yes! That's one of the reasons that I'm here. I wanted to see if you had time to come out, so I can introduce you to the ones that would like to join your pack."

"How many did you bring back with you?" I ask excitedly.

"Seventy all together. Fifteen of them are small children, though." She replies.

"Oh wow, and they are all women?" That's what I was assuming, because why would any of the warriors get brought back to me.

"Oh, Goddess no! there are only twenty-five women and thirty men." She goes on to explain when she sees the confusion on my face, "The men and a few of the women are actually rogues who chose to leave their packs due to not believing in the wrongs that their Alphas were doing. The rest of the women were captives from other attacks and the children are those born of the mothers being forced by Luther's warriors."

"Oh my!" My hand flies to my mouth. I shouldn't be surprised, but I am, and so devastated for these she-wolves, "Well, let's go then; take me to my new pack members." I smile broadly. Yes, I've already made up my mind that I will be accepting each one of them into my pack. I can hardly turn them away when they have already been through so much!

By the time I finish meeting all the newcomers, swearing them all in, and getting each one settled, I am dead on my feet. As happy as I am to have my pack growing, I'm also becoming a bit nervous about being in charge of everyone. Did I bite off more than I can chew?

I drag myself up to my room and drop face first down on my bed. The silence is very welcoming, but also reminds me that I'm alone. I wish | would find my mate soon. The Goddess Selene could not have forgotten to give me one, could she? I don't think on it too long, though, because sleep takes me soon after I first think about it.

It's a fitful sleep, as I toss and turn all night long. I guess it doesn't matter how tired you are, if you have been kidnapped and used for other? s enjoyment,

you're bound to have nightmares. Declan kept them away last night, and now, I have no one. When I wake up in a cold sweat, I climb from the bed and make my way down to the kitchen to warm me some milk. I've never actually tried drinking warm milk to help me sleep, but lots of people swear by it, so I guess I will give it a try.

Once the milk is warmed up enough, I carry it upstairs to my room and climb back into my bed. While I let the drink cool just a little bit, so I don't burn my mouth, I pick up my phone to go through all my messages. My eyes bulge at the amount of missed calls that I have from Declan, forty-two to be precise. That doesn't include all the texts that he sent me either. I sit back with my back against the headboard and click on the first text.

DECLAN: Please call me back Quinn.

DECLAN: Quinn, why won't you answer your phone or call me back?

DECLAN: Can't we talk about this?

DECALN: I need you in my life, Quinn. Don't shut me out.

DECLAN: We can go back to being just friends, as long as you remain in my life.

DECLAN: Quinn...

I delete the rest because it hurts too much to read them. In fact, I erase all my voicemails from him as well, without even listening to them. I have to let him go and this is the only way I know how.

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CHAPTER 35

Delcan

Sometimes being an Alpha is a bunch of **. You get no time for yourself when you have a whole pack to run. I hated leaving Quinn in bed alone this morning, but *won't get done around here otherwise. Knowing that I'll spend time with her tonight will either help get me through the day or make my day long as *either way, me leaving her naked form can't be helped. I want to take

her again before I leave, but we've used the last condom, and I've already kept her up most of the night. Kissing her forehead, I leave quietly, hoping that nobody catches me doing the walk of shame from Quinn's room.

Reports of rogues have kept me away from the pack house most of the day, leaving Carter in charge. Normally. I would send my Beta, but I needed to get out or else I was going to just say '*it' and go find a certain *Alpha she-wolf.

Before leaving, I head down to the cells to check on my *Luna. There were no glares or hostility toward me, which was very surprising. She smiles sweetly when I enter her cell, putting me on alert right away, but did nothing. The shewolf is docile the whole time." m there, not once raising her voice, and she even apologies to me. I'm sure she's just trying to get out of here, and me being the Alpha male that I am, I release her when she promises to be good from now on. Do I believe her? Hell no, but at least now she knows that I won't hesitate to throw her *in here. In fact, I keep everything as is, because I'm sure she will be back in the near future.

I leave her at the entrance while I mind link my Beta to let him know of her release, and then I let Duke take over as we join the other warriors at the border of our territory.

When I get there, my men have three rogues in restraints soaked in Wolfsbane, so they can't break free. All three are in their human form but refuse to talk. When I mention the Desert Sand pack, they all begin to look nervous, but still, they say nothing. I don't know whether to take their response to the pack name as them being afraid of said pack or because I'm close to the answer. Either way, the three will now be held in our cells for further questioning.

I should have been able to head back at this point, but then I'm informed that a couple of our security cameras that we keep on the borders were down. This is what has kept me away; having to find every camera that has been destroyed and then selecting a few warriors to patrol

the section until we could replace the cameras.

By the time I make it back to the pack house, it's dinnertime. Something feels off, though. The moment I walk inside, I feel the loss. Her scent is very faint, and I take the stairs two at a time to get to her room. I knock a few times and when I get no response, I open the door, only to find it completely empty. I can barely scent her anymore, it's fading fast.

Confusion sets in as I stand in the doorway trying to figure out what is going on. When my eyes sweep the room, I notice the envelope with my name on it on the bed. *it up, I tear open the envelope and let my eyes read her words carefully. My body slowly lowers down to the edge of the bed, and then continues to slide to the floor. One hand fists my hair as I continue to read her letter. I have to read it a second time in order for the words to really sink in.

Dear Declan,

I know that me leaving the way I did will probably come as a shock to you, but it couldn't be helped. Had I waited to say this to your face. I know that I wouldn't have the nerve to do it, and we would just be going around in circles.

First of all, let me just say that last night with you, was the best night of my life, and I don't regret any of it. If anything. I wish we could have more nights like that, but we both know that it isn't possible. I will always cherish that time with you.

Secondly, it's time that we face reality. What we want is not always what we are able to have. I think what will help get me through all of this is knowing that you willingly chose me, although, obstacles got in the way, preventing us from being together, just knowing that I was your choice will have to be enough. What I need you to know is that somehow along the way. I fell for you, so I'm hoping that you, knowing that you are loved by me, will help you get through all of this.

I wish that I could be there for you to help you get through the craziness that I'm sure your Luna will put you through, but I don't think that would be fair to either of us. Knowing that another woman is not only your Luna, but also carries your heir, it's just too much right now. Maybe in the future, but not now, not yet.

So, in ending this, please know that I will forever be grateful that you are the one that saved me from the very beginning. I'd like to say that it was fate, but

Please take care of yourself, Declan, and try to be happy. You have an heir now and need to think about them. We will see each other again someday, but for now, I will keep my distance, so you can give yourself the chance to find that happiness without me.

With Love.

Quinn

Gripping the note in my hand, I go in search of my phone. I tear through the pack house trying to find it only to find it right where I left it, in my office on the charger. I'm losing it already. Dialing Quinn's number, all it does is ring, so I hit redial, just to get the same response. I'm not sure how many times I try calling her, but I also send her texts in between, hoping that she will at least answer one or the other. I've also left her a bunch of voicemails as well, but they all go unanswered.

I feel like a teenage girl who is depressed because a boy that she has a crush on won't call her back. I even have a tub of ice cream as I sit in my bedroom, moping over Quinn. The logical part of my brain understands what she's doing, but my heart and my wolf does not. I'm messed up over a she wolf that was never my mate to begin with. I don't understand why this is affecting me like it is.

Both my mother and my Beta try getting me to come out and talk to them, but I refuse to budge. How can I face them after the way I've acted since finding out that Quinn was gone. I had literally torn through the house, knocking *over and turning over furniture, just so I could find my phone, and not once did I give any of them a reason for my behavior. I can't face them until I can face this situation, which means accepting that I no longer have Quinn in my life. For now, though, I'm going to sit here with my Ben & *Chocolate Peanut Butter Split ice cream and brood just a little longer.

ve kept myself busy over the next few months. Between pack business and taking Lila to her doctor visits, I've been able to stay somewhat sane. I keep telling myself that I have to do this for my heir. We found out a month after we rescued Quinn that we Lila and I are having a son. I think it was the first time that I had shown any kind of emotion towards the baby.

Once I started being more involved, Lila became more tolerable. She continues to try and get intimate with me, but I can't go there with her. I don't know why, but nothing stirs below the waist when it comes to that woman, but she continues to try. She still hasn't been accepted fully, but I refuse to say anything because I know why they keep refusing to acknowledge her; they know she isn't their true Luna. The only time i step in is when they are downright rude to her in my presence, after all, they are disrespecting me by doing so.

My Luna is now as big as a whale as her due date closes in. I feel bad that she's gained all the weight and now has swollen ankles because she carries my pup, so when she asks if I can make a store run for her cravings or make her something, I'm happy to do it. I may not like the mother too much, but I've already begun to love my son, and will do anything for him.

Today marks one week before the baby is due to arrive, and Lila has asked me to make her some chocolate chip pancakes, with peanut butter smeared all over them. The first time she ever asked me to make them, I gagged, but then she made me try them, and they were actually good.

Lila is just coming into the kitchen as I'm plating up her breakfast. I move over to her quickly to help her sit down. Pulling out her chair with one hand while carrying her plate in another, the back door opens quickly and in bounds Cici. I haven't seen her in a while, so I give her a big smile

"What are you doing here, little one?" I ask my Beta's little sister.

'I rode over with Quinn. Her and Cam have a few things to go over with Keenan about training techniques." She doesn't even stop to visit, just walks right on by and through the door to the hallway.

I stand here shocked after hearing what she just said. I haven't heard from Quinn since she left. I read her letter every *day just to feel close to her, but I haven't laid eyes on her in months. She usually sends either Beta Spencer or Cici in her place whenever a meeting takes place. I've *a few meetings and made sure that she knew just so she wouldn't have to miss them all. I knew I was the reason that she wasn't coming when I would hear through the grapevine that she had appeared at every meeting that I did not go to.

Lila's squeak draws my attention back to her, and I see her, mid-sit down, holding onto the edge of the table and looking down at the floor. Glancing in the same direction, I notice a puddle of water at her feet.

My Luna stares up at me with wide eyes. "My water just broke, Alpha!"

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CHAPTER 36

Life after leaving the Storm River pack and it's Alpha, was harder than I thought, but I pushed through everything. Having my best friend by my side and an amazing Beta, I was able to keep my head in the game and continue to strengthen our pack. Taking in the rogues that

Summer had brought in had added to our numbers, but over the last few months, more and more wolves, both male and female stumbled across us and joined our pack. We are now a little over three hundred strong, and still growing.

I'm sitting here on the front porch, getting in a little time to myself with a good romance book in my hand, but all I can think about is the last few months. I thought we were going to be a poor pack until we were able to get our feet back under us, but after a lot of badgering, my Beta got me to pay the bank a visit. Turns out that all the pack's money from before the attack is still all there. I was so happy to hear this, because this meant that I could start paying the Storm River pack back. It's been bothering me for some time now. Of course, I don't dare talk to the Alpha, so instead, I take bank notes to their bank and deposit them with a note. Declan tried calling me after the first deposit, but I still wasn't ready to talk to him, so I ignored the call, and he hasn't tried again.

Believe it or not, my best friend and Beta found out they were mates on Cici's birthday. I'm happy for them both, but having them around, acting all lovey dove, all the time, takes a toll on me. I honestly thought I would have found my mate by now. I'm beginning to think that I was one of the forgotten ones.

*Alpha," Cam, my head warrior stops and gets my attention, "I was wondering if you knew when it would be a good time to go meet with Keenan about blending a few training sessions together. I pretty much know the moves, because you are a good instructor, but I feel like should probably make sure that we have it together."

"Oh, yes. I haven't forgotten, just trying to figure out when a good time would be."

He places his hands on both hips and lifts a brow, questioning the book in my hand. I smile sheepishly at him, "You know what? I'm free right now if you are."

He chuckles, "If you are able to pull yourself away from Fabio for a few hours, that would be great."

Throwing my book aside, I jump up defensively, "I will have you know that I have never read a book with that name in it! I don't think it's even used anymore."

"Well, I'm sure that whatever his name is, will wait for you to come back."

"Okay, okay, let me go see if Cici wants to go over too. I'm sure she's wanting to visit her parents." I start to go inside.

Cam clears his throat, "Uh, Alpha. You may want to try the gazebo in the back. I saw both her and Beta Carter sneaking in there on my way to talk to you." He snickers.

I throw my hands up in frustration, "Oh great, well since you're going back that way then you can tell her that we leave in ten minutes."

"Will do, Alpha. I'm also going to stop by and let Veronika know that I'm heading out." He informs me and I smile back in response.

Cam is such a good guy. He lost his mate in childbirth, lost both mate and pup, but has been able to keep it together. When Veronika was among the group to get sworn into the pack, Cam took a liking to both her and her pup. He had them move in with him last month after she finally agreed to marry him. I'm happy for them both. Cam is about ten years her senior, but they are perfect for one another.

We roll into the Storm River territory and suddenly Tala is pacing inside my head, driving me mad, 'Do you mind?' I ask her.

'I can't help it, Quinn. I can sense Duke.'

'So what? We are here for business only, so don't be getting any ideas.'I try to give her my Alpha voice, but it doesn't work on my own wolf, and she chuckles.

"Did you seriously just try using My voice on me? You do know that the voice and aura come from me, right?" Tala asks amusingly.

"Oh, shut up, and don't talk back!' I'm annoyed now, and I think it's because I can sense Declan close as well. I push her back and block her just before my car comes to a stop in front of the training field.

"I'm going to go find my brother before I head to my parents' house." Cici informs me and then takes off towards the packhouse.

Keenan spots us and starts making his way over as I keep watching my friend until she disappears in through the kitchen door. I'm barely listening to the conversation, only answering with a yes or no, or just nodding. After a few minutes, the back door to the pack house flies open, and out comes the Alpha, carrying a very pregnant Luna.

Our eyes meet, and I can sense the pain in his, but then he turns his attention back to the she-wolf in his arms and carries her over to some

kind of jeep. It's a new one because I don't ever remember seeing it when I was here.

"Looks like the she-* is going into labor early." Keenan states from beside me.

I turn my head and look up at him, "Does the pack still not see her as their Luna?"

Keenan shakes his head, "No, most of us don't, but there are a few that tolerate her and even address her as such."

"You said she's going into labor early?" I ask him.

"Yeah, she isn't due for at least another week."

"see. Well, sometimes you can't make the pup wait." I chuckle.

"I guess the warrior says, "Alpha must be happy that his heir is finally coming. He's been excited for this day."

His words are painful to hear, but I keep my expression hidden. "I'm glad that he is finally accepting the pup more than he was when he first found out. Maybe what I did was a good thing, if it means that it brought Declan closer to his child.

"He wasn't really involved until they found out that it was a boy. Since then, he's been very attentive to Lila." He hesitates, "He still refuses to touch her intimately, though, and Goddess knows she tries every chance she gets."

I don't know if he saw into my inner thoughts and that's why Keenan said what he said, but either way, it makes me feel a little bit better. When I glance back

up, all I see is the cloud of dust from the vehicle that the Alpha and Luna took off in.

I should be glad that Declan has left because that was the reason I kept putting this visit off, I just wasn't ready to see him. Now, though, I wish he would hurry back just so I can lay eyes on him once more. He won't be back though, not today, and when he does come home, it will be with his new little family.

I turn my attention back to Keenan, "How exciting that Declan will have a son as his heir. I should probably have a gift sent over for the little guy." I rattle on, "That's if Lila will accept it from me."

"*that she-*. Her day will come at some point." Keenan's anger towards the Luna is quite disbelieving, but I'm sure he has his reasons for it.

"No, Keenan, I could never wish for a pup to lose their parent, no matter how horrible they are. As long as they love their child, then they should be around to watch them grow.

"Sorry, Quinn. I really didn't mean it that way. All I meant is that she has been hiding something, I can feel it. It has to do with the Alpha, too, but for the life of me I can't figure it out. She needs a good punishment for whatever it is that she has done.

"It's okay, no need to apologize. You have your reason to dislike your own Luna, and you don't need to explain yourself.

"Well then, shall we move on?" He grins at me.

"Yes, we shall." Cam and I turn and follow Keenan towards the training field.

After a grueling day of almost getting my *handed to me by Keenan himself, I call it quits right around supper time. I wasn't planning on training but after today's events, I felt as though I could use some training time to release my frustrations.

It isn't until we are getting ready to take off that I see the same jeep come up the drive. It slows to a stop almost behind my own vehicle, like he was trying to prevent me from leaving. Little does he know that I am good at maneuvering myself around things. Declan jumps from his vehicle and he's moving quickly towards me, "Quinn..."

*Alpha Declan..." I address him formally because it may be the only way to keep myself away from him. I see him flinch at his title.

"It's been a long time."

"Yep, it has. I hear you're having a baby, a little boy. Congratulations."

"Uh yeah, thanks." He itches the back of his neck, which he does whenever he is nervous.

"Well, we better get going. I've got a lot to do back at my pack. It was so nice to see you, Alpha." I jump behind the wheel and close the door, not letting him say another word to me,

He really knows how to get to me. Just as I start up my car and put it into drive, he mouths the words 'I miss you' and I can't help myself, I smile sadly back and mouth, 'me too!

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CHAPTER 37

Seeing Declan that day made my heart ache all over once again. I wanted so much to stop my car and get out, just to throw myself into his arms, but I knew better. It was enough that he came back to see me once more before I left. Not that I know that that's the reason he returned, but I like to think it was.

Since that day. I've thrown myself into pack business and training once again. There are rumors of another pack attacking other packs in search of this legendary Dire wolf once again. Wasn't one psychotic pack enough? Now we have to deal with it all over again? The only positive thing about this news is that this pack is in the Midwest and nowhere close to the Eastern side of the states, but we can never be too careful.

It's been a few weeks since I was at the Storm River pack, and so it's been a few weeks since the Alpha of that pack became a father. Gavin still visits and we've become really close, but it annoys me that he insists on keeping me updated on his cousin's fatherhood progress. I don't think he means anything by it, but it still irks me.

Gavin is here visiting with me today, and as we take our usual walk around the border, he surprises me by taking my hand in his. I don't say anything, and I don't pull away. It actually feels nice. We walk mostly in silence after he takes my hand, but when we come to the clearing by the lake, he stops and turns to me.

"Quinn, you know how I've felt about you since day one," he begins and I go to cut him off, but he stops me, "Please, just let me say what I want to say and then you can turn me down all you want." He smiles sadly.

That's what I like about Gavin, he never took offense of me turning him down in the beginning, and he has remained a true friend to me. I don't know what Declan has against his cousin, but all I see is a true gentleman and a great friend, so I nod and let him continue.

"Like I was saying, you've known how I've felt, and I know you were waiting for your mate, so I stepped aside and became your friend instead." He stares down at my hand in his and runs his thumb back and forth over the top of it before returning his gaze back to me, "It's been almost a year, and you still haven't found your mate; most she-wolves find them shortly after. Have you ever thought that maybe you are that minority that the Goddess Selene left to choose their own?

I don't think of it as that way, just that I was forgotten, but what Gavin says makes sense. I grin, "I never thought of it that way, but still, what if my mate is too busy leading a pack or helping to run one?" Usually, Alpha females are either fated to an Alpha or a Beta with Alpha blood in them, "They may just be too busy to come looking for me."

"Do you honestly believe that. Quinn?"

My grin fades, I cannot lie to him, so I shake my head, "No, Gavin, I don't." It's my turn to study our hands now, but he lifts my chin back up.

Before I know it, his lips are lightly pressed against mine. They aren't demanding, only testing, maybe to see what I would do. The thing is, I'm not sure what I want to do. I know I can't have who I want, but I know that I am becoming lonely. Do I take a chance with Gavin?

When I don't push him away, he brings his hand up to cup my face and licks the seam of my lips. Hesitantly, I open my mouth for him, slowly, and his tongue pushes through just as slow. He's not pushy at all, and because of that, I open myself up to him a bit more.

*his shirt in my hand, I kiss him back. He doesn't try to take any more than I'm willing to give, and all too soon, he's pulling away. I open my eyes and stare into his green ones as he looks down at me. His eyes are full of lust, but he keeps himself in check.

'What are you doing, woman?' My wolf asks.

'What does it look like I'm doing?' I ask with an inward eyeroll.

'Well, it looks to me as though my human counterpart is a little *!' Tala snorts.

'What would you have me do, Tala? Have us live alone our whole lives?'

"No, I want you to go get our man!' She lectures.

And who would that be, Tala, huh?'

'You know very well who I am referring to!' My wolf scoffs at me.

'And you know very well that he isn't available! I am not going to be a homewrecker, Tala! Lila has first rights to him. The only one who would have more rights is his true mate and that isn't us!"

"So, you're just going to go around kissing every male that you come across?"

"You know that isn't true! Gavin is only the second male that I have kissed! Besides, I thought you liked Gavin and Mace?"

'I did when I thought they were only our friend.'

"I'm not saying that this is going to go anywhere, and I won't have sex with him, just in case our mate does come along, but I'm not going to stand around and be lonely while everyone around me is finding their mates!"

"Fine, whatever! You do whatever you want anyway. I'll just take a back seat and watch as you * up.' Tala then turns and shows me her 9*end as she moves to the far back.

"UGH! Wolves, I tell you!"

Tala shows me an image of a middle finger before she blocks me out completely. –

Without thinking on it anymore, I reach up and pull Gavin's mouth back to mine. His hand releases mine only to move around my waist and pull me closer, but he still isn't demanding. I'm not sure how long we stand here kissing, but when I finally pull away, it's only because I am breathless.

"Well, that went better than I thought it would." He chuckles.

I tilt my head, "What do you mean?"

"To be honest, I thought I was going to get a slap across the face."

I smile at him and shrug. "I'm in a generous mood." I wink and then take his hand in mine once more and continue walking.

"Is it too much to ask for you to have dinner with me tomorrow?" The Alpha heir asks sheepishly.

I giggle at the adorable way that his cheeks flush when he asks, "No..."

"Oh, I see. That's okay, we can remain friends..."

I stop and grin at him, "I mean no, it's not too much to ask, silly."

His eyes light up with the realization that I'm not turning him down, and he hugs me excitedly, "Thank you, Quinn. I promise to be the perfect gentleman."

I laugh, "I never worry about you not being a gentleman, Gavin. You have always been a great friend, and a very patient male. I can't promise that this will go anywhere, though, so please don't be mad if it doesn't turn out the way you want it to."

"No worries, Quinn. I'm just happy to be able to have a chance, that's all."

Surprisingly, I have no apprehension about going on a day with Gavin. I thought maybe I would, but I'm kind of looking forward to it; my very first date. Declan's face pops into my mind, and I know it's Tala doing it, but I still get a pang of guilt, even though there is nothing to be guilty about.

glance at Gavin, "How about we let our wolves run for a bit. Mace and Tala haven't played for a while."

"Mace would love that!" Gavin agrees.

step behind a tree to undress and as much *that Tala was doing, she's all excited to run with Mace. When I question her about it, she ignores me and comes forward, pushing me to the back as she takes over.

When we come out from behind the tree, Mace is already waiting for us. Tala pounces on him and they both go rolling before Tala jumps up and takes off, Mace follows, nipping at her heels. We fly through the forest together, jumping and swerving around trees and boulders. Tala has always been fast but could never keep up with a male. Now, her and Mace are running side by side, and unless Mace is slowing his pace just so we can keep up, Tala has gotten much faster.

We come to a skidding halt when we both get a whiff of blood. It's not old blood either, this is fresh blood. Lifting my nose into the breeze, 1 take off in the direction in which it's coming from. Mace isn't too far behind me, as we run towards the scent. It becomes familiar the closer we get to the spot. When we are right on top of it, we stop and look around, but all we find is a puddle of blood. I happen to glance up, and then gasp.

Hanging upside down from a tree branch is a she-wolf. Her hands tied behind her back and beaten black and blue. The blood is coming from claw marks and a deep *in her abdomen. Tala lets out a howl and I mind link both Spencer and Cam to come, and to bring a hunting party. If the *who did this is still in the area, then hopefully they can find him.

As wolves, we are always changing into wolf form unexpectedly and so there are spare clothes stored throughout the forest. I go searching for the marked areas as Gavin changes back and climbs the tree to cut the poor woman down. I stay close in case the *is still in the area. Only finding one change of clothing, I throw the shirt on, which comes to the middle of my thighs, and bring the basketball shorts back to Gavin

He's already got the she-wolf down by the time I return, and I toss him the shorts as I kneel beside the woman to check for a pulse. A choked cry erupts when I find no sign of a pulse and tears roll down my cheek. Looking closely at the woman, I move some hair from her face, and both Gavin and I gasp at the same time. We both know the she-wolf, and even though she isn't part of my pack or his, she was a

member of the Sun River pack, Deke's pack. She was the Beta's eldest daughter.

I turn my head away and Gavin pulls me in close, "The *went after a high-ranking family! This is not going to be pretty. We should have your Beta call Deke and let him know so he and his Beta can get here as fast as they can."

Inod, and then mind link Spencer, telling him to call Alpha Deke and let him know about our findings. Once I'm done, I glance back at the woman. She is actually the same age as I am and I've talked to her at plenty of gatherings when I was younger, before my parents died. With all the markings, I wonder if she was sexually assaulted as well. Moving away from Gavin, I go towards her lower half and start to spread her legs but stop as I glance at Gavin. He understands what I'm doing and then turns his head away.

As soon as I have her legs open, though, my hand flies to my mouth and I quickly close her legs back up. Backing away, I stand up and move to the closest tree so I can empty my stomach.

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CHAPTER 38

Declan

Holden Storm arrived a week early and gave his mother one hell of a ride during delivery. After twenty-six hours of labor, she was able to push out the eight-pound, four-ounce little heir. I was in total awe of my son from the moment he was born. I was hoping to see some of myself in him, but he looks like his mother. The only thing that could possibly be mine would be his eyes, but his mother has brown eyes as well, so yeah, he's all his mother. It doesn't make me love him any less.

He's a handsome little guy, though. Even Dr. Langley said that he is the best-looking baby that he's ever delivered. He's definitely going to be a ladies' man when he's older, I'm going to have to teach him to stay far away from the women like his mother. Of course, I won't name her personally, but you get the gist of it.

I'm a very hands-on father and I do whatever needs to be done to make sure all of my boys' needs are taken care of. I am the one that gets up with him during the night for his feedings, as long as Lila has pumped enough for me to feed him without having to wake her up. I've temporarily moved Lila into the Luna's Quarter's making sure that I stress the point that it is only temporary. Only until Holden starts sleeping through the night, then it's back to the second floor for her.

It's already been a few weeks since we brought my son home and he's already grown so much. Unless he is eating, sleeping, or I'm away on pack business, you can always find him in my arms. It doesn't matter how much book work I have; I will have him in one arm while I write with the other. My son will never go without knowing what a father's love is. My father was the best, and I plan on being just like him for my own son.

I'm in my office blowing raspberries on Holden's tummy when my cell rings. I glance over and see that its Deke calling me, so I put it on speakerphone, "What's up, Cuz?" I blow more raspberries.

"I need you to meet me at the border of Dark Moon's territory, if you're not busy." My cousin states, stopping me in mid-blow.

"Why are you going to Quinn's territory?" I ask, as a bad feeling comes over me.

"Her Beta called and informed me that while Alpha Quinn was out for a run, she came across a dead she-wolf hanging from a tree. She believes it's my Beta's eldest daughter." He explains with a heaviness in his voice.

"Of course, I will meet you. I will leave as soon as I find Lila, so she can take Holden."

"Thank you, Declan. I wouldn't ask you, because of your situation, but I think I may need help once my Beta realizes that it's his daughter."

"You didn't tell him?" I ask.

"I didn't know how accurate Alpha Quinn is, so I didn't want to upset him over nothing. All I told him is that it's one of my pack members." He sighs.

"I understand. I will see you soon, Deke." I hang up and head out of the office to find my son's mother. When I don't find her anywhere, I go looking for my

mother and find her stepping up onto the back porch, "Have you seen Lila? Deke needs my assistance with something, and I can't find her anywhere."

"She told me that she had a check-up at the clinic."

"Huh? I thought she just had one last week?"

"I don't know, Declan, she mentioned something about test results, who knows with her. She sighs, and raises her arms, "Give him here. He can visit grandma while you're gone."

Are you sure?"

She glares at me, "Give me my grand pup right now!"

Chuckling, I hand my son over and kiss both him and my mother on the forehead, "Thank you. I'll try not to be too long."

She waves me off, "Take your time. I don't ever get much time with Holden because someone is always monopolizing him."

"Okay, okay." I back off, and then turn and head toward the garage. My Tesla is in need for some fresh air, so I grab the keys and head out.

Driving my Tesla compared to the Jeep that I bought right before Holden was born is way different. I feel so much more at home in my baby. I press down on the gas pedal and take off, kicking up a little bit of dust as I leave my town.

I meet my cousin in the designated area and then together, along with his Beta, we make our way to where Beta Spencer instructed deke to meet them. As we get closer, I can smell her apple *scent, but then there is another scent that has my hackles rising.

When we approach the area that we are supposed to meet at, my attention goes to the woman in the over-sized shirt and blood all over her hands. Beside her is my *piece of *cousin in only a pair of shorts, so I'm assuming that they were out running together.

Quinn's head whips around and our eyes meet. Before I can try to convey anything to her, she turns away from me and walks over to Deke who had gone on ahead of me, anxious to see the body. A cry is torn out of his Beta as he drops to his knees and hugs his daughter's body to his chest. My own

heart aches for the Beta, now that I know what it's like to love a child. They are your whole world, and to have them ripped from you, especially in the callous way that his was, it's unthinkable.

I watch as Quinn pulls Deke aside and talks softly to him, so I go over to my other cousin who is standing off to the side, looking dismally at the Beta. Yeah, like he really *cares. I stop right beside him and cross my arms in front of my chest as I sweep over all the Dark Moon pack members that are here.

"What are you doing here?" I growl softly.

He looks over at me and raises a brow, "I was visiting my friend, if you must know."

"Don't you mean trying to get down her pants?" i look over at Quinn's appearance, "Or should I say, up her shirt?"

"*you, Declan." Gavin starts to move away but my hand shoots out quick and stops him.

"If Quinn so much as drips a tear from her eye because of you, I will tear you to pieces. Cousin or not, I will end you." I snarl as I warn him.

He rips his arm away from me, "Dear cousin, don't be taking *out on me because you *up and lost your chance with an amazing woman. Believe me, I will not follow in your footsteps, she means too much to me."

He walks away before I can get another word in, but his own words bother the *out of me. Is there something between them? I knew they have always been close, but has it turned into something else? When I feel a pair of eyes on me, I look up and see a pair of gorgeous blues eyes turned my way. There is a crease between her brows, telling me that she's confused about something. I want to go to her, but she turns away too fast.

Alpha Deke,* Quinn speaks up, "You have my pack's support in this. My men will continue to look for the perpetrator, and you are more than welcome to send your own men if you want."

*Thank you, Alpha Quinn. Any and all help will be welcome in finding this *and thank you again for contacting me right away." Deke shakes Quinn's hand.

"What confuses me," Quinn looks around the area, 'is that there was no other scent around when we got here and it was obvious that she hadn't been here that long, so the person's scent should still have been present."

"They most likely covered their scent, as to not be found out." Gavin interjects.

"Like Jasper... Quinn whispers loudly.

"Like whom?" Deke asks.

"Jasper, Alpha Luther's son. He's the one that kidnapped me from the Luna Ceremony," she glances at me, "Later on he admitted to covering up his scent. Do you think this could have been him?"

"It could have been anyone. Anybody can get access to the spray that covers our scent up." Deke says.

"Yeah, but who else would leave the body on Quinn's territory?" I ask myself.

"I don't like this, Declan.' Duke states with a growl.

I'm with you, wolf. Something isn't quite right.' I respond back.

'We have to protect her at all costs! Duke is beginning to get worked up.

'I would love to, but I don't think she will allow me to help in any way.'I say frustrated.

'Well then do it in a way that she doesn't know, because Quinn and Tala must be protected!"

Calm the fuck down, Duke! I will never allow harm to come to her again.'I glance towards Gavin. I will even protect her from him if I have to, somehow, some way.

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CHAPTER 39

I'm not expecting to see him, so when I get a whiff of his scent, my head whips around and our eyes meet. **, every time I see him, my insides melt. I

have to figure out how to put up a wall when I'm around him. I make sure that I don't go anywhere near him as I talk with Alpha Deke. I know Declan is trying to tell me something with his eyes, but I don't want to know what it is.

I noticed the way his expression hardened, and his jaw clenched when he saw that I'm with Gavin, but he needs to get over it. He has his own Luna and his own little family to worry about now. It's time he lets me have my little bit of happiness wherever I can find it. I don't owe him any explanations as to why I'm with his cousin.

When everything is set and Alpha Deke's Beta's daughter is removed from sight, I let the Alpha know that they can take their time, in case he wants to look around the area for clues as well, before he heads back to his own territory. I turn to Gavin and ask if he's ready to head back or if he was going to stay with his cousins.

He glances at Deke and then at Declan, and smiles sadly, "Nah, they wouldn't want me hanging around. As you can see, we aren't that close."

I can sense the sadness in his voice and in his demeanor. He's jealous of the relationship that the other two have and feels left out. I reach my hand out and take his, lacing my fingers through his as I turn back to the other two Alphas.

"We are going to head back. Let me know if you need my assistance with anything." I smile at Alpha Deke as he nods his head at me and says goodbye, but Declan is glaring at where Gavin's hand is laced with mine, "Alpha Declan, nice to see you again. It's unfortunate that it was under these circumstances."

I turn to walk away, but his voice stops me, "It's always a pleasure, Quinn." I hear the true meaning behind his words and my head turns slightly to the side, indicating that I heard his every word, but I don't turn to meet his eyes this time. Nodding my head in response, I walk away, dragging the Alpha heir behind me.

Cici is helping me get ready for my date with Gavin. For some reason I'm a bit nervous, and I don't understand why. Gavin and I have been friends for almost a year now and are very comfortable in each other's presence. Maybe it's because we are taking our relationship in a different direction, or maybe it's because deep down I feel a bit of guilt. I have nothing to feel guilty about, except for maybe dating the cousin of the Alpha who took my virginity, and who he hates with a passion.

"Will you keep still already?" My friend lectures me, "If I burn you then it's your own fault!"

"Sorry! I'm just so nervous..."

She stills for a moment and stares at me through the mirror, "What's there to be nervous about? Gavin has been crushing on you since your eighteenth birthday party. I hardly doubt you can do anything to chase him away at this point." She continues to curl the piece of hair that she had started on before pausing, "Besides, he's hot as *, girl!"

I chuckle. She's right on all accounts, but I wonder if him looking a lot like his cousin is the reason why I'm willing to give him a chance. I'd like to think that I'm not that shallow, but these days, I just don't know.

"I'm just worried about getting close and then my mate comes along, and I end up breaking Gavin's heart. He's been such a great friend; he's got the number three spot after you and then Summer."

"You said that you already warned him about all that, didn't you?"

"Well yeah, but..."

"No buts, then! You are going to go out on this date and then another and then another, and you're going to enjoy all of them. If your mate comes, then we will deal with it at that time. Don't stop living your life because your mate is too lazy to leave his territory to come find you."

I love my best friend, but I wonder where she comes up with half the *that comes out of her mouth. I laugh out loud and then agree with her just to appease her, and well, she's holding a very hot curling iron next to my scalp.

"Okay, I will keep an open mind while I'm with Gavin."

"Don't forget to take some baby blockers, you can never count on a male to have one on him at all times." My friend is dead serious when she says this to me.

"I said that I would keep an open mind, NOT open my legs, Cici!" I say incredulously, I'm not having sex with Gavin!"

Now she looks confused, "I thought that's what this date was about, so you could get laid and forget about You Know Who?"

I wish I had never told Cici about Declan, but as my best friend, it's in the rules that I must share everything with her, and she must share everything with me. Now, she continues to bring the situation up, but at least she isn't trying to talk me into being Declan's mistress like she was at first.

"Come on, Quinn! Most Alphas who are forced to take a Luna usually have a Mistress, and they are treated better than the Luna herself!" My friend had said back then, "Declan's pack loves you and will accept you as his Mistress before ever accepting Lila as his Luna. They will respect you more.

That is the exact reason why I left and refuse to let anything else happen between us. Yes, Lila **up and has to live with being disrespected, but I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I was part of her being disrespected. I don't want the Mistress title either; I'm an Alpha, not a **.

"You're wrong, Cici. I'm not dating him because I want to get laid. I'm comfortable around Gavin, and I want someone that I can cuddle with sometimes or kiss. I don't know where it will lead, but I'm trying to keep an open mind about it. My nineteenth birthday is right around the corner, and I plan on making a decision at that time on whether or not I want to get more serious with Gavin. By then, I'll give up in finding my mate."

"Well, whatever you decide, you know I'm behind you one hundred percent." She smiles at me from behind, "Viola, another masterpiece from the amazing Cici Stone..soon-to-be Cici Neely."

I giggle, "How is mated life? We don't get to talk much about you and Spencer."

"Oh, you don't want to hear about us." She waves the suggestion away.

"Yes, I do. You're my best friend and I'm here for you just like you are for me." I remind her as I take her hand in mine.

"No, I mean, you don't want to hear about me and Spencer, because you will get jealous from all the hot sex we have every chance we get." My best friend throws her head back and laughs.

"Oh, my Goddess, you're absolutely right," I laugh as I roll my eyes, "I don't want to hear about that!" Our laughter dies down and I get a little more serious, "But you're happy right?"

She places her hands on both my shoulders and gives me her famous Cici Stone smile, "I'm extremely happy, Quinn. I don't know how! lived without having him beside me before."

My stomach lurches, but I'm happy for my friend, "I'm glad that at least one of us are able to find real love and be happy." I don't say this in a sad way either, I'm truly glad that she found her mate.

"You will find your happiness too, Quinn, I promise." Cici hugs me from behind momentarily before jumping away, "Enough stalling! Gavin will be here any minute and you are still practically naked. Unless you want him seeing you this way, I suggest you go put some clothes on."

"Okay, geesh!" I chuckle and go into my ensuite where my outfit is waiting.

Gavin took me to a nice Japanese restaurant where the food was amazing, and the company was even better. He talked about growing up in the Blue River pack as the Alpha heir and about how strict his father was on him. I've met Alpha Daniel and so I understand what he means. I didn't care much for the Alpha, but his son doesn't seem to take after him, thank Goddess.

I told him about my childhood with my brother and parents. There were a few tears, but I'm getting better at being able to talk about them now. I even talked about how it was when I was brought into my new pack after the attack. I left out my feelings for my former Alpha, because I don't think it would be appropriate to bring it up on our first date.

Once we leave the restaurant, Gavin takes my hand and leads me down the street to a park that has a little carnival going on. I've never known about this part of the human town. Apparently, they have this small carnival every weekend, Gavin buys us tickets for the Ferris Wheel and then holds the gate open for me to go through. When we are settled, the car jerks forward as it starts to go up but stops to let the next customer on.

The car has a little privacy, with a cover that comes up from the back, and over the top of our heads. Gavin automatically stretches his arm across my shoulders and then pulls me closer to him. He smells nice, like shower gel and

**cream, but I can scent his own underneath it all. He smells like a fresh spring, nestled in the middle of the woods.

"Is this okay?" He asks softly.

glance up and smile. "Yes, Gavin. It's fine and feels nice."

He grins and then leans in to place a kiss on my temple. The car jerks once again as it ascends into the night. We can see for miles when we are at the top. I'm staring at the beautiful sunset when I hear Gavin's soft voice.

"So beautiful..."

I turn and start to nod in agreement, he has other ideas. He holds my head by placing a finger under my chin and slowly brings his lips to mine. The kiss is soft, and yet, a little more demanding than the last time. There isn't any hesitation this time when I open for him. His hand

slides back so he's now holding part of my cheek and the back of my neck. His thumb caresses my cheek as I bring my hand up to hold onto his wrist. My other hand rests on his muscled thigh beside me.

We make out through the whole ride, only breaking away when we hear the people in the car below us unloading and just before our car jerks as it descends to the bottom. I can feel how warm my cheeks are and Gavin chuckles at my slight embarrassment.

He kisses the tip of my nose, "Let's get out of here, and see what else this carnival offers, shall we?"

I smile and nod, letting him take my hand and help me from the small car. He never let's go of me as we walk through the assortment of different stands. From food to games, to rides, this little carnival has everything you need to make a nice first date memorable. Gavin shares a funnel cake with me and then wins me a teddy bear while playing one of the games. Overall, the date is a success.

As we walk back to his vehicle, we take it slow, neither one of us are in a rush to get home. When we reach the restaurant, he's parked right out front, so he walks around to the passenger side and opens my door for me. Before I can get in, though, he moves in until my back is against the frame, and he kisses

me once more. The kiss is brief, but long enough to make my toes curl with the passion it holds in it.

We are both smiling when he pulls away, and then waits until I'm seated before closing the door. I'm still smiling as I take hold of the seatbelt and click it into place. When I glance out the window, I freeze. There, standing just outside the door of the restaurant with a to-go bag, is Lila. She's smirking at me as Gavin gets behind the wheel. I then hide my expression as I turn to him once more and smile.

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CHAPTER 40

I invite Gavin in for a movie since it's still early enough, and he happily accepts the offer. I bring up the streaming channel for him and have him find something while I go and make us some popcorn. Just as I walk into the kitchen I shriek and spin around.

"Get a *room you two!" I'm not really *, but I try to sound like I am as I hold my laughter back, "Others live here, you know!"

"You were out on a date," Cici giggles, "What are you doing back so soon?"

peek over my shoulder and they both have their clothes back on for the most part, "What do you mean? I've been gone for three hours, and now we are going to chill and watch a movie, is that okay?"

The door to the kitchen swings open and Gavin rushes through, looking around the room for something, "I heard you scream, Quinn! What happened?"

I chuckle and point toward my Beta and his mate who are now presentable and no longer half naked, making out in the middle of the kitchen. He takes one look at Cici's messy hair and rosy cheeks, and smirks.

"Go get 'em tiger!" He winks at both of them and earns himself a slap to his chest from me.

"Stop encouraging them! They have a room for that kind of stuff." I chuckle and move to go and get the popcorn started but he grabs me around the waist and pulls me against his chest.

"How fun is it if there is no risk of getting caught?" He leans in and nips at my neck.

I gasp, "Gavin! There are others in the room!" Cici chuckles and then rolls her eyes, "Come on babe," she addresses her mate, "Let's go break in the Alpha's big bed." My best friend is evil!

Spencer chokes out a laugh but allows her to pull him behind her, while Gavin is doing all that he can to cover his own laughter.

"I better not find any bodily fluids on my bed, but my own, Cici Stone!" I call after her, but then realize what I just admitted to and end up turning bright red.

Gavin snickers, and hugs me closer, "No need to be embarrassed, Alpha. We all do it." He whispers into my ear, making my skin break out in goosebumps.

"I didn't mean... I just meant...". I can't seem to finish any of my sentences.

"You didn't mean to admit that you take care of yourself intimately?" Gavin grins, "Maybe one day you won't have to anymore." He takes my lips and kisses me with a desire that I've never seen in him before. He also pulls away before it gets out of hand, and I'm thankful for that, because I'm not sure that I would have been strong enough to be the one to pull away, "Only if and when you are ready, Quinn, no worries." He kisses the tip of my nose and then releases me, "Now, where is the popcorn?"

I'm really happy that Gavin didn't find some sappy chick flick to watch. I don't mind them, but it's not what I want to watch on a first date. Instead, he picked out a newly released comedy that I was planning on watching myself when I got the chance.

T hear my phone vibrate on the table in front of me, and when I check to see who it is, my heart stops. It's Declan. How much do you want to bet that bitch went back and rubbed it into his face that she saw me and Gavin kiss? I ignore it without even opening the message up and then I put my phone on silent. I don't need to explain myself to him or to anybody. I'm moving on and I'm sorry if it upsets him because it's his cousin, but it's my choice, not his.

"You can answer that if you need to." Gavin says as his eyes are glued to the television.

| smile, "No, it's nothing that can't wait." I snuggle closer to him, and he lifts his arm for me to lean into his side. We spend the rest of the movie laughing, relaxing, and just enjoying each other's company.

It's late by the time the movie gets over, "There is a spare room on the second floor if you want to crash." I say nonchalantly.

"Thanks, but I better head home. I've got an early start tomorrow and I'm still trying to prove to my father that I'm ready to take over." He rolls his eyes.

"Okay, well please drive safely."

He pulls me to him and looks down into my eyes, smiling, "Thank you for caring enough. It's been a while since someone has shown they cared for my well-being."

"That's just sad, Gavin." i frown.

He shrugs, "You get used to it in my family."

"Hey, why doesn't Declan like you very much?" Declan would never tell me why, saying it isn't his place, so why not ask Gavin, himself.

"That's a story that is probably best left untold. You know how teenagers do *things, especially when they are wanting their father's approval. Declan just doesn't quite understand the whole story and I shouldn't have to explain it to him." He shakes me a bit, "Hey, it's the past, and if my cousin doesn't like me then there isn't much that I can do about it, is there?".

I only give a half smile, because only half of what he says is true. I know that it hurts him to be shunned by both his cousins; I saw it for myself yesterday. I don't want to make him talk about anything that he doesn't want to talk about yet, so instead, I lift myself up onto my toes and press my lips to his.

"Mm.*" he hums when I open my mouth for him. After a few minutes, he pulls away slowly. Still holding me close at the waist, he brushes some stray hair from my face and smiles down at me. He's got a great smile, with perfectly straight, white teeth, "Thank you for agreeing to go out with me tonight."

"Thank you for dinner and the teddy bear," I grin back at him, "and for picking out a great movie to watch with me."

"I'll take movie nights with you any day of the week, Alpha Quinn." He dips down and pecks me on the lips, "I had better get going, or else I won't leave at all."

I chuckle, "You best be going then." I walk him to the door where he gives me another peck on the lips before walking out to his vehicle, whistling all the way. I smile to myself and then shut the door and bolt it.

I wake up to my phone buzzing beside me on the nightstand. Glancing at the caller ID, my eyes widen when I see Declan's name lit up. I ignore the call and bury myself back under the covers. It's not quite seven in the morning; I can't believe he's calling me now. When my phone starts buzzing again, I yank my phone from the charge cord and answer.

"What in Goddess's name can be so important this early in the morning?" | growl.

"Quinn! Thank *! I've been going out of my mind worrying about you!" I can actually hear the worry in his voice, and I sit up.

"Why, what's going on?" I ask him.

"Another body was found. It was unrecognizable but she had the same hair color as you. Had you not answered in the next fifteen minutes, I was coming to your territory."

"Wait a minute, another body was found? Where?" I ask.

"Right between your border and mine." He replies.

"I'm sorry, I didn't answer your text last night. I was busy, but had I known, I would have texted you back right away."

"Yeah, I didn't think to say why I was trying to get a hold of you, sorry." I hear a small cry in the background and then Declan is cooing.

My heart begins to ache, "I better let you take care of the little guy. Let me know if you need my help with anything, and please, keep me in the loop as to who it is that was found."

"Quinn, I don't..." He starts, and I know he's going to tell me that he doesn't have to hang up, but for my own sanity, I do.

"I'm sorry, Declan, I've got to go. Have a good day." I quickly hang up and then fall back into my pillows. Will it ever get easier to talk to him?