

Broken by One, Desired by All

C – 5

Zane's Point Of View

“Enough.”

The voice cut through the chaos like a blade through silk, cool, sharp, commanding. The whispers of the crowd fell into instant silence.

I blinked against the dimming light of the magic circle still humming around me, shielding me like a fading heartbeat. My vision was hazy, but I saw them... figures in blue uniforms gliding down the temple steps with an air of untouchable grace and confidence.

They wore matching midnight coats embroidered with silver thread, arcane sigils stitched down their sleeves like sacred tattoos. Their boots gleamed, their eyes sharp.

Pure humans.

Every werewolf in the courtyard shifted slightly at their arrival, some with tension, others with restrained distaste. I could feel it, a deep, unspoken rivalry simmering beneath the surface.

The one in front was tall, his stride calm and deliberate. His hair was obsidian-black, tousled in a way that seemed almost too perfect to be accidental. His eyes were a shade of amber-gold, not fiery like a wolf's, but burning with a quiet kind of wisdom. His face was angular, carved like a statue, and though he barely spoke above a whisper, everyone listened.

He was beautiful in a way that made you forget to breathe.

“You know the law, Mark,” he said coolly, voice soft but unyielding. “No fighting inside the sacred grounds. Or do the wolves intend to disgrace even the Temple of Ignis?”

Mark froze, his lip curling, but he said nothing. Even he wasn't stupid enough to challenge the Blue Order.

The boy knelt beside me, brushing his coat back. His touch was gentle but firm as he placed a hand on my shoulder. Warmth flooded my aching muscles. The tension that had tightened my chest began to ease.

“Can you stand?” he asked.

I nodded weakly. “Y-Yeah. I think.”

He offered me his hand. I hesitated. No one had ever done that for me, not without wanting something in return. But something in his eyes made me believe this was different.

I reached out.

He pulled me up with surprising strength, steadyng me before I could stumble. I gasped, clutching my side as the pain caught up to me.

"Don't push yourself," he said gently. "You took quite the beating."

"Thanks," I muttered, embarrassed. "I'm... Zane." He smiled. "Miles. Captain of the Blue Order." Captain? He couldn't be more than a year or two older than me.

But his presence... his energy... it was different. Controlled. Centered.

But before I could ask his name, the sound of chanting echoed through the air.

Professor Rhyel stood at the front of the temple steps, raising both arms as an ancient incantation filled the courtyard. Runes on the ground pulsed in response, forming a radiant spiral around the altar in the center.

"The time has come!" Rhyel's voice boomed, magnified by the temple's energy. "Step forward, those chosen by heirloom! Prove your bond to the arcane, and awaken what lies within!"

The ritual had begun.

The air turned electric. A shiver ran down my spine.

Mark's voice cut through the tension with cruel delight.

"Well? What are we waiting for?" he barked, smirking as he walked toward me. "Let the mutt go first. Let's see what kind of 'legacy' he's got in that pathetic bloodline."

I stared at him. Every bone in my body screamed not to engage. To wait. To think. But my pride, what little remained, spoke louder.

I stepped forward.

The crowd murmured.

Whispers.

"That's the one who got shielded."

"Is he even full-blooded?"

"Looks weak. He won't last a second."

I ignored them all.

Each step toward the altar felt heavier than the last. My heart pounded like a war drum in my chest. The glowing runes around the platform beckoned me forward.

The relic pulsed in my palm.

My mother's watch.

I took a deep breath, placed it in the center of the altar, and closed my eyes.

'Please... please let this work.'

The energy surged.

Runes rose from the ground, wrapping around me in tendrils of golden flame. I felt heat. Power. My blood burned. My breath caught in my throat as the air cracked with magic.

The crowd held its breath.

The altar trembled.

Come on... And then... Nothing. The runes fizzled out. The light dimmed. The warmth vanished. The air went cold. Dead. Empty. Silence. I opened my eyes. Stillness. The altar rejected me.

No connection.

Rhyel looked down, a frown tugging at his lips. "Candidate... failed." The words struck harder than Mark's fists ever could.

Laughter erupted from behind.

"Of course," Mark barked. "I called it. No power. Just a pretty light show from a broken toy." Others snickered, some whispering behind their hands.

I stood there, frozen.

Ashamed.

Why?

I wasn't good enough. Not strong enough. Not worthy. I stepped down, my feet like stone. Miles was watching me. His expression was unreadable now.

I didn't want pity.

I didn't want anything.

Just to disappear. I walked past Mark, who leaned in and whispered:

"Told you. You don't belong."

I sighed, staring down at the watch, and all I could feel... Was failure.

I stood there like a statue made of shame, every whisper around me louder than the last.

Failure.

That word echoed in my skull like a curse I couldn't erase.

I didn't cry. I wouldn't. But the tightness in my throat, the heat burning behind my eyes, it was too familiar. The same feeling I'd known growing up in the shadows. Always overlooked. Always not enough.

Even now.

Even here.

Mark strutted past me, grinning from ear to ear like a wolf who'd cornered his prey. "Aww, poor pup," he said loud enough for the crowd to hear. "Looks like the temple didn't think much of your mongrel blood."

I didn't move.

Didn't speak.

But gods, I wanted to.

He turned to the altar, rolling his shoulders with theatrical ease. "Let me show you how a real heir does it."

He stepped into the circle, dropped his crimson fang-shaped heirloom onto the pedestal, and smirked as if the magic already bowed to him.

Light surged immediately.

The flames danced around him like they recognized royalty. The runes flared so bright they painted the sky in scarlet. The energy pulsed... strong, aggressive, raw. Magic poured from the altar like blood from a fresh kill.

The crowd cheered.

Show-off.

When the ritual ended, Mark turned, triumphant.

And then his eyes locked on me again.

“Take a good look, half-breed,” he called out, his voice dripping with venom. “That’s the last thing you’ll see before they kick your talentless ass out of here. Hope you enjoyed your little fantasy.”

More laughter.

My fists clenched.

Before I could speak, or throw a punch I didn’t have the strength to land, another shift in the air silenced everything. A rumble. A pressure like something ancient had just walked in.

The temperature dropped.

The air grew tight.

Then I saw them.

A new group emerging from the opposite temple gate, tall, lean figures in dark red uniforms, marked with deep black thread shaped like fangs, claws, and battle scars. Their boots were caked in dried mud and their expressions were anything but kind.

Pure-blooded werewolves.

Every one of them radiated danger... feral, untamed, proud. They didn’t walk. They prowled. And at the front of the pack was him.

He looked like war itself... tall, broad-shouldered, with silver rings piercing one ear and a jagged scar running down his right cheek. His eyes were a stormy steel-blue, cold and unreadable, and his jet-black hair was a tousled, spiky mess that somehow made him look even more dangerous.

His presence didn’t just demand attention, it commanded it. He didn’t look around. Didn’t smile. Didn’t care. And still, people moved aside like the gods themselves had told them to.

“Ronan,” Miles’s voice rang out from across the courtyard.

He stepped forward, jaw tight, arms crossed.

“You’re late. Again.”

The boy in red... Ronan, tilted his head, slow and lazy, like a predator deciding whether the prey before him was worth killing or not.

“Punctuality,” he said, his voice low and rough, “is for cowards. And obedient little pets.”

Gasps rippled across the crowd.

Miles narrowed his eyes. “You’re in a sacred space, Ronan. Watch your mouth.” Ronan shrugged. “If the gods are offended, they can smite me themselves.”

Arrogant bastard.

I should’ve looked away then. I should’ve kept my head down. But I didn’t. I met his eyes. And everything stopped. The noise. The murmurs. The wind.

Gone.

Only him, standing there, staring at me like I was something he’d never seen before. His cold, dead expression cracked. Subtle. Barely noticeable. But I saw it. His brows dipped. His lips parted slightly. His shoulders tensed.

And I felt it too.

The scent.

Something sharp. Earthy. Spiced like a storm caught in wildfire. It hit me like a punch to the lungs. I inhaled again, helpless to stop myself.

His scent.

The air was saturated with it.

Mate.

The word slammed into me like lightning, and I almost fell back from the force of it.

My vision blurred.

I couldn’t breathe.

No, no, no... this couldn’t be happening. I hadn’t even awakened my wolf yet. I wasn’t supposed to feel anything this deep. This intense. Not until, his eyes locked with mine.

Time cracked.

Everything made sense.

Ronan was my mate.

He stiffened. He must've felt it too. But instead of shock, or understanding, or even warmth, his expression hardened like ice reforging itself.

He turned his head away. Dismissive.

Cutting.

Like he was denying it.