

Denied by Destiny: Trapped in the Shadows of the Mate Bond

- Knox~

His fist flies at me as soon as I have opened the alpha house front door. He was waiting for me...and he wasn't alone.

His fist keeps ploughing into my face and I don't fight back at first...he was pissed off at me and I would let him have this. This was a deserved punch...but the punch was quickly turning into a bloodbath. When he doesn't stop, I start to fight back and push him off me.

He's cut my lip open and I can feel the swelling at my eye already. The metallic taste of blood enters onto my tongue as I lick the corner of my mouth.

"Calm down Jaxon." I warn him, my tone a reminder to him that he needs to keep his anger in check. My wolf and I were expecting a reaction like this...but we weren't push overs.

"Calm down, I brought you here to check on our security...not hook up with my sister. You've lied to me, to us. All this time. I knew it, I knew it the moment I found you two in bed together." I could see the hurt in his eyes, the betrayal he felt at my actions. Him finding us together was news to me, something Josie hadn't told me.

"I didn't mean to break your trust...but.."

"But what?" Jace takes a step closer, his hand landing on Jaxon's shoulder...a reassuring calming technique that would have been missed during his absence.

"But I just couldn't keep away." It sounds corny, but it was the truth.

"Break it off before you break her heart!" Jaxon roars at me, as blood continues to drip down from my lip. His hand balling into a tight fist as he prepares to strike me again.
"Look..I'm not breaking things off with her. It's not like we are just hooking up.."

"It's not?"

"No..." I can feel my own body preparing for impact. My chest is broad, my back is straightening and my own hands were clenching into small balls. I would protect her character at all costs, even if it means beating the shit out of her own triplet brother. Hector, noticing the atmosphere in the hallway taking a sudden turn again, steps forward...pushing through the tension head on. I usually rein in my alpha aura...but Jaxon was now starting to piss me off with his unrealistic demands.

"You've said what you need to say, now let Knox and Josie sort it out themselves." Hector comments now standing next to us both, his watchful eye casting upon his eldest son.

"Aren't you angry?" Jaxon seethes out.

"I was at first but I've had time to let it sink in."

"What the fuck... how long have you known about this?"

"Language!" He growls at Jaxon before continuing.

"I've known for sometime."

"You didn't tell me?"

"Tell you what Jaxon..."

"That my sister was hooking up with one of my best mates. Someone who happens to be ten years older than her."

"What has age got to do with this." Jace smirks from the side, casually leaning back against the wall as if this was all very amusing to him.

"Break it off." Jaxon demandingly growls at me.

"I'm not breaking it off..." I growl back, matching his tone. I wouldn't give her up again, not now I know what she is to me.

"What happens when you leave, what happens when she finds out you can't commit, that you can't give her what she wants." Jaxon jabs a finger at my chest, trying to agitate me. "I'm not ending it Jaxon...I love her."

"You love her?" He scoffs at me.

He's right, the old me would have scoffed also at the notion of me being in love with anybody...but now that I have found her I can't imagine a life without her.

I already nearly had to, and that isn't something I will ever consider being a reality of mine. She is mine and I will be by her side from now on.

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"Why are you being so fucking quiet about this?" He turns on Jace, his anger rising again.

appearance.

"They are both consenting adults, if they both want it...there are more complicated things in the world." Jace responds, shrugging his shoulders. Now wasn't the time to ask, but something was still bothering Jace, something that must have something to do with his new I need to tell them, they need to know that this isn't me just fooling around anymore... that this was it. She was it for me.

"She's mine...she's my mate." I declare to them, my voice strong and steady. Steadfast in my delivery. They needed to know there was no question about my loyalty, my feelings for her...no question of my integrity towards her.

For me, this was it...she was it. She was the one. I'm just more flipping annoyed at myself for not seeing it earlier, for not listening to that gravitational pull to be with her.

"I knew it!" Hector moves towards me, clapping my back almost as if he's been waiting for me to say this. Waiting for me to catch up ever since those words of his in the office, just the two of us. After he caught me sneaking out of her room. "You knew?" Jace rolls his eyes at his Father, seemingly not at all surprised.

"Not much happens around here without me finding out, remember that." Hector's eyes take a turn in holding each of ours in some kind of warning.

"Look, I'm sorry how I went about it, but I didn't want to betray you, yet I just couldn't keep away from her. I never would have done anything to intentionally hurt her."

"That's if she'll have you of course..." Jace winks at me as he joins Hector in placing a hand on my shoulder. It's not a blessing but I'll take it for now.

"Just don't keep things hidden from us." Jaxon sighs out, finally calming down enough to let us talk rationally.

"Does she know that you are mates?" Jace asks me, an unreadable expression forming upon his face.

"She didn't have a wolf a few hours ago, she wasn't even breathing by herself..." I pause, swallowing down on a lump that has formed in my throat. The memory of her lying still in the hospital bed returning to me. How close was I to losing her forever.

"I'm just waiting for it to click." She needs to get used to her wolf first, then she'll realise what we are to one another.

"So you're going to stick around for a bit?" Jaxon asks, his body language becoming less threatening.

"I will need to go back to training head quarters, but yes for now I will stay and sort things out with Josie."

"And then what?" Fuck me, Jaxon was acting like a father. I thought the Dad was meant to be the hard one to crack...not the brothers.

"Jaxon, I really don't know. I haven't thought that far ahead. I've come back to freshen up and return back to the hospital. I didn't want to leave her that long." I missed out the part where I knew they would be waiting for an explanation. He was only just starting to calm down, let's not irritate the beast even more.

"I was also going to put some calls out regarding the human hunters..." I start but Hector cuts me off mid sentence.

"I've put the alliance on alert already, any information you can find out would be appreciated. Let me show you what I've been sent already by the alphas in my inner circle." Hector gestures for me to walk towards his office.

I wanted to get back to Josie but her safety is my number one priority and as a member of this family, of this pack...I would do what I can to keep the Dark Phantom pack safe from another attack.

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- Josie -

A slight pinching pain on my arm wakes me, my eyes opening into a dark hospital room.

This is weird and will take time getting used to. My vision before having a wolf would have struggled in the dark, reaching for the light switch or my phone to enable to torch...but now..I can see everything. As if a soft shine emits from each object...even from people. I can see him, sitting up in a chair, his head lulled to the side...fast asleep.

I turn my head looking for the source of the pinch on my arm, to find Doctor Abel extracting blood from me.

"What are you doing?" I croak out. I was off the fluid drip now but need to remind myself to drink more water. My throat still ached from the breathing tube and the lack of talking over the past few days.

"Did I wake you? I was just going to send some of your blood off for testing. We wanted to check that the levels of silver has reduced, that it was no longer in your system." He informs me with a soft smile to his face as I watch him finish his task in hand and label my blood on the small vial. "What if I do?" I start to panic, sitting up slightly.

"It's highly unlikely, you would be in excruciating pain if you did." He was right, I would be doubled over in pain...my mind seems to have blocked out the pain of being hit by the bullets, something I was thankful for.

"How long has Knox been here?"

"Erm...a couple of hours. He switched over with your Mum and Auntie, he hasn't moved since. Although, I should really see to his eye."

"Why what is wrong with his eye?" I sit bolt upright, unable to control the concern that something was wrong with Knox.

"I think certain brothers might have been surprised by the revelation, we all were." He holds my gaze with his eyes and I'm not sure if he was slightly hurt that I hadn't confided in him or teasing me.

"It happened all so fast... then, well, then I knew it wouldn't be long term so I didn't tell anyone." My head sinks down, my hands playing with themselves as I think back on how heartbroken I was at Knox's rejection. I don't ever want to feel like that again. "It's not for me to pry, but I'm here if you ever need to talk. I thought as well as colleagues...that we are friends."

"We are." I say guiltily.

"Good." He smiles at me as he places my vial of blood in his pocket.

"I'll get these to the labs. Hopefully we can get you back home today."

"Really?"

"I expect bed rest and for me to still check up on you..." He eyes give me a pointed look.

"Of course, whatever the doctor orders." At this point I would agree to anything to get home.

I wait until Doctor Abel is long gone before I move myself out of my bed.

My legs are still a little bit wobbly but I manage to move holding on to the bed and chairs as support. I move towards a sleeping Knox, his soft snores tugging at my heart.

He held his promise to me, he had come back, like he said he would. He has stayed, even when clearly he was exhausted.

I tilt his head slightly to the other side, earning a grunt of protest in his sleep. I muffle a giggle at the sleeping hunk of a beauty...he cute really be cute at times.

My fingers brush across his face. He's already healing, but it doesn't stop the anger starting to boil within my blood.

His lip was cut open and his eye had the distinguishable colouring of having received a hard punch. It had clearly been swollen and was now reducing in size but had bruising remaining. To know he's received this because of me hurts like hell.

If it was the middle of the night, and if my legs weren't struggling to bear my weight I would march home to give Jaxon a piece of my mind.

Yes Jace would have been cross, but Jace doesn't act out...not like Jaxon.

And yet again, it is Knox who receives the brunt of Jaxon's anger.

Unbelievable, I'm go to kill Jaxon the next time I see him.

Using the doorframe and the corridor walls for support as I move in the dimly lit hospital. I move to my store room, searching for a bottle of my skin healing lotion.

I reach up, pulling my chest and wincing out in pain, falling back down to the floor. I shouldn't have done that...I mentally scold myself rubbing my chest to ease the pain.

I scan the shelves, Sod's Law that the pot I need is on the top shelf.

Standing back up, I reach up again. Holding my breath and rubbing at my chest to ease the pain I'm almost touching the jar, when I hand comes out of nowhere and easily reaches the top shelf.

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- Josie -

His arm brushes against mine, his breath already on my neck. Tingles erupt across my skin as I watch him reach for the jar and place it down in front of me.

I don't even turn, I know who it is. It is only his scent that would cause such a reaction from my body. A reaction that seems more intense all of a sudden, even harder to fight.

"I knew doctors made the worse patients." My head rolls back exposing more of my neck to him. Suddenly his voice had the potential to command me. I'm not saying I wouldn't fight it, but to fight it would be a struggle.

His voice had a new tone to it, a new weight behind it...something I couldn't quite understand. Something I didn't really want to understand. I just didn't want this feeling of complete rapture to ever end. I was going to enjoy this new Knox for as long as I had him. I'd worry about the heartbreak at a later stage.

"Technically I'm not a doctor." I continue to lean into him, my back curling into his chest as my wolf pushes forward. She seemed to like Knox, so far he was the only male that she would leap forward for. However she has only, through my eyes, seen the men in my family or Doctor Abel. So there wasn't much competition.

"You should be resting...not working." His fingers lace around my waist.

"I'm not working...I wanted to fix what my brother caused." I turn, now pressed against my work top and his brick wall of a body.

"It's nothing, nothing I can't handle and nothing I didn't deserve."

No, he didn't deserve this. Never would he deserve this.

I touch the corner of his mouth gently with my finger tips before trailing my hand up to his eye to touch. He doesn't flinch from my touch but he does close his eye and tense his jaw, a sign that it was still causing him discomfort.

Red molten hot anger starts to boil within me again...

"Wait until I see him."

"No..." He grips the side of my wrist, his head shaking in protest.

"It is done, we have handled it in our way." His eyes seek into mine, he wants me to reassure him that I'll drop this.

I sigh out, instantly calming him but I won't let this go. It wasn't fair, I was just as much to blame..what was Jaxon going to do...hit me as well? No, then why does he think it is okay to punish Knox.

"Well...as you are here now, in my nest of remedies..." I hoist myself up on the worktop, pulling him in closer to me and wrapping my legs around him to trap him close to me. He doesn't fight against me in fact his lips are almost on mine before I place a small amount of my remedy at the corner of his mouth.

"I'm sorry." I whisper out as I blend the remedy into the wound.

"Listen to me, you have nothing to apologize for. Compared to the emotional torment you've put me through...this...and this..." He points at his lip and at his eye as I apply cream there also.

"..is nothing."

"So..."

"So..." He repeated, raising an eyebrow at me.

"Emotional torment hmm?"

"Emotional hell more like." His chin tilts up just as I finished dressing his eye area.

"So...what are we to one another now? Because since waking up...things have suddenly gone full speed. My family now know, you're touching me in public..." I guess what I wanted to ask him was at what point will he duck out again. At what point will it become all too much again.

"Perhaps...I'll let that sink in with you." He smirks at me as his hands move around my lower back to grip at my upper ass cheeks.

"But for now, let's get you back to bed."

"Really? I'm bored of rest...and I've got an itch."

"An itch that needs scatching eh?"

"Something like that..." I move to his neck, my tongue tasting his skin as I leave lingering open mouthed kisses all the way to his jaw line.

My hand moves down, pulling at his waistband trying to gain entry; a groan escaping him.

"These wandering hands of yours have a way of getting me into trouble."

"I just thought you said trouble was worth it."

"Oh it is...trust me. But.." He cups his hands under my ass completely and lifts me off the worktop and into his arms, my legs wrapped around him tightly. "Rest...we have time. We have all the time in the world." He places a kiss on the sensitive part of my neck as he carries me back to my hospital room.

"But...Knox.." I try reaching for him again, trying to get him in this bed with me only for him to chuckle as he pries my hands off him.

"It's your wolf..how about I lay next to you? But we need to keep it PG clean...there are eyes everywhere here."

What does he mean it's my wolf?

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- Josie -

Stepping into my home wasn't quite the quiet return from hospital I had expected. Word must have gotten out that Doctor Abel had signed me out first thing this morning as long as I promise plenty of bed rest.

He made a point of saying that he would visit to ensure I was following his orders, something that seemed to not sit well with Knox.

As much as I love this hospital, I preferred to be the one giving aid, not the one receiving it.

So, when I step through into the hallway and find banners and balloons screaming out, "Welcome Home", I can't help the smile land upon my face. I thought my return had remained discreet, that everyone would be busy at training. It grew wider when I spotted Jace in the corner next to Mum...happy that he hadn't left yet.

I knew he would, I could feel it, feel that he needed to leave but for what reason I still didn't know.

The identical male only a few feet away from him having the opposite feeling, wanting him to stay.

As soon as my eyes land on Jaxon, I hold his gaze....letting him know without words that he and I would have a private one to one when the time was right.

"Welcome home, how are you feeling?" Dad takes a step towards me, where Knox's hand was still wrapped around my waist. I think he feels that I am going to fall at any moment.

"I'm good, I just missed you all."

"Well Doctor Abel made it very clear you still need to rest, so after a return home breakfast you can go back to bed." Mum orders at me.

"I was thinking..."

"No, absolutely not." Dad cuts me off knowing exactly what I was going to say. That I wanted to try and shift for the first time.

"But.."

"In time Josephina, in time."

After breakfast I spent the rest of the day upstairs in bed. Knox remained with me and even brought his laptop in so that I could watch trash TV shows on catch up.

But I had now had enough of rest, I wasn't a rest type of person. I liked to keep busy, I liked to keep active.

When Knox finally falls asleep during the tenth episode of a TV show, I'm not surprised to hear a creek outside my bedroom door.

Knox has fallen asleep curled up next to me, his arms wrapped around my waist, his small snores gently tickling my ear.

Jaxon pushes my bedroom door open, his eyes rolling into the top of his head at the sight before him.

"I'm not sure I'll ever get used to seeing my mentor like a love sick puppy." His face makes a disgusted expression before moving into a soft smile.

"What do you want?" I grunt back at him, not particularly keen to see him at the moment.

"Come on then..." He whips his head behind him back to the hallway outside.

"Come on what?"

"Let's see what she can do." Jaxon continues, a small smirk gathering at the corner of his lips.

He could obviously sense through our bond that I was eager to meet my wolf. I bet he was just as eager.

"I don't know..Dad said..."

"Since when do you listen to Dad?" Jace appears out of nowhere, his head almost floating in mid air as he curves it around the door frame.

"Leave sleeping beauty. I'm sure we can handle you." Jaxon laughs, elbowing Jace in the chest jokingly.

"Okay then." Excitement floods through me and I know it is a mixture of mine and my wolf's. Both of us were keen to shift, both of us were keen to complete this bond between us.

If Knox wasn't almost on top of me I would have bounced out of bed, instead I slowly move the laptop to the side and untangle his arms from around me.

The house was quiet, Mum and Dad in a meeting with Auntie Alora, Ezra and Beta Riley. Now would be the perfect time to do this together.

We sneak out the back, knowing full well that if we were caught Dad would have something to say to not only me but my brothers.

We were the only ones on the training field. Training had finished hours ago and as the evening starts to set in, it's the perfect timing to try and shift without pack eyes on me for the first time.

I won't lie, I had been feeling anxious at the thought of having to shift in front of the pack for the next pack run, especially if that would have been my first time.

Coming out here with Jaxon and Jace, meant I was able to shift in a safe environment. I could shift without pressure of not meeting the pack's expectations.

"Okay..." We form ourselves into a triangle formation.

"...So, how do I do this?"

"Do you feel some kind of barrier between the two of you?" Jace asks.

"Yes, it's like a veil...a doorway that I'm trying to keep closed but the material covering it is too weak still, she can push through it...like fabric." I respond, not caring if what I say makes no sense whatsoever.

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"Good, so you'll need to work on trying to make that veil firmer...like an impenetrable door. That only you can grant access to..." Jace continues. "Okay...I can work on that."

"Remember you are connected to each other, but the human side is the commander. You command the wolf, not the other way around. Otherwise your wolf will gain too much power and will fight back each time." His words make me pause for a moment...could wolves do that. "Okay." My head was spinning around from Jace's words. I had to control the wolf side...how the hell do I do that.

"Don't worry Sis, it will come naturally to you. You have nothing to fear." Jace's words of encouragement boost my spirits.

"Thanks." I nod in appreciation at his reassuring words.

"You'll feel your wolf push through that barrier each time she wants to communicate with you. And that's fine, you can communicate with the veil closed as long as she is behind it. If she is too far away from it, then you won't be able to feel her as much." Jaxon adds. "Right..."

"But when you start to open the barrier, that's when she can shift. So you need to work on letting that barrier down....but keeping it intact enough that you can call her back at any time and make the shift back into human form."

"Got it.." I start stretching my neck to the side, keen to get started. The more they spoke, the more my confidence about this was declining.

This was it, enough of them talking...I needed to do this now or I don't think I ever would.

I wave my hands out to stop them from talking, to hush their voices...to let me concentrate.

I close my eyes, taking a deep breath in to calm my inner senses. To only think about me and my wolf...that veil.

Mentally it felt like a doorway with a billowing black curtain draped across it. I needed to work on reinforcing that material and making it stronger.

But for now...I was just psyched to have a wolf. To try shifting for the first time.

I can feel her, feel her just behind the veil. She's not pushing through, even though she could...she's waiting, waiting for permission and my heart aches at her kindness, at her patience.

Has she always been waiting, always been waiting in the dark...or has she only just miraculously appeared since I woke up from almost the dead.

I concentrate, channeling all of my energy onto the doorway, onto her. When I see a glimpse of colour...a paw poking through.

"That's it, come on...I won't hurt you." I try to encourage her through my mind as the paw extends to an entire leg. I don't want to scare her away but I also want to let her know this was a safe space for her.

Then a snout pushes through and I'm in awe of what I mentally see in my mind.

She was red, not bright red, more like a brown red...she was beautiful. I've never seen a wolf her colour. Sure there are brown wolves with a tone of red, but her reddish highlights made her stand out, make her distinguishable from all other wolves. She wasn't a white wolf, she was a red wolf.

The black curtain pushes open as her entire wolf frame comes into view, her eyes glowing a brilliant red.

She was exquisite.

We share a moment, a moment between us when neither of us move. I suppose she was probably looking at me the same way I was looking at her. Our first meet.

My brothers have had years to get to know their wolves, whereas this was my first time.

They spent most of their teenage years together, whereas I had my entire adultlife to catch up, to get to know mine.

I feel her push forward, warmth spreading through me, my breath catching as last minute fear spreads through me. What if it goes wrong, what if we get stuck mid shift.

"It's okay, I've got this." I hear her clearly in my mind before she continues to take over. She sounds like me, but she clearly isn't..her voice is deeper, full of confidence.

That feeling of warmth spreads into my bones as I don't feel the pain of a shift, but I certainly hear it. I can also hear the almost unmissable humming of energy around me, which must be the shimmer that appears around each person when shifting. I always thought it was a sign of magic.

I feel a touch of vertigo as my head is swirled from being upright to suddenly down. Nausea almost catching me off guard.

"Open your eyes." I hear Jace whisper out. I follow his words, opening my eyes to find myself in wolf form.

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- Josie -

I felt...liberated.

All these years I tried to push aside the inner hurt of not having a wolf, of being different. And I was happy with that, I was thriving...but now I have her...I can't imagine my life before her anymore.

I never knew what to expect but now that I know what it is like to have the wolf side, I'm wondering how I managed without her before.

Everything was super clear, as if my vision had been upgraded tenfold. I could see small insects moving between the grass in-between her paws. Make out every part of them, no squinting required. This was insane.

Looking up, my eyesight changes without even needing to try; it's gone from microscopic form to long distance. I can see the trees ahead of me as if using a telescope. See the each leaf with clear definition, as if in HD even from this distance.

I can't see them but I can also sense that guards are on the borders, that things are as they should be within the fences of the Dark Phantom pack.

I look to my side, my clothes shredded on the ground next to me. In my haste, I didn't think about removing them, not like my brothers are doing now. I'd have to remember for next time, and keep clothes stashed around the pack grounds. Even the possibility of doing something as simple as that was giving me flutters of excitement in my tummy.

Giving my brothers privacy, my wolf turns, there are still some sights I do not need to see.

When I hear their own bones crack I turn back to find two deep black wolves looking right back at me. It's been a while since I've been in their company.

Usually opting for the cabin during pack runs, and with them away training for a year...simple things like this get forgotten. They were like the darkest shadows of the night, pitch black. Not charcoal like Dad's wolf...no hints of white from Mum's...completely black.

I remember them being larger than other pack wolves...same size as Dad's wolf because they are the alpha heirs but seeing them, in my new form was quite intimidating.

But she doesn't backpedal, she doesn't show any sign of me being slightly apprehensive...she's oozing in confidence.

"You want to run?" I hear a voice push into my head, and at first I have to remember that I'm not hearing things. That I now have access to the pack link, and mind linking was also something I could now do.

It was Jace's voice that had entered my head, keen for us to run together. Something we've never ever, as triplets, as siblings, have done together.

We've shared a womb, we've shared a cot, a home, but never this experience together. It felt fitting now that they were the ones to experience this with me, to be by my side.

"You lead!" Jaxon's voice commands in my head, for once a demand I was happy to comply with.

She leaps into action, her paws bouncing off the soft grass as she sets the pace. Their wolves run either side of her, forming almost a protective shield from prying eyes.

But this was my home pack, these were my people. We run the entire distance of the border, not stopping once. Very quickly it became clear that she was no longer setting the pace, and was the one out of breath trying to keep up with them.

They were experienced, they were lean...they were alpha wolves for crying out loud. But she did really well and as we circled back to the training ground, I could sense the pride emitting off my brothers from my first run with them.

"How was that?" Jace's voice enters into my head as my wolf collapses to the ground, panting with her tongue out the side of her mouth.

"Fantastic. Better than I could have ever imagined...I just need to practice." I had just run the length of the pack borders, something I hadn't never done in my life. I've not even driven it.

"This is incredible Josie, you can now join in on the pack training...no more guns." Jaxon's voice filters into my mind and I make a choice not to comment on the guns. I still planned to head up training on weaponry, having a wolf now meant that I was just as fitting for that role. Why would I stop what I was naturally good at. If anything, the clearer eyesight will only enhance my shooting skills further.

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"Wait until your first pack run..." Jace comments.

"Are you staying around for that? Are you back now?"

"I haven't thought that far ahead." His voice responds too quickly which to me means he has, he just doesn't want to say. He doesn't want to dampen this moment with Jaxon and I.

"Don't let Auntie Alora or Ezra hear you say that, I think their retirement might start with a mating ceremony." I quip through the mind-link.

"Excuse me?"

"Oh my goddess...you haven't heard."

"Heard what?" His wolf turns to mine, undivided attention.

"I caught Auntie Alora and Ezra kissing in the front room during the annual alliance packs party."

"What?"

"Yep, apparently been at it for years."

"No way..."

"Yes so this little wobble of yours better end soon, because Clear Waters will be ready for you to take over soon. Training has officially ended." Jaxon states clearly, his expectations made clear. Jaxon's and Jace's wolves start playfully nip at each other before both start moving back towards their clothes on the ground.

I needed to say something, about Knox, and they were both in such a good mood. Now would be the best moment....right.

"Talking of training..." My wolf finally stands back up, breaking out into a gentle run to catch up with them both.

"Can you lay off Knox, the thing with him and me isn't one sided. If anything I'm the one that coerced him into our arrangement."

"Arrangement?"

"What do you want me to say? Friends with benefits, hooking up...sex..." I laugh out through the mind-link only for that feeling of playfulness between us ending.

"Enough." Jaxon grunts, that flip again between hot and cold. I can't keep up with him any more.

"No, enough with you Jaxon. Stop putting hands on him..." Also stop trying to scare him off.

"You don't even know what you're talking about so drop it."

"I won't drop it..." I defiantly match his tone.

"Josie.." Jace's voice warns me.

"No Jace, what gives Jaxon the right to hit someone just because he doesn't like something. What are you going to do next... hit me, because it took two of us to tango." I seethe through the mind-link, my wolf mirroring my words with a growl. "I said enough!" Jaxon's wolf turns on me, his stance threatening as his menacing aura seeps out of him.

"Easy." I warn my wolf but she literally chuckles back at me, unfazed by his threatening stance. If she had a hand I would imagine her waving it away unbothered.

"He's all smoke...no substance."

"You want to take that risk?" There's one thing Jaxon is and that's not being afraid to back down from a fight.

"I think I can handle him..." Her blasé attitude surprises me and I have a feeling she's got a lot to prove having missed out on so much.

She doesn't back down, now even as his aura increases and he applies it directly to us. I can feel Jace's wolf standing next to me, trying to communicate but Jaxon has frown him out of the mind link, making it just the two of us.

"Let's remember who the alpha is shall we." His voice echoes in my head, a command applied with it that is meant to make me submit. But she doesn't, she holds herself...she is a fighter.

"For fuck's sake Jaxon. Josie...submit." Jace says out loud as I feel his hand stroke the top of my head. I see in my peripheral vision that he has shifted back into skin form.

Jaxon's beast of a wolf prowls closer towards me, each step he takes is meant to drive fear into me. And it does.

"Back down!" He roars through the mind-link, his teeth flashing at me...a sign of aggression. My head wants to lower, I can feel it...feel the weight of the command that he doesn't let up. If anything the more she fights it, the more her head weighs. "Don't make me hurt you."

"He won't!" She reassures me, her voice calm in the face of danger.

"Josie?" I hear him call out to me from the distance, I actually hear them both. Knox and Dad.

I can hear them both shift in the distance just as Jaxon's fangs flash at me again.

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- Knox ~

As soon as my eyes open I know something is wrong.

The fact that Red is no longer next to me and judging by the coldness of the mattress where she had been...she hasn't been next to me for some time.

Step one of my wolf releasing panic into my system but she was in her own pack, in her own home for goddess sake...I can't worry about that. My wolf needs to calm down, he'll feel better...more at ease when I have marked her.

I move with quickened pace down the stairs to find the lower level of the alpha house...empty.

Step two...my wolf was pushing forward, preparing to shift.

The alpha office door was locked which always means it is occupied, having been here for a while now, I'm getting used to the non verbal communications of the Varon-Glace alpha family.

The office is soundproof like most alpha offices, which means I can't be certain that she is in there but with both Jaxon and Jace not hanging around the front room or kitchen, it is mostly likely they are having a family meeting and who am I to pry.

I settle myself in the kitchen, making myself a coffee to help wake me up from my unusual late afternoon nap. More importantly, keeping my wolf preoccupied.

I can't believe I fell sleep. Sleeping in the day was forbidden for me, something I never allowed myself to do.

There was always something to do, and since being alone, sleep has never been a priority for me. But there was something about Red, something that makes me feel secure...safe. It also didn't help that I've been at the hospital non stop by her side, not wanting to miss a moment of her being back with us.

Even when she was unconscious, I didn't want to sleep from fear of something happening whilst I was.

As I pour milk into my coffee and stir to blend the liquid...that ominous feeling hasn't left me. Quite the opposite, in fact it was becoming more powerful. My wolf now aware that

Josie was our mate, didn't like her being out of our sights, especially with the recent attempt on her life. Deliberate or not.

I try calling her mobile but when I hear it ringing from upstairs, panic starts to grip me by the throat and I struggle to fight my wolf any longer.

No, I might not be an official family member yet, but I am her mate...her fated mate and I was designed to stand by her side....so I have no problem in opening the office door without permission.

"Knox? We are in a meeting..." Hector struggles to hide his frustration at my intrusion, something that he must know by now I wouldn't do unless urgent.

"Apologies Alphas. It's just...." I scan around the room to find all three of the alpha triplets aren't in attendance. Fuck...

"I don't know where Josie is and without..." I try to keep my voice calm but it is a contrast to how my inner self is feeling.

"Having the mind-link to her yet...I understand. Well it's comforting to see that her mate is security heavy just like her father. She's..." I try to remain patient, but my wolf is bursting at the seams for an update on her current location. Hector's eyes turn into a mind-link, his eyes glazing over into that telltale sign of communicating through the pack link.

"At the training field with her..." He stops mid sentence, his own face taking on an expression of sudden concern.

"She's shifted..."

"What?" Both Kaia and I ask in unison.

He moves, pushing past me and not even waiting for Kaia who is calling after him from behind. I'm following him like second nature, his sudden running only confirming that dread within me, something was wrong.

We run side by side to the training field where my eyes spot Jaxon's beastly black wolf instantly, Jace in human form standing next to him...when I do a double take.

A red wolf beside them.

It's her, I know it's her. How could it be anyone else.

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"Josie?" I shout out as I push my legs further, before shifting mid air and moving in front of her. Blocking her from the dangerous alpha wolf flashing his teeth in her direction.

What the fuck did he think he was doing...she had only just shifted for the first time.

She was incredible, she was beautiful already but seeing her wolf... if the situation wasn't on the verge of apocalyptic I would let my wolf claim her as his.

I would shift back and use those cheesy words of "Mine" which I hear other male wolves say repeatedly.

I never thought they would be words that I would utter. But now that I know that connection between us is because she is my destiny, that urge to keep her breathing for as long as possible, keep her safe is consuming me. I know it can be much longer before I need to claim her as mine, mark her as mine.

My mindset is to protect, but even from the second of glimpsing her I can see what a goddess she is. Why it has taken this long for her wolf to come to her...perfection takes time.

I move his wolf away from her, I was now a threat to him and as I planned he followed my wolf instead of glaring at hers. My eyes flash to the side, knowing she was safe as Hector's wolf now stood in front of her.

I can't talk to him like this, and I don't want to fight him unnecessarily...I know when to choose my battles. So I shift, hoping that he is in control of his wolf enough to also shift back.

"What do you think you are doing?" I shout at him, taking a step forward to meet his face with mine.

"Teaching my sister how to shift for the first time. Do you mind?" He rolls his eyes at me now in his human form.

"Bullshit, what's with the fangs." I call him out, full well knowing his games of control.

"I was just reminding her who was in charge here."

Anger erupts within me, that he would push her so hard on her first shift. That he would dare to threaten her.

"Put hands on her and I'll fucking rip you to pieces." I seethe out, her brother or not.

"Is that a threat Kit?"

"A promise." My eyes burn into his, my promise made.

"I wouldn't worry Knox...she seemed able to handle herself." Jace calls out to me as I turn to find Kaia walking out to us, a dressing gown in her hands.

"What is going on...oh Josie...you are spectacular." She gasps as Hector's wolf moves away from blocking Josie's slightly smaller wolf. Putting her back in the limelight.

"It would seem our Sons wanted to deprive the pack of Josie's first shifting experience." Hector shifts back into his skin form.

"It wasn't like that Dad, we just didn't want Josie panicking over it. It should be a joyous occasion and now that shifting seemed liked second nature to her, when she shifts in front of the pack for the first time...it will be." "Josie?" Kaia takes a step forward, and I watch in awe as her fingers brush through the reddish brown fur of her daughter's wolf.

"See...we were just supporting her." Jaxon's voice is arrogant...smug. But I don't buy it, I know his wolf sometimes better than he does.

"Next time, make sure I'm present."

"We are her brothers, we know her better than anyone. Who are you to tell me what to do...in my pack." He's a real prick when he is like this, the colder side of him. The wanker side.

"I'm her mate, so next time, back the fuck off." I push his shoulders back, getting him out of my space before I did something I would regret.

I hear it behind me, the unmissable sound of a shift. Of her bones changing into skin form.

"Mate, did you just say I am your mate?" Her voice asks determinedly as I turn to find Kaia placing a dressing gown around her.