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Dawn

My wrists hurt even when I awoke. It was like someone used hot needles to draw a tattoo on both of them.

Groaning, I pushed myself up and forced my eyes open to stare at them. My vision was blurry at first until it cleared up. As soon as I could see clearly, the pain was gone.

I rubbed my wrists testily. There was no sign of pain. My skin was smooth and soft. There were no bumps that showed any indication of the pain I'd felt.

Weird. I thought.

The door flew open and Princess dashed in. I blinked.

What was I doing here? Didn't Rhys tear down that door or did I imagine everything?

"Oh my gosh. You're finally awake." She exclaimed.

"Hi," I croaked.

"I'm really sorry. I shouldn't have allowed you to follow me." She apologized.

"Nah. It's fine. I overreacted." I responded still trying to put the pieces of what happened in the past few days together.

She shook her head. "Overreacted? No. I'm just grateful that you're out of that useless pack."

"Mmmm," I mumbled, then blew a breath and ran a hand through my hair. I didn't want to think about Creekside or remember the things I went through. It was already too embarrassing. I looked out the window and swallowed.

I needed to do better to control my emotions. Recently, it seemed like I was always on the edge and waiting for an opportunity to explode. This wasn't me. The old me endured the worst punishment without any reaction. My wolf may have always raged within but never showed. I blamed Alex.

His and my parents' final betrayal broke something within me. I need to fix

whatever it was quick. Because I couldn't be throwing tantrums at every instance.

An echo of that old Alpha's voice rang in my head, taking me back to what happened while I was unconscious.

What'd it mean? What was he doing there? Why would I see him of all people? What were those two wolves? I'd never had any relationship with the Old Alpha.

The day I was sold was the first time I stood in his presence. So why did I see him in my dreams? Was that a dream or a trance?

My head was spinning. My eyes fluttered close and immediately, the pain in both my wrists returned. I stifled a hiss and wrenched my eyelids open. My breaths were coming in hard and heavy. I rubbed both wrists and felt nothing.

"I cannot begin to imagine how hard it was for you," Princess muttered. "Rhys may not have a therapist but I do. Whenever you're set free from him, I'll take you with me."

"No!" I blurted, my voice raising slightly. She stared wide-eyed at me as I tried to form words to say to her. I didn't want to go anywhere. I didn't feel anywhere but here. With Alex now the Alpha of Creekside and having access to immeasurable power, I didn't want to leave Golden Crest. I was scared that he might try to find me to continue his torment.

The thought that Sophia was now Luna had me trembling. It hurt that she got everything she wanted. Alex may have been a user but she was even worse. I wanted him to dump her or something, but knowing Sophia and Grace, they would hold him and keep him under their control.

"Is something wrong?" Princess asked after a few minutes of silence.

I shook my head. "I'm just tired," I said finally. "Today was a lot. I need more rest."

It wasn't a lie. There was still a lot that I needed to get over and I felt drained. I wanted the hole Alex and my family left in my chest to cover up so badly. I wanted to not care if they got their Karma or not. But I did and it was sucking out my energy.

Princess sighed and nodded. "I understand. Rest well." She said before drifting out the door.

I wanted to stop her and tell her everything. But I was too ashamed to confess that I was still hurt. I shouldn't be. Not when I was now living a life that was bigger than my wildest imagination.

"What did Rhys tell you?" I asked just as Princess stood up.

"He didn't go into details and I don't blame him. He asked us to never bring up that place before you because they made you go through hell."

I gulped. It was so thoughtful of him to keep the truth hidden. Or did he do it to protect his image and position?

His motive didn't matter. I was grateful that he didn't tell them the truth. It would make me look foolish and ruin our chances of keeping up with the three months.

"I know that there's more to the story," Princess added, "But I'll be patient and let you heal. Whenever you're ready, I'll be here to listen."

I swallowed again. It didn't feel like I'd ever be ready to speak about my family or what I went through. The pain was too much. But I nodded.

"Stay fine, Dawn. And whenever the monsters in your head come calling, remember that you're in the most protected pack to exist. And if they even think of coming for you, Rhys will make them regret their existence." She said before walking out briskly.

As the door swung closed, I flopped back on the bed. My eyes remained wide open because I didn't want the pain in my wrists to return, nor did I want to see the Old Alpha in my head again.

I didn't know what to think about her last words. I didn't like that it made me feel a lot better. I didn't want the thought of Rhys to make me feel anything at all. Everything I had was temporary.

I turned my thoughts to the Old Alpha. Seeing him was scary because no matter how much I tried to wrap my head around it and decipher it, I couldn't. It didn't make sense. I couldn't even tell anyone what I experienced because just like he said, I sounded crazy.

I would have successfully convinced myself that it was a dream if not for my aching wrists. My stomach grumbled and my eyelids had begun to droop.

I wasn't sure which one I wanted to do first. I was terrified of seeing him in my dreams again and it was pretty late. I needed food. At the same time, I

didn't want to meet anyone or have to endure the pity in their eyes. I was certain that news of my episode had spread to the whole pack and they would have concocted theories about me.

I stood up and walked to my balcony. I spied the forest that lay at the corner. I looked down and saw a path that snaked directly into it. The ground, however, was too far down. The pack house was carved into the mountains and the Alpha's lair was deep within it. My room was on the other side though.

My stomach grumbled again and I wished I could find food without meeting anyone. I eyed the door knowing that the only way I could do that was if I could turn invisible.

My senses told me that both Princess and the triplets were lurking about and that the moment I stepped out, they would invade my space.

My eyes returned to the forest before me. I craned my neck as I took turns inspecting both sides of the balcony. Just then, I found something interesting.

One part of the rock mountain had formed a smooth slope and went down. It cut abruptly halfway and small rocks formed slim ledges that led all the way to the bottom. It was a sure way to get down, however, the distance from my balcony to the slope was far. My chances of safely making the jump were slim and if I missed it, I would smash my bones on the deadly-shaped rock formations until I got to the bottom of the mountain. There was definitely no way I would survive such.

Another voracious roar in my belly had me taking a sharp breath and leaping to what seemed like my death.

I barely made it. My heart felt like it was going to burst open. I'd never been such a daredevil. Yet here I was.

I propelled myself and slid down the slippery rocks. The rough ends dug into and tore my flesh. I hissed.

It wasn't until I was at the end of the slope and preparing to hop onto the ledge like rocks that I realized that I couldn't sneak back into my room from there. And I was too hungry to think of a way back in.

My hands and legs stung from the fresh wounds.

"Princess wouldn't be impressed," I muttered, before leaping off to my

freedom.

As soon as I was on the ground, I carefully removed my battered clothes and shifted to my wolf form. I fought the urge to howl as I dashed into the forest beckoning me.

Food was too easy to find. Unlike the barren forests in Creekside, Golden Crest was full of Fauna and Flora. I easily found a rabbit and gobbled it down in minutes. After eating to my fill, I hunted other animals for sport. It was so much fun and it took my mind off everything.

My fun lasted until I got to a water body for a drink. The reflection of my wolf had me jumping back. It was too similar to the one I saw with the Old Aloha. I couldn't recognize the wolf staring at me. Its eyes had changed. My fur was the same but something was different about it.

It was like I could hear the old alpha's voice echoing in my head again. Spooked, I raced back to the mountains and lost my way. I wandered around the forest until I was completely worn out. It didn't help that I was full and lazy.

My wolf didn't seem to care about my fear. It didn't want to return to the pack house. It seemed to have developed a strong mind of its own. It was unsettling. I forced myself to shift back to my human form, then traced my way back to the pack house.

I stood outside for long minutes as I tried to figure out a way back into my room. I even tried climbing. I could easily go around and walk in through the front door, however, I looked like a mess. I didn't need any more speculation.

If I was bonded to the pack, I could have easily contacted Princess who would have found a creative way to sneak me back in. It felt like I was getting a glimpse of what my life would be like when I was finally cut off and set free.

I wasn't sure if I liked the idea of being alone. Frustration began to gnaw at me when I couldn't find a single option. I tried to search for hidden entryways. There was none. It was like I was trying to get into an impenetrable fortress. I got a few more cuts from trying to scale the steep edges.

Annoyed, I trudged back into the forest but it became scary. There was not a single soul within it. It almost felt like the old alpha was dwelling within

it. The image of my wolf wasn't helping.

Once again, I began to ponder on his words. Why was I changing? Did it have anything to do with what he said about me holding my wolf back?

After roaming, climbing, and falling, I finally collapsed at the foot of a tree and slept off. Surprisingly, it was more comfortable than I expected. I convinced myself that I would wake up early and sneak just before the crack of Dawn.