

Crescent Moon Cell

I woke to the sounds of metal scraping against metal. My vision was blurry, and I winced at the light above me.

I closed my eyes tightly as I tried to adjust; the pounding in my head worsened by the light and the noise. I touched my hand to my head and flinched, sucking in a breath when my hand came back with blood on it. I clenched my eyes shut again, fighting the dizziness. Whatever they hit me with had surely done its job.

I could feel Aria pacing in my mind, her worry flowing through me. I opened my eyes slowly and looked around, my body tensing as I found myself in a concrete cell.

"Well, well. Good morning," a voice said.

My gaze jerked to the side to find two men standing at the door of the cell. "Where am I?" I asked with a cough, my voice raspy and hoarse. How long had I been out?

"You're in Crescent Moon," the man said casually as the cell door closed behind him.

I looked him over with a frown. He was tall and tan, middle-aged, but you could tell he was once considered very handsome. His jet-black hair was streaked with silver, and his deep brown eyes looked almost... amused.

The man beside him was shorter and a bit fuller in the waist. His skin was lighter, as if he spent all day inside. His dirty blonde mop of hair was shaggy, and he looked nervous, his eyes dancing around the room. For some reason, he seemed familiar, though I wasn't sure why.

"Why am I here?"

"Our scouts caught you at the border. You Green Ridge scum were wandering around where you shouldn't."

"It was your scouts that crossed the border, not us!" I growled.

"Your idiot alpha slaughtered four of my warriors. It is your pack that is in the wrong."

Internally, I sighed in relief. They don't know who I am. "I was with the alpha. Your warriors rushed our border. We acted in self-defense."

The taller man scoffed as anger flashed through his face. But it was gone as soon as I blinked, and his stare was back to indifference.

"The... the one that brought me here... he—"

"You shouldn't worry about the past, my dear," the man crooned. "I assure you, there is very little you will be able to think about when we are finished. I have questions for you. If you answer them, you will be rewarded with meals. If you do not... well..." he trailed off, leaving the obvious threat for what it was.

I scooted back on the bed. "There's nothing I can tell you."

"I find that unlikely," he said, taking a step forward. "Please, come have a seat."

I shook my head. "I'm fine here, thanks."

His face darkened. "Sit."

I could feel Aria growling in my mind. We could probably take these two down without any effort. But whatever that man had done to get me here had left me feeling odd, and I couldn't risk it.

I stood slowly, fighting the dizziness as my vision began to blur from the motion. I dropped into the chair and looked up at the two men before me.

"How many warriors does Green Ridge have?" the taller man asked.

"I don't know," I said firmly.

He frowned. "I will only ask once more. How many?"

"I. Don't. Know."

His eyes flitted to the nervous-looking man whose anxiety, I soon found out, was in fact bottled-up excitement. The man pulled a silver dagger from his pocket and scraped it along my arm, drawing blood in a long gash. His mouth curved up in a dark smile, and I realized where I'd seen him.

That day in the woods. The man who stood over my grandfather's body.

I clenched my jaw and bit down against the searing pain as his knife cut down my other arm. "How many warriors?"

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"I don't know."

"Surely, as a warrior yourself, you know how many battalions you have," he grumbled.

I looked up at him, rage simmering in my stare. "I'm just a low-level girl. Am I supposed to have the entire pack's battalions memorized?" I simpered.

He nodded toward the man again, and the shorter man stabbed his dagger into my hand. I cried out in anguish, the pain more than I could bear.

He pulled the dagger from my hand and watched the blood drip from the blade. "Answer his question, girl."

My chest heaved as I fought the pain, Aria whining in the corners of my mind. "Bite me," I spat, earning a backhanded slap across the face.

"That's enough for now, Eli," the taller man said, raising a hand to stop him.

"Yes, alpha," the man, Eli, replied. He wiped his blade on my shirt and left the room.

The alpha took a step forward, his face drawing close to mine. "I will return tomorrow, and you will tell me what I wish to know."

"Don't count on it," I growled.

He smirked and gripped my chin tightly. "You will find your days much more enjoyable if you just behave, girl."

I glared up at him. "I haven't behaved a single day in my life."

The man snorted and walked to the door. "Eli will be able to break you of that issue."

The moment the cell door closed, I ran to the bed and tore at the sheet, wrapping my hand tightly as I waited for it to heal. I clenched my jaw, biting back the tears I knew were threatening to fall.

"Are you okay?" Aria whined softly.

"I'm... I'm fine," I answered, my voice shaky as I held back my tears.

"How did this happen?"

I shook my head. *"We need to find a way to call for Dad. He'll come for us."*

"I'm sorry, Emma. I wasn't strong enough to fight him off..."

"No, don't. This isn't your fault. I should have taken more warriors with us. That wolf... he was stronger than anyone I've ever fought."

I sat back on the cot and wiped at the tears that fell down my cheeks. I didn't know how I would get out of here. But one thing was for certain—whatever my mate was—he betrayed me the moment he put me in this cell. And for that, I would never forgive him.

It had been four days. Four days of pure, agonizing torture.

The alpha, I later learned, was named Benedict—came down every morning with Eli to question me. He wanted to know everything about my people. How many warriors, how many pack members, when we held our gatherings, where the emergency bunker was hidden, the movements of the alpha, intel on his family—the family he didn't know we shared.

And every morning, I would leave his questions unanswered. So every morning, Eli would have his fun with me. I knew I wouldn't be able to last much longer. Aria had already spent most of her strength supporting me through his torture sessions.

And in the afternoons, I would shift to help my body heal faster, only to be broken again the next morning. I stared up at the ceiling, wondering how long I would survive this, my hatred for Crescent Moon Pack growing day by day.

"Good morninet"

"Good morning!"

I closed my eyes as I heard the alpha's voice chime through the cell. The door groaned open, and the two men walked in. I sat up slowly and looked the two of them over.

"How long are we going to do this?"

"Well," Benedict shrugged, picking at his nails, "No mere girl could withstand Eli's brand of... entertainment. So you must obviously be different from what you claim to be. I think today we will get to know you."

I could feel Aria's anxiety grow as the men began circling me. "I'm nothing special," I said quietly.

"I beg to differ," Benedict said before shoving me to the ground.

My knees and palms scraped against the cement floor of the cell, and I could feel the stinging of the scrapes in my skin. I breathed deeply, sending myself to the place I went when they began their torture. I closed my eyes and felt the warm breeze on my face and the scent of the pine trees surrounding my home.

"Now, I have asked you every day what your name is," Benedict huffed. "I will ask one last time."

I clenched my teeth, biting back a response. I tensed as Eli's silver blade scraped across my back, sending searing pain through my body.

"Name."

"Screw you," I panted.

"Name!"

I looked up at him with a glare. "Aria." They didn't need to know that Aria was my wolf's name, not mine. I couldn't risk them actually connecting me with my family.

"Good girl," he grinned darkly before walking across the room. "Now, Aria, tell me, what do you think will become of your family if you do not cooperate with us?"

I stood slowly from the ground and looked up into his dark eyes. "Considering I haven't given you any information, I imagine they'll stay perfectly safe. Green Ridge Pack takes care of their own."

I stood slowly from the ground and looked up into his dark eyes. "Considering I haven't given you any information, I imagine they'll stay perfectly safe. Green Ridge Pack takes care of their own."

The alpha growled, his fury rising as he hit me across the face, sending me flying across the room.

"Eli!" he screamed. "Tie her up and make her answer our questions."

Eli's grin was feral as he stalked across the room toward me. He pulled me up by the arm to my feet and tied me to a chair.

"Now, Aria. The alpha has been very patient with you," Eli crooned.

I spat blood at him. "Is this what you call patience?" I glared up at him, the swelling on my cheek and bruise on my eye showing just how little patience they truly had.

"I think we have been more than fair in our questioning," Eli twirled the blade in his hand before hitting me across the face with the handle.

I could feel the blood trickle down my cheek, and I blinked the stars from my eyes. "I have no answers for you. I don't know anything. Don't you think I would have told you by now if I did?"

"Honestly, I expected more begging and crying," Eli shrugged.

"I'm not that type of girl," I grumbled.

What felt like hours later, I was untied and dropped on the floor. I groaned as I clawed my way toward the bed. I could feel the broken ribs and the bruises and gashes across my body. I could still feel the stinging of the cords that he whipped across my back and arms. I could still smell the tang of fresh blood as it flowed from my body.

But I didn't care what they did to me. I would never give them what they wanted. I would never betray my people. I would never allow another single person I loved to be hurt.

It burned to even breathe, let alone move, and tears fell down my cheeks as I pulled myself up on the cot.

I'm so sorry, Emma... Aria whispered.

It's not your fault. I whispered back, my body shaking from the pain.

I'm so sorry, Emma... Aria whispered.

It's not your fault. I whispered back, my body shaking from the pain.

We have to leave this place before they kill us.

There's no way out, I cried. I could feel the corners of my vision becoming blurry as my body slowly succumbed to its injuries.

At least there was one place that did not offer pain.

I welcomed the dreams that came as the darkness took me.

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