

My Hockey Alpha #Chapter 121 Werewolf Weaknesses - Read My Hockey Alpha Chapter 121 Werewolf Weaknesses

Chapter 121 Werewolf Weaknesses

Nina

By the time the symposium came, I had spent the past few days trying my best to solely focus on my presentation. I decided that I couldn't let my feelings for Enzo impede upon my grades in the exact same way that he couldn't let his feelings for me impede upon his performance in the tournament. So, I didn't see him at all for that time, although I couldn't stop the negative thoughts and nightmares despite that.

The day of the symposium finally arrived, and I was well-prepared. I had a presentation put together on anatomy, and had spent hours practicing my presentation in front of Luke, who used his past as a talking skeleton to give me pointers and correct my mistakes.

I was well-prepared enough, in fact, that my presentation went incredibly well. I finished my presentation and stepped off of the stage, smiling in reaction to the applause coming from the small group of attendees, one of whom was my professor.

"Well, Miss Harper," my professor said, approaching me as I packed up my laptop and other materials, "I must say that you gave an excellent presentation. I'll award you the extra credit."

I couldn't help but smile even wider. "Thank you, Professor."

"Remember that this is a one time thing," he said, patting me on the shoulder. "I hope you'll try harder from now on to be present in class and stay on top of your work."

I nodded vehemently. "I will. Thank you again."

The professor smiled, then left. I decided to stay at the symposium for a while longer and listen to some of the other presentations, as well as to walk around and look at the other projects that were laid out on tables around the gymnasium.

As I walked around and looked at all of the projects, I suddenly felt a familiar presence in the room. I froze for a moment, then jerked my head up from the particular project on mold that I was looking at, only to see none other than Enzo standing on the other side of the room.

He had his head bent and appeared to be looking at a project as well, but as I stared at him, he suddenly lifted his head as well and made eye contact with me.

His brown eyes began to glow ever so slightly red when he saw me, but he quickly looked away.

I figured that it was too late now to pretend that I hadn't seen him — besides, I was curious as to why he was here instead of practicing hockey — and decided to make my way over to where he stood.

“Hey,” I said sheepishly as I approached, stopping to stand in front of him. “Surprise seeing you here.”

“I heard you were giving a presentation,” he muttered. We kept a respectable distance between ourselves, but I could still pick up a bit of his scent from where I stood, and it took some focus to not let it get to me. “You did a good job.”

“Thanks,” I replied, managing a small smile. I folded my arms across my chest then as there was an awkward silence between us, before my eyes finally fell on the table we were standing in front of.

As I scanned the posterboard, my eyes immediately widened.

It wasn't just any other project on biology or anatomy; it was a project on werewolves.

Specifically, their weaknesses.

The poster board had several blurry photographs of werewolves, as well as a blurb under each photograph containing werewolf facts. On the other half of the poster board, there were bullet points of various werewolf “weaknesses”, such as silver bullets, fire, and wolfsbane.

On the table, these different weaknesses were laid out. There was a single silver bullet, a wolfsbane flower, and the handle of an axe — the head had been removed, of course, to keep with the rules of no weapons being allowed on campus, but below it was a small card that mentioned how werewolves could not regenerate once beheaded.

I felt an enormous knot form in my stomach. When I looked back up at Enzo, his eyes were glowing again — not from attraction this time, but rather from anger.

“I think he made this,” he said, gesturing to the sick project. There was no name attached to it anywhere, however.

“You don't think...” I began, my voice trailing off.

Enzo shrugged, glancing over at his shoulder. As he did, a couple of other students quickly looked away. I wondered if they had seen this project and were starting to get ideas.

“I think he doesn’t wanna man up and try to kill me himself, so he’s trying to incite violence,” Enzo growled. “If he wants violence... Then he’ll get it.”

Before I could stop him, Enzo suddenly gritted his teeth and kicked the table, sending it toppling over and causing the project to scatter across the floor.

“Enzo!” I said incredulously. “You can’t do that.”

“What, so he’s allowed to blatantly suggest killing me to an entire host of angry and scared students?” he asked. “Bullshit.”

“Kicking over his table isn’t gonna help your cause,” I whispered, bending down to pick up the scattered items as people looked at us in silent shock. “Come on. Help me.”

Enzo sighed, muttering an apology under his breath, then helped me pick up the table and replace all of the items.

“Is there a problem here?” an attendant, one of the professors, said as she walked up to us.

I shook my head. “No, sorry. It was an accident.”

The professor narrowed her eyes — not at me, but at Enzo — but didn’t say anything else and walked away, seeing as how we cleaned up the mess. I turned back to face Enzo when she was gone.

“Don’t do stuff like that,” I whispered. “I’ve been trying really hard to get more people to your side, and it’s been working. I know you’re angry and that what happened in the tunnels was awful, but you have to control these outbursts or else people really will start to get sinister ideas.”

Enzo nodded solemnly as he stared at the floor.

I sighed, then shifted my bag on my shoulder. “I have to go,” I said, turning to walk away. “I have a paper that I have to work on tonight.”

With that, I left Enzo standing there in the gymnasium. I didn’t get far, however, when I suddenly heard a somewhat familiar voice shout after me in the hallway a little ways away from the gymnasium.

“Hey!” the voice said. “Nina Harper, right?”

I frowned, turning around to face the source of the voice.

It was the girl who threw the tomato at me.

“What do you want?” I asked, folding my arms across my chest.

She sneered as she sauntered up to me. She was a bigger girl, and she was tall with dyed red hair and dark eyeliner.

“You know, I keep seeing you with that monster,” she said, smirking and stopping just a couple of feet away from me. At her tall height, she practically towered over me. “Do you have a werewolf fetish or something?”

I frowned, narrowing my eyes. “Who even are you?” I asked. “Why do you seem to have a vendetta against me just for having different beliefs than you?”

Once again, the girl scoffed. “So you don’t deny it,” she said. “You must be his little minion or something. I see the way he walks you around like you’re on a leash.”

“Hey.”

Enzo’s deep, angry voice suddenly bellowed from behind the girl. She turned around, stepping slightly to the side as Enzo stormed toward her. Already, her face looked frightened, and she started to stagger backwards.

Enzo didn’t need to say anything. A low growl rumbled in his throat as he approached, and that was enough to cause the girl to turn tail and run down the hallway, out of sight.

He stopped in front of me, staring after her, then unexpectedly wrapped his arm around my shoulders and pulled me close beside him as we continued to walk.

“What are you doing?” I asked, looking up to see his sharp jaw set hard.

“I told you I would protect you,” he said quietly. “I didn’t say that I’d only protect you from Edward.”

Chapter 122 The Magic Doctor

Nina

The coffee shop was dimly lit and quiet when I arrived, but also warm and cozy: the perfect atmosphere for working on my paper. I grabbed a quick coffee to stave off the constant feeling of exhaustion from my lack of proper sleep before I set my things down at a corner table and made myself comfortable. I opened my laptop and my notebook, then got to work.

However, as I worked, I couldn’t help but notice that my gaze kept slipping over to the table where K and I sat that one day when we first met. I tried to focus on my work, but each time I would look at that table, I would have flashbacks to the night that he tried to drag me through that swirling portal in the woods. Even now, as I thought of it, I could

practically feel his hands still wrapped tightly around my ankles as I clawed desperately at the forest floor. It was as though his hands were burned there.

That event also made me think about this woman that they called 'The Sister'. Was she somehow linked to my heritage? Tiffany had mentioned how my mother suddenly disappeared, cutting off all contact with the Peacekeepers out of nowhere. The more I thought about it, the more I started to think that maybe it was time to give my mom a call or even pay her a visit so I could learn more.

Suddenly, my thoughts were broken by the sound of the bell on the cafe door tinkling as someone came in. I looked up, tearing my gaze from the empty table where K and I once sat, to see none other than James walk in.

He looked even more haggard now than before. I watched as he ordered a triple shot of espresso, which was a copious amount of caffeine; had he been sleeping at all? As he turned back around and his glum, soulless eyes met mine, that suspicion was confirmed.

James suddenly put his head down and tried to scurry past me as though he never saw me, but I wasn't about to let him leave. I jumped up and followed him out onto the sidewalk.

"James!" I shouted. He picked up his pace, still keeping his head down. I jogged after him and grabbed him by the elbow. "James."

"What do you want?" he snapped, turning suddenly to face me. Now that we were closer and out in the daylight, I could see even more clearly how dark the circles were under his eyes and how gaunt his face looked.

"What's going on with you?" I blurted out. "You don't look good at all."

He ripped his arm away from me, narrowing his eyes at me. "I'm just stressed about school, that's all," he said.

I frowned. "You and I both know that's bullshit. You dropped your letter from your dad the other day. What's this about a 'family business'?"

James fell silent. His eyes became wide, and his lip began to quiver.

"James," I said, reaching out to touch his shoulder, "is someone threatening you? Whatever they're telling you to do, you don't need to do it. This isn't you. I know it."

Before I could touch his shoulder, he flinched away and shot me an angry glare. "You don't know the first thing about me," he snarled. "Stay out of my business." With that, he turned on his heel and continued to storm down the sidewalk.

I tried to call after him, but he was already gone.

Sighing, I headed back into the coffee shop. Whatever was going on with my friend was completely out of character for him... And I was worried for his safety.

...

I couldn't focus much more on my paper after that strange interaction with James, so I finished my coffee and headed back to campus. I was going to head home to try and get some sleep, but as I passed by the hockey arena, I noticed that the door was propped open and light was spilling out onto the sidewalk. Worried that Enzo was still drilling the team incessantly and that it might lead to an injury, I decided to poke my head in and check.

Surprisingly, the team wasn't there. I quickly came to realize that Enzo was alone on the ice. He was training harder than ever, but kept repeatedly failing at his drills and cursing loudly to himself. I watched quietly from the sidelines, shocked by his performance and his subsequent bad attitude.

Finally, he performed one last drill. I watched as he weaved back and forth between cones on the ice, keeping the puck with his stick, then tried to flick it into the net at the end.

It missed.

"Fuck!" he shouted. He threw his hockey stick down with such force that it snapped in half. I watched as the two halves slid in opposite directions on the ice before I finally stepped out of the doorway and spoke up.

"Are you okay?" I called.

Enzo must have been so absorbed in his drills that he hadn't even noticed me standing there, and he jumped when I spoke. "Don't sneak up on people like that," he growled, hastily skating around to pick up his broken hockey stick and the cones before he skated over to the rink exit and threw them onto the floor.

"Sorry," I said, walking up to him and watching as he hobbled over to the bench and sank down with defeat. "Have you been training this hard all day?"

He shrugged. "I've got another match tomorrow, and my skills are slipping. I'd still be practicing if I didn't just break my stick."

I was silent for a moment. I bit my lip, fumbling with the strap on my bag, before speaking again.

"Why do you think your skills are slipping?"

Enzo didn't answer right away. He glanced up at me with slightly glowing red eyes, then shook his head. "It's nothing. It's just my back."

I remembered how scarred his back had been from Edward's beatings. He must have lost mobility from it; when we showered together that one night, he had needed help taking off his shirt and washing himself.

"You still haven't been able to heal?" I asked.

He shook his head. "A little bit here and there, but not much. Whatever Edward gave me to weaken my wolf was potent."

I frowned for a moment, but then suddenly I had an idea.

"Take your shirt off," I said.

Enzo frowned up at me. "What?" he asked, giving me an incredulous look.

I dropped my bag on the ground. "As your doctor, I'm ordering you to take your shirt off."

Enzo hesitated, but finally complied. He reached up to take his shirt off, but seemed to be having trouble just as I suspected. Without giving it a second thought, I reached out and helped him.

Tears came to my eyes as I looked at his back. I'd almost forgotten how scarred he was. My wounds were fully healed with only three thin, white lines where Edward had slashed my stomach with his

claws, but Enzo's back was covered in long, pinkish-white scars that raised up from the rest of his skin like a topographic map.

"I don't like you seeing me like this," he murmured, hanging his head.

I shook my head and blinked the tears away. "It's not that bad."

He chuckled wryly. "You're lying."

There was a long, palpable silence between us. I just wanted to reach out and wrap my arms around him, but I knew that it would only end in more heartbreak... So, I did the next best thing, and I reached out instead to place my hands flat on his back.

"What are you doing?" he asked, flinching slightly beneath my touch and tensing his back.

"Just relax," I said, shutting my eyes. "I think I can help you."

Enzo fell silent. He didn't flinch away as I pressed my palms harder against his skin. I began to breathe deeply, focusing all of my energy on the point at which my hands and his back met, and as I did, I searched for my wolf's presence and borrowed some of her power.

As I did this, I felt a tingling that began in my chest and slowly flowed down my arms and into my hands. I wasn't sure exactly, but as I felt Enzo's tight back relax, I knew it was working. Finally, after several minutes of this, I opened my eyes and stepped away.

I almost screamed with joy. The scars were still there, but they were much less prominent now. Without a word, I laughed and ran over to the supply closet. I flung the doors open and grabbed a spare hockey stick off of the rack, then ran back to Enzo and shoved it in his face.

"Go on," I said. "Try again."

Enzo looked at me with wide eyes, but then hesitantly took the stick out of my hand. I ran over to the rink railing and gripped it tightly as he skated back out to the center, lining himself up on the opposite side of the rink with the stick in his hand and the puck in front of him.

"Go on! Skate!" I shouted.

For a brief moment, a smirk spread across Enzo's face. Then, he skated.

I watched in awe as he weaved around flawlessly on the ice, swerving back and forth and doubling back, all while skillfully keeping the puck controlled with his stick. Then, with a final flourish, he flicked the puck toward me. It slid past me with a whirring sound before landing perfectly in the net.

I couldn't help but jump for joy. A wild yell escaped my throat, and through my tears of happiness, I saw Enzo's form skating rapidly toward me. He practically slammed into the railing, then reached over and grabbed me, pulling me over to his side and spinning around on the ice while he held me in his arms.

We laughed together and spun until we got dizzy

Chapter 123 Beauty and the Alpha

Nina

Enzo and I spun on the ice and laughed together until we became so dizzy that we spun out of control and fell down. This only made us laugh harder, and as I regained my composure, I pushed myself up onto my palms and couldn't help but smile down at Enzo.

He smiled back up at me as well. For a split second, everything felt okay, and it felt as though both of us temporarily forgot about his mate.

But that split second quickly ended. Our smiles faded. Enzo cleared his throat, then helped me stand up and placed me back on the carpet outside the rink.

“Thank you,” he said, averting his gaze to the ice. “I feel a lot better now.”

I swallowed the lump in my throat and nodded. “Any time,” I replied. “I’ll be here to help as much as I can until you get your abilities back.”

...

The following night, it was time for the next game in the tournament. It was a frigid Saturday night, and was even forecasted to snow a little. Lori and Jessica were waiting for me when I emerged, and we walked to the arena together.

“Have you thought about what we suggested?” Lori asked, her breath coming out in little white clouds in the cold air as we walked.

I shrugged. “A little, I guess. I just don’t know if I can go down there.”

“What about Tiffany or someone else?” Jessica chimed in. “You said there’s an entrance to the tunnels in her supply closet?”

I nodded, but then shook my head in disagreement. “I don’t wanna make her go down there. It’s horrible down there... I don’t want anyone to go without reason.”

“I think that finding evidence of Edward’s crimes is reason enough,” Lori said sternly.

She was right: it was important to gather enough evidence to turn Edward in. But, at the same time, there were two other things stopping me. For starters, Edward probably took off through one of those portals, and the police would never find him anyway — even if they did find him, I highly doubted they could keep him locked up for long before he would find a way to escape. Second, while I trusted Tiffany, she did have an extensive history with Edward. I knew that she would never do anything to help him, but at the same time, I couldn’t be entirely sure that she would be willing to turn her old friend and someone she loved dearly in to the police despite his crimes. There was a good chance that she would try to protect him to some extent if I asked her to gather the evidence.

I didn’t have the energy to explain all of this to my friends, so I just nodded as the hockey arena came into view. “I’ll think more about it,” I said.

As we arrived, there were more protesters standing outside.

“Jeez,” Jessica said, shivering and rubbing her hands together. “They’re dedicated, doing this out here in the cold.”

I shrugged, keeping my head down and ignoring the snide comments from the protesters as we passed. All I could do at this point was ignore them and do my best not to give them more cause to hate werewolves.

The rink was a fair bit warmer than it was outside when we entered, but still cold. I said goodbye and parted ways with my friends to go stand at my post. Tiffany had been too busy in the infirmary lately with the cold and flu season upon us to join me at any of the games recently, but had entrusted the job to me. By this point, I knew what I was doing quite well — plus, I apparently had a healing ability now.

For a few more minutes, the thin crowd slowly finished flooding in. There were more students now than at the last game, although as I looked up at the stands, I could see that some of this increase in traffic was actually just more protesters coming in to hold up big anti-werewolf banners for the duration of the game. The red-haired girl was at the forefront of the group. She saw me looking and shot me a smirk and a little wave. I rolled my eyes and looked away.

Finally, the announcer began to call out our team one by one, ending with Enzo coming out at the back of the line. When he came out, the red-haired girl and her posse began to boo loudly, pumping their banner in the air.

But then, something interesting happened. The rest of the team lined up next to Enzo in the center of the rink. The crowd started to quiet down aside from the protesters’ booing. I watched as the team slowly began to join hands, then raised their hands into the air silently.

A small gasp escaped my lips as I watched. They stayed like that for some time, just silently showing their solidarity with Enzo at the center of the line. They stared quietly at the protesters until the protesters finally got escorted out by security.

The rest of the crowd cheered once they were all gone. I couldn’t help but smile, and as I looked back at the team, I met Enzo’s eyes from across the ice.

Once again, peace won over hatred.

Next, the announcer called out the other team. I watched, biting my fingernails, as the other team filed out onto the ice and got into position. The captain also came out last, and as I saw him, my heart dropped.

He was massive. Enzo was tall and muscular, but this guy was somehow even bigger and broader. He skated out to his position like a human tank, his cold eyes fixed on Enzo as though Enzo was nothing but a piece of meat sitting on a silver platter.

I expected Enzo to look shocked or uncomfortable, but much to my surprise, he wasn't.

He was smirking.

The game began. The other captain held back, letting his team do most of the work, but Enzo and Matt were fast. They flicked the puck expertly back and forth between the two of them, almost mockingly, and scored goal after goal.

"Matt's gotten really good," a familiar voice suddenly said from behind me. I looked over my shoulder to see Justin approaching with his hands in his pockets.

"Yeah," I said, looking back out at the game. "I don't know what happened. I mean, he was good before, but..."

"So Enzo won't let me on the team for drinking the Mad Wolf serum, but he's letting Matt stay when he's clearly taken it now?"

I frowned, furrowing my brow at Justin's sudden choice of words.

"I don't think—" I began, but my voice faltered as I watched Matt dodge another player like a flash of lightning and score a goal.

"I'm just saying," Justin said with a shrug. "Seems suspicious. Maybe I'm wrong, though."

I opened my mouth to speak, but before I could, the buzzer signified the end of the first round and Justin walked away.

The second round went much like the first. The other captain held back, only participating occasionally, while Matt and Enzo breezed through and scored goal after goal. I began to get a little suspicious as I

watched the other captain. Why wasn't he playing? Could he even play hockey at all, or was this just another talentless werewolf who relied solely on the fact that he was a werewolf to win the game?

Then, the third round came. It went the same — until the last minute.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, the other captain sprung into action. He seemed to have his sights set for Enzo, and not the puck. I watched in horror as he roared, then skated toward Enzo like a flash. He collided with Enzo and sent him sliding across the ice.

The referee blew his whistle and stopped the game. I held my breath as I watched Enzo; thankfully, he got up. The crowd all seemed to sigh in relief. The other captain continued to snarl at Enzo, but the referee stayed between them. The referee then turned to the announcer and made a signal with his hands.

“Disqualified!” The announcer exclaimed. “It looks like that move just cost the opposing team the game. Not that they were gonna win, anyway...” The crowd laughed mockingly as the other team angrily skated off the ice, but I wasn’t laughing as I watched Enzo and the rest of our team skate toward me. Once he was off the ice, I could see now that he had blood trickling down his forehead.

I rushed up to him and grabbed him, yanking him away from the crowd and into the locker rooms.

“What are you doing?” he asked as I flung the door open and shoved him inside, closing it firmly behind us. I simply shook my head and pointed to the bench for him to sit, which he did.

“That captain wasn’t here to win the game,” I said, tugging off his helmet to reveal a nasty cut on his forehead. “He was here to hurt you.”

Enzo didn’t answer. I crouched down, then pressed my fingers into his wound to start healing him.

“Ow!” he exclaimed, pushing my hand away. I only frowned and went to put my hands on his face again, but before I could...

He kissed me

Chapter 124 Like Father, Like Son

Nina

Out of nowhere, Enzo kissed me.

He kissed me hard and fast, and it was over as quickly as it began. I continued to crouch in front of him, blinking dazedly as I processed what just happened.

His hands, which he’d cupped on either side of my cheeks, dropped down to his side. He stood suddenly, pacing away from me as though he needed to get distance between us, and when I stood as well, I noticed that his eyes were red again.

“That scent,” he said, pointing his finger at me and burying his nose in his jersey. “I don’t know how you’re doing that, but you have to stop. I can’t control myself when you do it, and it’s only gonna hurt both of us even more.”

“Enzo...” I took a step toward him as my eyes began to fill with tears. “Why won’t you just let me in? Is all of this really because of a scarf? I know how you really feel about me—”

Enzo shook his head and backed away even more.

“Get out,” he said.

I furrowed my brow, both confused and hurt by his sudden order. “Why?”

“Just get out,” he demanded again. “I’m not allowed to get involved with you like this anymore, and clearly I can’t control myself around you... So please, just go. Be with Justin. Be with anyone except me.”

I took a step backwards, shaking my head. What did he mean about not being allowed to get involved with me anymore? Nothing was stopping him except for that stupid scarf. Time and time again, we had

played this back and forth game. And now, I had experienced his scent, and he was clearly attracted to mine. Why, then, did we have to do this? Why couldn’t we just be together?

Before I could say anything, however, the rest of the team suddenly filed in. When they saw how Enzo and I were looking at each other, they all fell silent and stood by the door.

“Should we leave?” Matt asked.

I stared at Enzo for a long few moments, willing him to say something. Anything. But he didn’t. Without another look at him, I shook my head and turned on my heel. “No,” I muttered, keeping my head down so as to hide the tears in my eyes as I walked past the group. “It’s fine. Good job tonight.”

I stepped out of the locker room into the arena, which was mostly empty now aside from a few students still filing out, some cleaners, and the food vendors closing up their booths. I let out a shaky breath as the door closed behind me and headed for the exit.

But I didn’t make it far before I felt the strange feeling of being watched.

Stopping in my tracks, I narrowed my eyes and slowly looked over my shoulder. Standing in the shadows beside the locker room... Was Enzo’s father. He was leaning against the wall, dressed in his usual suit and tie, with his arms folded across his chest. As he looked at me, his cold eyes fixed unwaveringly on my face, I suddenly felt a pit of dread start to form in my stomach. We stared at each other for several long seconds.

“Stay away from my son. I know that your mother is a Crescent traitor... And I know where she and your brother live.”

His low, sinister voice rumbled inside my head, vibrating against my skull and giving me an immediate, pounding headache. I winced, touching my fingers against my throbbing temple.

When I opened my eyes, he was already gone.

What did he mean by what he said? Was he threatening me to keep me away from Enzo? Did that have something to do with why Enzo was so adamant about staying away from me?

I wanted to figure it out, but at the same time, I couldn't shake the feeling of unease in my stomach. I briskly walked out of the arena and slipped my phone out of my pocket as I headed back to my dorm, dialing my mom.

"Mom?" I said when she answered.

"Hi, Nina," she said, sounding a little surprised. "Is everything okay?"

I let out a sigh of relief. Thankfully, nothing had happened to her yet. "Yeah," I lied. "I'm fine. How are you and Tyler?"

She paused before answering. "We're fine. Actually... I was just about to call you."

The feeling of anxiety in my stomach returned. I picked up my pace as my building came into view and glanced over my shoulder, still feeling as though I was being watched. "What for?" I asked.

"Well, I've been thinking of visiting your aunt overseas. You have next week off of school, right? Would you like to come with us? We'll be leaving in a couple of days."

"Oh," I replied, letting out a sigh of relief. It was unexpected, but the thought of spending some time away from this town was tempting. "How long are you going for?"

"Just a week," she said.

I finally made it to my building and flung the door open before walking inside. Now that I was safely inside with the bright amber lights of the common room enveloping me, I suddenly didn't feel so afraid.

"Um... You know what? Sure," I replied, smiling. "I'll go."

Once again, my mother paused. I climbed the stairs to my suite. "That's great, honey," she finally said. "Make sure you pack enough for the week. I'll buy you a train ticket to come down to meet us here."

As I opened the door, a thought suddenly came to my mind while the image of Enzo's father and the sinister things he'd said swirled around. He'd called her a Crescent traitor. I realized then that I had to see my mother and Tyler as soon as possible, not only to check on their safety, but to ask my mother some questions. "Hey, mom..."

“Yes?”

“Can you buy a ticket for tonight? I can leave right now.”

...

Less than two hours later, I was climbing out of a cab and walking up to my mother’s front door with a suitcase in my hand. I hadn’t been to my childhood home in so long; it was a small suburban home with yellow paint that looked like it was starting to peel a little. The front door was blue, and the shutters on all of the windows were the same shade of blue. Growing up, I hated how brightly the house was painted, but now it felt like a beacon of warmth and safety glowing in the night.

Before I even knocked on the door, my mom flung it open. She came out onto the walkway and hugged me tightly — a gesture of warmth that I wasn’t used to with her. I froze at first, then relaxed and hugged her back.

“Come in quietly,” she said, guiding me back to the house. “Tyler is asleep.”

When I stepped inside, the house was just the same as I remembered. A tiny living room with a little floral couch and an antique writing desk in the corner. An even tinier kitchen outfitted with all retro

appliances. A small hallway with a narrow staircase that led upstairs to my brother’s room and my old room, while my mom’s room was situated at the end of the hallway downstairs.

“Are you hungry?” my mom asked.

I realized that I’d hardly eaten all day. In fact, ever since the tunnels, I still hadn’t quite gotten my appetite back, but being home made me hungry all of a sudden.

“Yes,” I replied, nodding and following her to the kitchen.

“PB&J?” she asked as she opened the fridge. “Your favorite, right?”

I nodded, smiling, and hoisted myself up to sit on the counter while she made me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich — with peach marmalade instead of jelly. It was my favorite childhood snack. Even though my mother was never particularly warm to me growing up ever since she divorced her first husband, she always made the best sandwiches.

“Hey, mom,” I said, watching as she spread the marmalade on a slice of white bread. “Can I ask you about something?”

“Mhm.”

“Do you remember the Peacekeepers?”

Suddenly, my mom froze right in the middle of making my sandwich. She stood like that for several long moments, opening her mouth to speak and closing it again so many times that she almost looked like a fish gasping for air.

But then, all of a sudden, she continued making my sandwich with a smile on her face and shook her head.

“I have no clue what you’re talking about, honey,” she said, handing me my sandwich

Chapter 125 Pebbles at the Window

Nina

I cocked my head. My mother smiled up at me and pushed the plate containing my sandwich into my hands.

“Eat up, honey,” she said. “Are you alright? You look like you’ve lost a lot of weight.”

“U-Um... I’ve just been stressed.” I picked my sandwich up off my plate and took a bite, chewing for a moment, before speaking again. “Are you sure you don’t know about the Peacekeepers? The school doctor that I’ve been working with—”

“You know what?” my mother interrupted, stretching and feigning an obviously fake yawn. “It’s late, and we’ve got to be up early tomorrow to catch our flight.”

Now, I frowned and watched as she turned somewhat robotically and started to walk out of the kitchen. “But you said that we would be leaving in a couple of days...”

My mother froze again. “Did I?” she asked, her back still turned to me. “I guess I just misspoke. No, our tickets are set for first thing in the morning.”

“Oh...” I paused, looking down at the sandwich on my plate. “Okay.”

“Good night, honey.”

“Good night, mom.”

I sat alone in the kitchen and silently finished my sandwich, puzzling over why my mother acted like she didn’t know about the Peacekeepers. In fact, her entire demeanor was a bit strange, almost scripted. It was unsettling, to say the least.

When I was finished, I hopped down from the counter and rinsed off my plate before grabbing my suitcase out of the living room and quietly heading upstairs to my old room.

Just like the rest of the house, my childhood bedroom was exactly the same as it had always been. I hadn't slept here in years, always opting to stay at a motel on the rare occasion that I came to visit, but as I sat down on my bed and heard the springs creak beneath my weight, I suddenly felt overcome by a sense of nostalgia that overshadowed my mother's strange behavior. Sighing, I fell backwards and splayed my arms out on the bed, running my hands along the quilt as I looked up at the old glow-in-the-dark stars on my ceiling that I'd put there when I was seven. I turned my head, looking over at my old desk that still had my high school textbooks piled up on it, then turned the other way to study the layers of faded science fair posters on the wall.

Suddenly, as I laid there, I heard something patter against my window. I didn't get up right away; instead, I chalked it up to the wind or the branch of the tree that sat right outside my room.

But then, I heard it again. And again.

Finally, I frowned and sat up. I turned around to look at my window, only to see something small and round hit it again, as though someone was throwing something from below.

"What on earth..." I whispered to myself. I stood and tiptoed over to my window, peeking out from behind the curtains. My jaw dropped as I saw Enzo standing on the lawn staring up at me. What was he doing here? And how did he know where my mom and my brother lived?

I flung the window open and leaned out.

"What are you doing and how did you find me?!" I half whispered, half shouted out the window.

"Can I come up?" was all he asked. He pointed to the tree, then made a climbing motion with his hands. I sighed and gestured for him to come, stepping away from the window and waiting with folded

arms as he quietly and nimbly climbed up the tree. I watched as his hand, then his leg, followed by the rest of his body, came through my window. Once he was through, we stood there in silence for a few moments; mine was a disbelieving sort of silence, while his was more expectant.

"Well?" I asked. I was a bit put off by his sudden appearance, especially after how he'd spoken to me in the locker room and even more so after what his father had said to me.

"I'm sorry for how I acted," he said quietly. "I've been a confusing asshole."

"I'll say," I muttered, staring at the floor. As I looked down, I heard Enzo approach and suddenly felt his warm arms wrap around me. My eyes widened, but as I inhaled his musky scent, I couldn't stop myself from relaxing against him.

When we finally pulled away, there were tears in my eyes. "You can't stay," I whispered, taking a step back and wiping the tears away with my hand. "Your father... I don't know what he's planning on doing to my mom and my brother, but he was very clear with his threat."

Enzo's eyes widened. "You spoke to my father?"

I nodded. "I saw him after the hockey game. He said that if I get involved with you, he knows where my mom and my brother live. I don't know what that means, but I can't risk letting my family potentially get hurt."

There was another long silence. Enzo let out a deep, rattled sigh. When I looked up, he was staring intensely at the floor.

"Is that why you've been pushing me away?" I asked. "Because of him?"

"It was... a big part of the reason," he whispered.

More tears came to my eyes. "Why didn't you tell me? If I had known, I—" My voice faltered. I didn't know what I would have done if I had known about his father's threats. Would it have even made a difference, or would I have been so blinded by Enzo's scent that I would have risked the safety of my mom and my brother?

"I thought I was protecting you by not telling you," he said.

I scoffed. "Protecting me?" I choked out through the tears. "All this time, I thought that you just discarded me like I was worthless because of that stupid scarf. After everything we've been through, I thought that you only pushed me away because of your mate."

"I do have a mate, Nina," he said. "But you have a scent, too. And it makes me lose control around you."

"So you're saying we could be mates," I whispered, "if it wasn't for your father."

Enzo paused for a long time. The tension between us fell thick and heavy on the room, and it told me everything that I needed to know: Enzo wasn't certain enough about me to claim me as his mate. Because of a scarf, even if his father wasn't making these threats, he still wouldn't know if he really wanted me.

More tears streamed down my cheeks. I began to shake my head. "You have to go—"

Suddenly, my door flung open. Enzo jerked his head up with wide eyes. I spun around to see my mother storming up to me with fury written across her face and, even more shockingly, a baseball bat in her hand.

“Mom, it’s okay,” I said, trying to block her from Enzo. “He’s a friend.”

She wasn’t listening. She gritted her teeth and pushed past me, putting herself between me and Enzo, and protectively blocked me with her body as she pointed the baseball bat at Enzo.

“I know who you are and why you’re here,” she growled. “Get away from my daughter before I kill you.”

Chapter 126 Romeo and Juliet

Nina

My door swung open. Enzo’s eyes went wide as he looked at something behind me, and when I turned, my own eyes widened too. My mother was standing in the doorway, her nostrils flaring angrily and her eyes full of fiery fury, and she was holding a baseball bat. Before I could stop her, she rushed at me and then, for some reason, she put herself protectively between Enzo and I.

“I know who you are and why you’re here,” she snarled, her voice low and angry. “Get away from my daughter before I kill you.”

My mother pointed the baseball bat at Enzo, poised to strike. Meanwhile, he stood in front of her with his hands held up in surrender and a confused look on his face.

“Mom,” I pleaded, grabbing her arm. “It’s okay. This is just Enzo. He’s a friend of mine.”

“Bullshit,” she snarled, prodding him with the baseball bat and causing him to back up against the window. “I’m doing exactly what your father told me to do, kid. What more do you people want?”

“What?” Enzo said, confused. “I have no idea what you’re talking about, Mrs. Harper. I’m only here to talk to Nina.”

Suddenly, my mom let loose an angry noise that almost resembled a roar and brought the baseball bat up above her head. She swung it hard and fast toward Enzo with all of her strength, but he was too quick and dodged it, causing her to hit my desk instead and send my old high school textbooks flying.

She tried to hit Enzo again, but missed that time, too. She then lunged for him again, this time managing to hit him on the shoulder with the bat. He barely flinched from the

impact, but then let out a yelp and rolled to the left as she almost hit him again. They began to circle the room like this, with my

mother repeatedly trying to hit him with the baseball bat and Enzo dodging this way and that in order to avoid her frenzied attacks.

All throughout this scuffle, I screamed for her to stop.

“Mom!” I shouted. “What are you doing this for? Enzo has nothing to do with his father!” I finally managed to grab the baseball bat and was somehow able to wrench it free from my mother’s shaking fists. By that point, Enzo was halfway out the window. His face was wrought with a mixture of confusion and regret as he climbed out the window and back down the tree to the motorcycle, but I was too preoccupied trying to pin my mother down and get her to calm down enough to explain what was going on.

I had my arms wrapped tightly around her in a bear hug, pinning her arms down to her sides. I heard the sound of the motorcycle engine rev, and then heard it fade into the distance. When it did, I finally released her.

Without hesitation, she suddenly sprung into action and grabbed my suitcase. She shoved it in my hands, then ran out of my room and across the hall to Taylor’s room. I chased after her as she flung the door open — Taylor was already awake, but was still sitting in bed with a confused look on his face — and watched in horror as she grabbed his suitcase out of the closet and began to stuff clothes in it.

“Mom, please,” I begged, dropping my suitcase on the floor as my chest heaved from the anxiety of the whole situation, “you have to explain to me what’s going on.”

“That boy is Richard Rivers’ son, isn’t he?” she asked.

“Yeah, but—”

“I knew Richard in college. He’s the reason why your brother is like this.”

“Wait, what?” Taylor said, throwing his blanket off of his legs and clamoring out of bed.

“What are you talking about?”

“I’ll explain everything in the car,” my mom said, shutting and zipping Taylor’s suitcase. “We have to get to the airport. Now.”

Taylor and I both watched in abject shock as our mother bolted out of the room and practically flew down the stairs. We exchanged confused looks before I ran after her. I followed her to her room and stood in the doorway, my eyes wide, while I watched her shoving clothes and family photographs into her suitcase.

“Mom,” I said as calmly as I would, trying to hide the fact that my voice was quivering, “I really think you’re overreacting. Can we just sit down and talk about this?”

“There’s no time,” she said. “Richard will stop at nothing to get what he wants. And now he sends his son to intimidate me?”

My mind wandered back to the things that Richard had said to me in the hockey arena... He’d said that he knew where my mom and my brother lived.

“Did he threaten you?” I asked. “Because of me?”

My mother was silent for a moment, frantically shoving things into her suitcase, before she finally answered. “...Yes. He told me that he wanted us to leave the country, or else he was going to come after your brother and I. That’s why I bought those plane tickets; I was going to call you just as you called me. I’m sorry I lied to you, but I didn’t know what else to do. But I don’t want you to blame yourself, honey. It’s not really about you or whatever it is that Richard led you to believe; it’s a decades- old vendetta that he has against me.”

“Why?”

“I fell in love with the wrong person in college,” she said. “Taylor’s father. Richard was not only jealous of our relationship, but he also felt like I was a traitor for being with someone who was in his rival clan. He had a witch lay a curse on Taylor before he was even born.”

“So... That’s why...” My eyes widened.

“Yes,” she replied. “That’s why your brother is sick, and why I never took him to see any doctors. Because they couldn’t help him. I found a witch, but she could only do so much, and her potions were expensive. But maybe, in Europe, we’ll be able to find someone better.”

She finished packing her bag, then turned to face me. Her shoulders shook with fear and anger, and in that moment, she looked so small. “Are you coming with us or not?” she asked as tears streamed down her cheeks. “Is it going to be me and your brother, or that boy?”

I was still standing in the doorway, and when I looked up at the stairs, Taylor was standing at the top. He was wringing his hands nervously, and looked more frightened now than I’d ever seen him before. I couldn’t leave him like this; I promised, when we were kids, that I would always protect him. By staying with Enzo, I would only be putting him in more danger. I knew that my friends would understand; I wasn’t so sure if Enzo would understand, though, but I knew that I had to choose my family first.

“Okay,” I whispered, nodding solemnly as I blinked away the tears that were beginning to form in my eyes. “I’ll go with you.”

Chapter 127 Midnight at the Airport

Nina

“Okay,” I whispered. “I’ll go with you.”

My mom let out a relieved sigh. Without a word, she rushed over to me and pulled me into a tight hug. I felt myself tense under her touch for a moment before I relaxed and wrapped my arms around her. For a long time, we held each other, crying, and eventually I heard the sound of my brother quietly walking down the stairs.

When I turned around, he was standing in the doorway with his suitcase in one hand and mine in the other.

“You knew all along?” I asked as we waited for my mom to finish packing up some sentimental items and valuables around the house to bring with us.

He nodded, then paused and furrowed his brow. “Yes. Well, sort of. I found out a couple of years ago when mom had a witch come and try to break the curse. I thought she was crazy for a long time, though. Now, I realize that she was telling the truth.”

I nodded, staring at the floor with wide eyes as a million things raced through my mind. “I’ve learned a lot these past few months,” I said. “If you had asked me at the beginning of the semester if I thought werewolves were real, I would’ve laughed in your face and called you a maniac. Now...”

My voice trailed off as I looked up to see my mother standing by the door. Her face was twisted into a look of sadness, and as she gripped her suitcase in her hand, her knuckles were white. “Come on,” she said, opening the door. “We have to go quickly.”

I nodded solemnly and took my suitcase from Taylor. Then, we said goodbye to our childhood home and left.

...

As our mother drove us to the airport, the reality of the situation hadn’t fully hit me yet and I had a million questions. Thankfully, my mom was finally honest and open about everything, and I was able to get some answers.

“So... You knew Richard in college?” I asked. “And Tiffany, and all of the others? Even... Edward?”

My mother smiled a bit at the mention of Tiffany's name, but her smile quickly faded as I mentioned Richard and Edward.

"Yes," she said quietly, gripping the steering wheel tightly as she drove. "The Peacekeepers. How did you know about our club?"

"Tiffany told me," I replied. "She misses you, by the way."

"I miss her, too," my mom said with a soft sigh. "But it's been too long. I'm afraid I'm not the same person I was in college."

I was silent for a moment, looking out the window as the occasional streetlight cast the inside of the car in an amber glow. With each flash of light, mine and my brother's intertwined hands were illuminated. "I think she'd still like you," I said.

My mother didn't answer.

Finally, we pulled out onto the highway.

"Mom," Taylor said, "what are you gonna do with the house? Will we come back?"

"I'll have to sell it," she replied. "We won't be coming back. I'm sorry."

My eyes widened. "You told me it would only be temporary—"

"I only said that so you would come with us, honey," my mom choked out through her clenched throat. "I'm sorry. But I had to do what was best for my children. Richard will stop at nothing to get us out of the picture, especially now that the Crescents are making a return. He still thinks I'm a traitor, and he thinks that I planted you there on that campus as a spy."

"That's ridiculous," I said. "He can't really be that unreasonable."

Once again, my mother didn't answer. For the rest of the drive, I couldn't help but wonder if I was making a grave mistake by leaving with them — permanently. But then again, what could I do? If Enzo's father really was as ruthless as he seemed, then I didn't want to put my brother and my mom at risk anymore. Was I really about to say goodbye to everything and everyone I had come to know and love over the past four years? My friends, my job, my career, the campus, Tiffany, Enzo... The thought of not even having Lori and Jessica in my life was heartbreaking in and of itself. As we sped along the dark highway, I watched the silver guard rail fly past us, and the entire time I couldn't stop myself from crying silently.

Eventually, the airport came into view. My mom pulled into the long-term parking lot and got out of the car. We had left so quickly that she was still in her pajamas; not that it mattered, since the airport seemed mostly empty.

“Are you coming?” Taylor asked as he got out. I snapped out of my thoughts and nodded soberly before climbing out. My hands shook as I closed the car door and retrieved my suitcase from the trunk, and every step we took toward the airport felt heavy and painful.

As we passed through the doors to the airport, all I could think about was Enzo. Already, I missed him more than anything. It felt as though I was leaving an entire half of my own body behind. Did he feel the same? Where had he gone when he climbed out of the window? As I stood behind my mother and listened to her arguing with the receptionist while she tried to exchange our old plane tickets for newer, faster ones, I couldn't stop myself from glancing periodically over my shoulder at the front doors. It was

as though I kept hoping that Enzo would be standing there with his arms outstretched, but he never was.

Finally, the receptionist relented and let my mother exchange our tickets. She gave us the new tickets and pointed us toward security, where we went through the motions of removing our shoes and electronics while the security guard, a tired-looking middle aged man, waved us through the metal detector.

Once we were through and on our way to our plane, which would apparently be leaving in twenty minutes, it all felt so solid now. I felt as though I was walking through a thick mud, and with every step, I sank a little deeper. I trailed behind Taylor and my mother as they walked briskly to the terminal, still looking over my shoulder with the feeble hope that Enzo would be running after me... But he wasn't.

We arrived at the terminal. My mother handed our tickets to the attendant, who waved us through the gate with a stiff smile on her face.

Suddenly, I felt my heart leap.

A familiar scent floated to me across the air. It was faint at first, but it grew stronger with every millisecond.

It was Enzo's scent. I was sure of it.

I stopped in my tracks and looked over my shoulder one last time.

“Nina?” my mother called. “What are you doing? Hurry up!”

I turned back to face her and took one more step, but the mud was too thick now. I couldn't go with her. Enzo's scent was like a lifeline pulling me to safety, pulling me home. I felt tears begin to stream down my cheeks and I shook my head rapidly, taking a step backwards.

“Mom... I can’t.”

“Ma’am, the plane will be leaving in five minutes,” the attendant said. “If you’re not going to get on, I have to ask you to come back out of the gate.”

My mother’s eyes were wide and frantic. She rushed toward me and grabbed me by my shoulders, her face pleading. “What are you doing, Nina?” she asked, her voice shaking just as much as her hands. “We have to go!”

I shook my head and took another step back, wrenching myself free of her grip. “I don’t want to, mom. Go without me. I promise I’ll make everything better, and you and Taylor can come home, but I need to stay. Please.”

My mother froze. Her eyes searched my face desperately. “You love him that much?”

I nodded.

Her eyes welled up with tears. “Go, then. But... here.” She grabbed her suitcase and pulled something out, shoving it in my hands as the attendant approached to remove me from the gate and usher them to the plane.

It was the baby blanket from the picture.

“It’s the only link to your past,” she said as the attendant began to pull me away. “I love you, honey.”

“I love you too, mom,” I called as the doors began to close. Behind her, I saw Taylor smile weakly and wave.

“See you later, sis,” he said through his tears.

Before I could answer, the doors closed. I felt tears streaming down my cheeks, but I knew I did the right thing... Because Enzo’s scent was invariably close now.

Without another look back, I grabbed my suitcase and ran.

I ran all the way through the airport, back through security, and burst out through the front doors. Just as I emerged, panting and looking around wildly, I saw him.

Enzo was running across the parking lot.

“Nina!” he called.

I let out a choked sob and dropped my suitcase. I ran to him and leaped into his arms almost weightlessly. He lifted me off the ground for a moment as he wrapped his strong arms around me, holding me tightly while I sobbed into his shirt.

“I thought I lost you for good,” he said. “I went back to the house and you weren’t there—”

I didn’t care. “Just kiss me,” I murmured, interrupting him.

And he did

Chapter 128 The Guardian Wolf

Nina

Enzo kissed me. He didn’t pull away suddenly, or kiss me by accident. He kissed me softly and deeply, with his hands cupped around my cheeks. His scent overwhelmed me, making me relax into his body. It felt as though we were floating on a cloud, and everything else fell away.

When we finally pulled away, it was reluctant. We rested our foreheads against each other, breathing deeply. I closed my eyes, taking in his scent as much as I could.

“What made you turn around?” he asked as he led me to his motorcycle.

I stared at the ground, unsure as to how to answer. But I wanted to be truthful. “It was your scent,” I finally said. “I knew I had to turn back then.”

He nodded quietly. I wondered if he picked up my scent, too, but he didn’t say. As we climbed onto the motorcycle, he caught a glimpse of the baby blanket in my hand and pointed at it. “Is that...”

I nodded, holding it up. It was small, a bit tattered around the edges, and the pattern was faded, but it was the same blanket from the pictures.

“My mom said it’s the only link to my past... I think it might help me figure out who this woman is that keeps sending people to capture me.”

As I held it, I felt a slight tingling in my fingers. It was almost as though the blanket held some sort of magic, but I knew that was ridiculous. I pocketed it, then helped Enzo strap my suitcase down to the luggage rack on the back of his motorcycle. When we were finished, he handed me a helmet before we climbed on and drove away.

That night, Enzo took me back to a motel room that he had rented before all of this happened. It was a cheap, run-down motel along the side of the highway. Apparently, he’d planned on spending the night

there until my mother calmed down, and then he was going to come back to try to talk to us and figure out what was going on.

I explained everything to Enzo as we made our way into the motel room, including the curse that his father hired a witch to cast on my brother. When I was finished, he sat on the edge of the bed with a confused expression on his face and wrung his hands.

“My father is a jerk, but I really can’t see him cursing a baby,” he said thoughtfully. “Sure, he might make threats, and I could see him bribing your mother to take you out of the country to get away from me... But I just know that he’s not that violent.”

I sighed. There were two small beds in the room, and I sat down on the other. “I don’t know. But either way, I promised my mom that I would find a way to let her come back. If I could strike up a deal, maybe—”

Enzo shook his head. “Let me handle it,” he said solemnly, then gestured toward the baby blanket in my hand. “You’ve got enough on your plate.”

I looked down at the blanket and nodded. “Yeah. I guess you’re right.”

“For now,” Enzo said, standing, “we’ve got an early morning tomorrow, and it’s already two o’clock in the morning. We should get some sleep.”

I agreed. We got ready for bed, then got into our own beds; despite our kiss, there was still a lot of confusion surrounding the arranged marriage, and we decided it was best to sleep separately. As I fell asleep with the taste of Enzo’s lips still on mine, however, I couldn’t help but notice that he kept the red scarf in his hand while he slept.

...

At some point during the night, I awoke with a yelp. I sat up abruptly in bed, panting from my most recent nightmare that involved Edward’s torture.

Enzo shot up, too, startled by my sudden outcry.

“Are you okay?” he asked from across the dark room.

I sighed, holding my hand over my racing heart. “Yeah. Sorry... Just a nightmare.”

He was silent for a moment as I laid back down. I thought he went back to sleep, but then he spoke. “You’ve been having them, too?”

I frowned, turning my head to look over at him. Even in the darkness, I could see his form in the bed next to mine.

“Yeah,” I whispered, shutting my eyes. “I guess we both are.”

He was silent again for some time. Then, without a word, I heard his bed creak and opened my eyes to see him approaching me in the darkness. Neither of us spoke as he

lifted up the blanket on my bed and crawled in with me. He slowly wrapped his arms around me, pulling me so close I could feel his heartbeat through his shirt. It felt so natural like this; it reminded me of the night we spent together at the lodge in the woods. The room was silent, filled with nothing but the quiet sound of our in-sync breaths as we slowly drifted off into a dreamless slumber together.

...

The next morning, I woke up to the sound of cars outside from the highway. I rolled over and cracked my eyes open against the light to see that Enzo was no longer in bed. In fact, as I sat up, I realized that he wasn't in the motel room at all.

"Enzo?" I called, my heart starting to pound as I wondered where he went. Had he abandoned me? Had something happened to him in the middle of the night? I felt myself begin to panic — but then, suddenly, the door opened.

Enzo stepped in, carrying a take-out food bag and a cardboard coffee carrier with two cups of coffee in it. He smiled gently as he saw me.

"I was hoping to be back before you woke up," he said, coming over and setting the bag and the coffee down on the bedside table between the two beds. "I hope I didn't worry you too much."

"I only panicked a little," I said, relaxing now that I knew that he was okay and not missing. "What's this for?" I nodded toward the food.

"Breakfast, duh," he replied. I watched as he sat down on the other bed and dug into the bag to retrieve two breakfast sandwiches wrapped in paper. He handed one to me, then unwrapped his and took a big bite.

"I know it's not exactly gourmet," he said, "but there isn't anything around here except for fast food joints."

I chuckled and unwrapped my sandwich. "Yeah. Growing up here was pretty boring." I took a bite, relishing in the greasiness of the sandwich. Between this and the peanut butter sandwich from the night before, I felt as though I was starting to get my appetite back. Sleeping peacefully with Enzo certainly helped as well, although I found myself blushing whenever our eyes met.

When we were finished, I stood and walked over to my suitcase to rifle through it for some clean clothes. I finally produced a pair of jeans and a sweater. Enzo turned his back while I changed.

"You've got another game already tomorrow, right?" I asked.

He nodded. "Yeah... Then just one more after that before the final match."

“With Ronan.” I felt my heart sink as I mentioned the rival captain — the very same one who plotted to ruin my image and push Enzo and I apart in order to serve his plan with Edward and ‘The Sister’, whoever she was.

Suddenly, Enzo stood and came over to me. I felt my heart skip and my eyes widen as he wordlessly pulled me into a tight hug.

“I won’t let him hurt you,” Enzo said quietly. I looked up and blushed to see him looking down at me intently. At that moment, I wanted to kiss him again so badly. Our relationship felt so confusing now after spending the night together; the way he’d held me, making my nightmares go away like my guardian, made me feel more connected to him than ever. But at the same time... What sort of relationship could we have if he had a mate out there? And even more than that, how could we be together if his father was still hell-bent on keeping us apart for whatever reason?

But then, suddenly, he pulled away and averted his gaze. “Make sure you wear a warm coat,” he said. “It’ll be cold on the motorcycle.”

Chapter 129 The Deal

Enzo

I returned to campus with Nina with a weight lifted out of my heart in knowing that she was still by my side, but there was still so much we had to deal with. I still couldn’t shake the feeling that my fated mate was truly the owner of the scarf my father gave me, but at the same time, Nina’s weak scent was too similar to not notice that there was something more to this. Furthermore, my father still thought that Nina had run away overseas with her mother and her brother, and I worried that he would do something to her, like frighten her away for good, if he found out.

When we returned to campus, because of all of these things, I decided to drop Nina off at her dorm and part ways with her for the time being. I needed to figure things out, but I could only do that by going to the one place where I could clear my head and think straight: the empty hockey arena.

I parked my motorcycle and walked to Nina’s dorm with her. We walked slowly, hardly speaking, although I couldn’t help but steal the occasional glance over at her. She looked so beautiful in weather like this, with her long black hair poking out from inside her hat and her brown eyes sparkling with possibilities. My eyes wandered down to her body, and although I knew I shouldn’t be looking, I couldn’t stop myself from imagining how she looked that night in the shower... Her soft curves, her plump breasts, her smooth skin. I’d tried to keep myself from noticing how her body felt against me as we slept in the motel, but I couldn’t help it. Even now, I felt myself get a little hard thinking about it, and I quickly looked away and shook the thoughts out of my mind before it went any further.

Finally, we arrived at her dorm building. She stopped at the doorway and turned to face me. Her cheeks were rosy from the cold, and I thought I could see that her eyes were watery; whether it was from the cold or from her wanting to cry, I couldn't tell.

"Will you come up?" she asked quietly.

I was a bit taken aback by her question. I paused, considering it for a moment, but shook my head. I still had a lot to think about and I couldn't get any thinking done when all I wanted to do was be inside of her. "I'm sorry," I replied, averting my gaze so I wouldn't have to see the disappointed look on her round face. "I need to practice for the game... And I need to think about some stuff."

She was silent for a moment, but eventually nodded understandingly.

"Okay," she whispered. Before I could walk away, she suddenly moved forward and lifted herself up onto her tiptoes, then planted a gentle kiss on my cheek. Then, without a word, she left me standing on the steps with my face red from surprise.

I stood there for a moment, still feeling her cold lips on my cheek. I wanted so badly to run inside after her and carry her upstairs, but I couldn't. So, I hung my head and walked to the arena, where I headed into the locker room to get changed so I could practice.

But it seemed, however, that I wasn't alone in there.

My father suddenly rushed out of nowhere, grabbing my shirt and swiftly pinning me up against the wall with all of his strength. I struggled against him, but it was no use; he was too powerful as an Alpha for me to fight back very effectively, even though I was physically bigger than him.

"What did you do?" he snarled. "I told you to stay away from her — I even went out of my way to get you something that belongs to your mate in order to help you stay focused — and you undermine me by bringing her back here?"

A low, exasperated growl rumbled in my throat and I felt my eyes begin to glow. "You can't just threaten people and force them to leave the country, dad," I said. "Your beef is with her mother. Not her."

My father released his grip on my shirt and stepped away. He almost seemed to shrink at the mention of Nina's mother, and he passed a hand over his tired face.

"I'm only trying to protect you and our pack," he said quietly. "Humans — they're useless, fickle creatures. They don't understand the concept of a mate bond like we do. She'll only hurt you if you let yourself get involved, son. And, even more important than that, this arranged marriage is set in stone. If you back out now, it'll be detrimental to our future."

“Why?” I asked. “Why is it so important for our pack if I marry another CEO’s daughter?”

“Because she’s not the daughter of a CEO!” he barked. “She’s the daughter of the Alpha King, and by marrying her, you will become the next Alpha King.”

My eyes widened incredulously. I opened my mouth to speak, but nothing would come out; I couldn’t even think of a response for him.

“So,” he continued, “that’s why this is so important. If you marry this girl, you will ensure that the Crescents never return.”

“What about all of this ‘peaceful competition’ you and Ronan’s father talked about, then?” I asked. “I thought you decided that the tournament was a fair way—”

My father shook his head. “It’s just a distraction. Meanwhile, I’ve been working tirelessly to ensure that this marriage happens, and you very well may have ruined it. I don’t want to do anything to hurt the girl, Enzo, but you’ve left me no choice.”

At the mention of Nina, I couldn’t bear it any longer. I couldn’t risk her getting hurt, and if this was truly as important to my father as he claimed...

“I’ll do it, then,” I said. “I’ll marry this girl. If you promise not to hurt Nina, and if you let her family come home, I’ll marry her without fuss. You won’t have to worry about us getting involved anymore.”

As I spoke, I felt my heart shatter into a million pieces. Of course, I knew that my mate’s scent was powerful all along, but I supposed that there had always been a small shred of hope that Nina could be my mate in the end — especially since her scent was the same, just weaker. But, if marrying the Alpha King’s daughter would keep Nina safe, then I would do it.

My father was silent for some time before he finally nodded solemnly and spoke.

“Shake my hand,” he said, sticking his hand out. “If you do as you promise, then the girl and her family can continue living their old lives.”

I nodded, gritting my teeth as I shook his hand. “I’ll do it.” I paused then, and remembered something that Nina had told me about her brother. “I have one more condition, though.”

My father sighed and narrowed his eyes. “What is it?”

“Her brother,” I responded. “I want you to lift the curse you put on him.”

It was then, at that moment, that I knew that I was right about my father — because he cocked his head and a look of pure, unadulterated, completely innocent confusion spread across his face.

“What curse?” he asked

Chapter 130 The Final Stretch

Nina

“Are you ready for the game tonight?”

I hardly heard Tiffany’s question as I wistfully stared out the infirmary window. Ever since I came home, I couldn’t get Enzo and the feeling of his arms around me out of my mind. I wanted him to be with me so badly, but he became distant from me again all of a sudden. It almost made me wonder if I should have just gone with my mom and Tyler after all, but I was certain that he had a reason for it. Hopefully, we would have a chance to talk after the hockey match tonight — which was the second to last match. Soon, Ronan would be returning to town.

No one had heard from or seen Ronan around since he worked with Lisa to fake all of those rumors around sleeping with me. By now, most people had forgotten about it, and the account where the videos and pictures were posted mysteriously disappeared. There were still a few people here and there who would give me dirty looks as I passed, but most people were too preoccupied with the werewolf leak and the upcoming end of the Half-Moon Tournament to care.

We also had this entire week of no classes for the mid-semester break, which was much needed. However, I couldn’t bring myself to sit around and do nothing, so I agreed to keep helping Tiffany in the infirmary.

“Earth to Nina?” Tiffany asked, waving her hand in front of my face.

I jumped and blinked rapidly, broken from my deep thoughts. “S-Sorry,” I said, blushing. “I’ve been a little out of it.”

Tiffany’s smile was warm as ever. “That’s okay, so long as you’re not too distracted tonight during the game.”

I nodded, then returned to my work. Meanwhile, Tiffany pattered around the infirmary and cleaned since there were no students around.

“Hey…” I said, looking up from my notebook again. “Can I ask you something?”

“Hm?”

I bit my lip and glanced over at my shoulder at the supply closet, inside of which was the door to the tunnels. “Have you gone in there at all?”

The blonde doctor’s face went red and she shivered as she looked over at the door. “Um... No. Why?”

I shrugged. “My friends think I should go down there and take pictures as evidence for the police,” I replied. “But... I don’t think I can go in there ever again, if I’m being honest. Does that make me a coward?”

Tiffany sighed and set down her broom before coming over to me and grabbing my hands from across the lab table. “It most certainly does not,” she said softly. “What matters most is that you made it out, and you’re healing from the experience. Besides... I told Dean Cynthia about it. Trust me when I say that she has quietly been doing all she can to track him down and bring him to justice.”

I couldn’t help but smile at Tiffany’s kind words. “Thank you,” I said, blinking back some of the tears that began to well up in my eyes. “That helps a lot.”

...

That night, I attended the second to last hockey match of the tournament with Tiffany, Lori, Jessica, and even Luke by my side. The arena was packed to the brim with excited students from both schools, and thankfully, there were no protesters to be found — not as far as I could tell, at least.

The air was thick with the scent of sweat and adrenaline as Enzo skated onto the ice at the head of his team. Beside him was Matt, who looked up at the crowd with a grin and pumped his hockey stick in the air to arouse a cheer from the onlookers.

Their opponents then skated out onto the ice with the announcer’s call. The other captain had a fierce scowl etched onto his face, and his glowing yellow eyes scanned the ice with a hunger that made the hair on the back of my neck stand on end — but as I met Enzo’s calm, focused eyes from across the rink, I felt relief in knowing that he wasn’t scared of losing.

The referee dropped the puck, and the game began in a flurry of movement. The rink was alive with the sound of skates slicing through the ice and the clatter of sticks colliding. Enzo and Matt worked together to create a fast break, passing the puck back and forth as they advanced down the ice. The opposing team’s defense swarmed around them, trying to block their path, but Enzo’s size and strength proved too much to handle. With a powerful shot, he sent the puck flying past the goalie and into the net.

The crowd erupted into a thunderous roar. Matt and the rest of the team whooped in triumph, the sound echoing throughout the rink, but Enzo stayed silent and focused.

The other team seemed undeterred, however, and soon they were pressing forward with renewed vigor.

For the rest of the game, the two teams battled it out with a fierce intensity. Bodies slammed into each other, sticks clattered against the boards, and the puck sailed back and forth. Enzo and Matt continued to dominate, using their superior strength and agility to outmaneuver their opponents at every turn. Watching Matt like this continued to be a surprise, and for a brief moment, I could've sworn that I caught a glimpse of his eyes glowing, but I chalked it up to a trick of the light and focused on the game once more.

As the clock ticked down, it became clear that our team was going to win. The rival team made a last-ditch effort to score, but Enzo blocked their shots with ease, passing the puck to his teammates until

we scored a goal against the other team in the final moments of the game.

Finally, the buzzer sounded, and the entire stadium erupted into cheers. The crowd joined in, stamping their feet and clapping their hands in a deafening ovation. Enzo bared his fangs in a grin of triumph; I'd never seen him do anything like that before, but for some reason, it aroused something in me and I joined in with the cheers, throwing my arms around my friends and jumping up and down excitedly.

As the players skated off the ice, I couldn't stop myself from focusing my gaze on Enzo over the crowd. I had always known that werewolves were natural athletes, but seeing his power and grace in action was something truly special.

Once the team was off of the ice, Tiffany and I were bombarded by their excited cheers and whoops of victory. I watched, smiling, as they lifted Enzo and Matt up on their shoulders and carried them back to the locker room.

There was no doubt in my mind that their skills would help them to win the Half-Moon Tournament and bring peace to the town of Mountainview.

...

I was just about to pack up to leave when the team finally re-emerged from the locker rooms, still chattering excitedly. I looked up and felt my face go red as I saw Enzo jogging toward me with a toothy grin spread across his lips.

"I hope you're not planning on going home," he said as he ran up to me. "We're going out to celebrate. You should come."

I felt my heart skip a beat and paused, glancing over my shoulder with the fear of Enzo's father being there — but he wasn't. When I turned back around to face Enzo again, he was still looking at me with a

childlike hopefulness on his face.

“Um... Okay,” I finally said, unable to resist Enzo’s infectious grin. “I’ll come.