

# **My Hockey Alpha #Chapter 91: Justin's Return - Read My Hockey Alpha Chapter 91: Justin's Return**

## **Chapter 91: Justin's Return**

Nina

"You guys did amazing tonight. Get your shit together and get to the bar. We're celebrating."

The team was silent for a few moments after I spoke. Enzo continued to stare down at me with an expression on his face that I couldn't read, although I could tell that part of him wanted me to hit him before, as if violence would solve his issues with his father. I felt horrible just for even considering doing such a thing to him, tears started to well up in my eyes at the thought of intentionally hurting Enzo, making me turn on my heel and storm out of the silent locker room before anyone could see

It was dark now in the stadium when I re-emerged. Everyone had already left, and soon the custodians and the

Zamboni operator would come to clean up the stadium and resurface the rink Just then, someone stepped out of the shadows, making me practically jump out of my skin as my heart leaped up into my throat. I stumbled backwards, clutching my chest and cursing under my breath as my fight or flight instincts momentarily kicked in before

I realized who it was

It was Richard, Enzo's father

"What makes you think you've earned the right to undermine me, git?" he said, stepping toward me with his hands folded without so much as an apology for scaring me

I scoffed. It felt as though he was trying to intimidate me, and it wasn't working Without answering, I went to walk around him but he put his arm out to stop me

"I asked you a question" I froze, feeling my heart rate quicken as a million things raced through my mind.

"You don't need to speak to Enzo or the rest of the team like that," I said, mustering up my courage to turn and face Richard. "They won that game by a landslide. Just because they didn't perform up to your standards during the first round doesn't mean that they deserve to be punished."

Now, it was Richard who scoffed. "That's rich coming from someone like you, who can't even fathom the weight of this tournament."

“What, so you and another CEO can fight over who gets to run some dinky little town in the middle of nowhere?” I asked. “It’s ridiculous. You two should work it out like men instead of making your sons do the dirty work for you.”

Suddenly, Richard’s face twisted into a snarl and he roughly pushed me up against the wall, pinning me by my wrists.

“You have no idea what any of this means,” he growled into my ear, making me shudder. “You’re lucky that I’m even entertaining your little relationship with my son for the time being”

Before I could respond, the locker room door swung open. Just as quickly as he accosted me, Richard stepped away, releasing his grip on my wrists, and teleported away without so much as another word.

“Are you alright?” Enzo asked, seeing the panicked look on my face.

I nodded, not wanting to upset Enzo, and stepped away from the wall.

“Yeah,” I replied, ignoring the burning sensation in my wrists from where Richard had grabbed me “I’m fine. But I think I’m going home early tonight... You guys can go to the bar without me.”

Enzo cocked his head and gave me a disappointed look. “Are you sure?” he asked. “You were gonna come just a few minutes ago.”

I nodded, talking a few steps backwards. “I just.. I have a lot of homework to do, that’s all,” I lied, not wanting to reveal that Enzo’s own father had just scared the hell out of me. “I forgot that I have a paper due this weekend.”

Saturday morning, I woke up to the sunlight streaming in through my bedroom window. When I sat up, yawning and rubbing my eyes, I noticed that the notification light on my phone was blinking. I picked up my phone and read the notification: it was a text from Enzo.

“Drill sergeant made us practice this morning. Could use the team doctor in case anything goes wrong... And bagels, maybe? I’ll pay you back.”

I frowned as I read the text. Had his father still convinced him and the rest of the team to train this early, and on a Saturday morning, no less? Sighing, I climbed out of bed and started getting dressed with conviction. If they were going to be training this early on the day after a match, then I was going to have to be there as their team doctor, training while exhausted was nothing but the perfect storm for injuries.

I quickly got dressed and headed out, stopping at the dining hall to pick up enough coffees for everyone and bagels, then started to precariously make my way toward the

hockey arena with the tray of coffees in one hand and the bag of bagels in the other, taking care not to spill anything.

“Need some help with that?” a familiar voice said.

I looked up, astonished to see Justin standing in front of me.

“Justin?” I said, nearly dropping the tray of coffee out of shock. “Where the hell have you been?”

Justin furrowed his brows and gave me a confused look. “What are you talking about?” he said. “I’ve only been on campus.”

I shook my head. “No, you’ve been missing for, like two, maybe three. weeks now. Everyone thought you dropped out.”

Justin only chuckled and walked toward me, gingerly taking the tray of coffees from my hand “Nice try,” he said “Where are you taking this?”

“To the hockey team,” I replied warily, half expecting him to drop it all over the ground out of anger for being kicked off the team. But, much to my surprise, he simply smiled and nodded.

“Cool,” he said. “I’ll walk with you. I wanted to talk to Enzo today.”

Before I could say anything else, Justin turned on his heel and started walking toward the hockey arena. I bit my lip, utterly confused by Justin’s sudden change in attitude and apparent dismissal of his weeks-long disappearance, but decided to follow him anyway. At the very least, he was now headed straight for Enzo, who would at least see what was happening first-hand and would maybe have some insight on the situation.

“By the way,” Justin said as we walked, his voice nonchalant as ever, I’ve been so busy, I never had the chance to thank you for helping me out that night in the woods. I feel like an idiot for taking those drugs. But I’m all better now, and it won’t happen again.”

“Um That’s good,” I replied, stunned by his words as I thought back to his rogue rampage in the forest that night. The image of the woman’s bloody leg flashed through my mind, and I shook my head to dispel it. “Is that what you’ve been up to?” I asked. ” Getting better?”

“Sort of,” he replied. “I realized after you guys left me in the woods that night that I had to get my shit together if I wanted to get back on the hockey team. So I decided to get some help Like, professional help. And now I feel better than ever! I’m certain now that Enzo will let me back on the team.”

I stopped in my tracks as Justin mentioned getting professional help Could it be?

“Justin, who did you get help from?” I asked.

Justin stopped a few feet in front of me, his back turned. He stood like that for several moments, as though he was thinking deeply, before he slowly turned back to face me with a plastic- looking smile on his face.

“Edward helped me.”

## **Chapter 92: The Suspicious Counselor**

Nina

I stood there, in the middle of the quad as I clutched the paper bag full of bagels in my hand, staring at Justin’s horrifying, plastic smile

“Edward helped me,” he said. “He’s a really good counselor. Before, I felt so vicious and feral because of those drugs, but now I feel

better than ever.”

“O-Oh,” I muttered, blinking slowly as my mind raced with a million different thoughts of what might’ve truly happened to Justin if Edward

was the one who was deliberately turning people into werewolves. Beyond that, the blank and empty look in Justin’s eyes, although his

lips were pulled taut into a smile, horrified me to no end. “T That’s nice.”

Mhm. Justin’s smile faded and he turned around again. “C’mon. You were going to the hockey rink, right?”

I swallowed, “Yeah,” I said, feeling a lump form in my throat as I began to follow Justin again.

When we arrived at the hockey rink, I felt the lump in my throat grow larger. Justin swung open the heavy metal door with ease and held it

open for me, letting me pass through ahead of him. I felt as though my limbs were made of rope and the hairs on the back of my neck

raised from the fear of having Justin behind me, out of sight. Images of Justin suddenly shifting into a rogue again and decapitating me, or

slipping a knife out of his jacket, filled my mind but no such thing happened.

Enzo and the rest of the team were running drills on the ice. My eyes darted around as I looked for Enzo's father, but thankfully he was

nowhere. to be found.

"H-Hey, guys," I called, approaching the rink with wide eyes as Justin walked behind me.

Everyone looked up from their intense training. Enzo froze upon seeing Justin, his wide eyes darting to meet mine momentarily, before he

raised his hand to relieve the team from their drills.

"Justin!" Matt said. "Where have you been, man?" The rest of the team murmured in an equal amount of surprise and confusion as Justin

and I approached the bench, setting down the coffee and bagels. Enzo, however, stayed silent, only coming over to me in an almost

protective manner

"Yeah," Enzo finally said, narrowing his eyes suspiciously. "Where have you been?"

Justin shrugged, sticking his hands in his jacket pockets. The team started digging into the bagels with murmurs of appreciation directed

toward me as they ate, but Enzo and I stayed warily off to the side.

"Can I talk to you?" Justin said, turning toward Enzo. "Privately?"

Enzo hesitated for a few moments before nodding slowly and, casting me one last worried look, walked away with Justin.

"Don't tell me Justin is in on this whole werewolf thing," Matt said quietly, his mouth full of bagel.

"Something like that," I replied, keeping my gaze focused on Enzo and Justin. I couldn't make out what they were saying. I cursed myself inwardly, wondering why I was developing all of these werewolf abilities without developing the extremely useful ability of enhanced hearing

Lo and behold, Enzo returned a few. minutes later I watched in astonishment as Justin casually walked out of the arena; Enzo was just letting him go?

"What was that about?" Bryce asked.

“Nothing,” Enzo replied, although I could tell he was lying. “Training is done for the day. Go home and get some rest, everyone.”

Grumbling, the team retreated to the locker rooms. Enzo turned to follow them, but I grabbed his arm and made him stay behind.

“What the hell?” I whispered. “You just let him walk away when there’s clearly something going on there?”

“Don’t worry,” Enzo replied. “I’ve got a plan. Let me get changed and I’ll explain everything.”

Later that night, Enzo’s plan burst into action.

“Edward always leaves his office around one in the morning,” Luke explained from our hiding spot behind the art building, which was a perfect vantage point for watching the front door of the faculty office building

where Edward’s office was located. We were all wearing black to blend in with the night; it was still a shock to see Luke with a real, human face that was capable of expressions, but it was admittedly a nice change from the way it was before.

Enzo’s plan was to follow Edward, find where he lived outside of work, and then I would sneak in behind him. Luke had already snuck into Edward’s office when we first tasked him with keeping an eye on Edward, but the suspicious student counselor apparently didn’t keep files in his office... So, sneaking into his house was our next best bet.

“I still can’t believe you’re making me sneak in,” I whispered, glaring at Enzo.

“You don’t have a wolf scent,” Enzo replied. “He’d pick up Luke’s scent, too, since Luke is an undead. Besides, you’re small and you’re fast”

I groaned, but I knew that Enzo was right. If one of us was going to successfully get into Edward’s house without being caught, it would be me

Just then, Luke raised his hand for us to be quiet as the front door of the faculty office building opened, and out came Edward.

“Just on time,” Enzo whispered.

We watched, holding our breath, as Edward jogged down the steps of the building and made his way down the sidewalk. Once he was far enough away, we began to follow. We stuck to the shadows, hiding behind trees, cars, and garbage cans as we kept our distance,

until Edward eventually stopped in front of a small brick house a little ways away from campus.

Suddenly, Enzo, in an attempt to dart behind the car where Luke and I were already hiding, accidentally kicked a trash can with a large bang and alerted Edward. I cursed under my breath as Edward whipped his head around, scanning the area...

"You can come out now," he said.

Shit. We'd been caught.

"Man, you're late," a familiar voice suddenly said from the bushes. Enzo, Luke, and I all looked at each other with wide eyes as James

emerged from the shadows. We watched in utter shock and disbelief as James and Edward kissed on Edward's doorstep, then

disappeared into Edward's house

James was sleeping with Edward? How long had that been going on for?

But, then again.... he could be a good distraction

Without a word, I pressed my finger to my lips and darted across the street, running up to the side of Edward's house and sticking to the

shadows. I could hear James and Edward talking inside, indicating where they were in the house, as I shimmied my way around the side

of the house and found the perfect entrance stairs leading down to a cellar door, which was miraculously unlocked.

Taking a deep breath, I slowly opened the cellar door and slipped inside where it was pitch black and strangely cold inside, almost like a

freezer. I flicked on my phone flashlight to get a good look around.

The basement was mostly full of dusty boxes and old pieces of furniture, but there was also a set of filing cabinets on the other side of the

wall. Surely, I thought to myself, he would keep his patient files there...

"How much longer do we need to keep this a secret?" James said from above, his voice rising slightly. "I love you. We shouldn't have to

hide like this.” I bit my lip as I quietly tiptoed over to the filing cabinets. Oh, James, I thought to myself. If only you knew....

I made it over to the filing cabinets, just as I suspected, they were full of manila folders with various names on them. I began to look for

Justin’s name, which I found quickly thanks to Edward’s expert organization. Bingo!

“Soon, I promise,” Edward’s voice said from above, followed by the sound of footsteps crossing the floor

James let out a loud sigh. “I need a drink.”

“I’ll get some wine from the cellar ”

I froze as Edward’s heavy footsteps came closer to the cellar door, my heart racing a mile a minute. The door to the outside seemed so

far away, I wasn’t sure if I could make it through the maze of boxes in time...

Somehow, I managed to leap over the piles of boxes and run out the door. I wasn’t sure if I closed it behind me, but it didn’t matter as I

sprinted up the stone steps and out into the street, waving frantically for Enzo and Luke to follow me.

## **Chapter 93 Cabin Fever — Part I**

Nina

When I returned home that night, I locked myself in my room and got to work scouring through Justin’s patient files. I stayed up all night poring over the files until the sun came up, but there wasn’t anything in the folder that could outright prove that Edward had given Justin the Mad Wolf serum or that he’s done anything sinister to him. I felt as though I had hit a brick wall; in the same way that the police were no help when I tried to go to them about the stalker, they would certainly be no help now if I showed them a benign patient file. If anything, I would be painted as the bad guy for sneaking into Edward’s house and stealing the files, and alerting the police would probably only make Edward cover his tracks even more.

It was almost as if Edward intentionally set all of this up, knowing fully well that no one would believe me if I tried to turn him in to the police.

I was at a dead end.



The only mention of anything even remotely sinister was a single hand-written note mentioning that Justin was “resistant to treatment” and that “alternative treatment may be necessary.”

Who would believe that anything about that note would be evidence of an evil school counselor?

At some point, I must have fallen asleep at my desk, because I woke up sometime in the afternoon to the sound of someone knocking on my door. I had a pounding headache and drool was pooled up on the papers in front of me.

Groaning, I sat up and wiped the drool off of my mouth with the back of one hand while closing Justin’s file with the other before groggily calling out, “Come in.”

My door creaked open and Jessica poked her head in. She looked around for me, her eyes narrowed, before she finally found me and gave me a confused look. “Jesus,” she said, coming in the rest of the way and walking over to me. “Did you sleep on your desk last night?”

I nodded, nonchalantly shuffling some papers to hide Justin’s file. “Yeah. I forgot I had an assignment due last night.”

“Oh...” Jessica eyed me up and down, taking in my appearance as I stood and walked over to my bathroom sink and began brushing my teeth.

“What’s up?” I asked, my mouth full of toothpaste.

“Well, I know things have been kind of rough for you lately, so I wanted to ask if you’d like to come to a party at the cabins tonight,” she said. “You don’t have to if you don’t want to...”

“Who’s gonna be there?” I asked.

Jessica furrowed her brows. “I’m not sure why it matters, but pretty much everyone will be there.”

I halted my teeth-brushing, thinking to myself that if Lisa and Justin were at the party, then maybe that could be a good opportunity to observe them and gather some information... Maybe I could even figure out a way to get Justin so that I could question him, or even just get some pictures of him acting strange as evidence.

“Sure,” I said, spitting out my toothpaste and mustering up the best smile I could manage despite my state of utter exhaustion. “I’ll go with you.”

...

That night, Jessica, Lori, and I all went to the party together. We made our way over to the cooler to grab some drinks, and as Jessica filled up some red plastic cups with cheap vodka to get the night

started, I scanned the party, looking for Justin. He was standing by the fire with Lisa, and they appeared to be talking quietly. Lisa's eyes flickered over to me and she shot me an angry glare before grabbing Justin by the arm and pulling her away. I pretended that I didn't notice and took my shot of vodka.

As my friends and I drank and danced to the loud music, I made sure to always keep Justin in my peripherals. He wasn't acting particularly strange in any way. What if I was too late? Did Edward cover his tracks already? Or, was Justin really never acting strangely at all?

My heart leapt into my throat as I spotted him walking past the cabins and out into the woods. He glanced both ways over his shoulders, muttering something to himself.

This was my chance.

"I'm gonna go pee," I shouted to Jessica and Lori over the music, who nodded drunkenly before I jogged off after Justin. I wasn't sure where he was headed, but he seemed to be walking briskly, like he was deliberately headed somewhere — and despite the fact that I saw him drink a copious amount of alcohol, he didn't seem drunk in the slightest.

I stuck to the shadows at first as I tried to catch up to him, fumbling for my phone in the darkness to try to get a good picture or video, but it was as if he knew, and he picked up his pace. Eventually, I was running after him at full speed as he ran ahead of me.

"Justin!" I called.

He didn't answer. He just kept running deliberately into the forest. His body movements were stiff and calculated, like he was a robot who had been programmed to run this very path a million times before. Beneath the moonlight, as the sounds of the party faded behind me and the glow of the bonfire dimmed, I suddenly realized how dangerous this was.

Was Justin leading me out to a remote area of the woods on purpose? Was he trying to get me alone for even far more sinister reasons than why I was trying to get him alone?

I stopped in my tracks, biting my lip as he slowed to a walk several yards ahead of me. It was as if he was teasing me, tempting me to follow him. Maybe I should just turn back, I thought to myself. This wasn't safe...

"Hey there."

I jumped and spun around to face the source of the male voice behind me, my eyes widening as I saw who was standing there.

Ronan.

“Y-You...”

I took a few shaking steps back, swiveling my head this way and that in the hopes that somebody, anybody, would come and help me.

“Why so scared?” he asked with a smirk, walking toward me and closing the distance as I continued to backpedal away from him.

“H-Help!” I yelled, my instincts kicking in. I attempted to dodge around him and run back to the party, but he was too fast. His arm shot out and blocked me, knocking me over onto my back on the forest floor. I tried to scramble away in terror, but his foot came down on my wrist, pinning me to the ground in agony as I tried to wrench myself away.

“You should really calm down,” Ronan said, crouching, his boot still pressed into my wrist as his hot breath sprayed onto my face. “You’re not as pretty when you act like this.”

## **Chapter 94 Cabin Fever — Part II**

Nina

I woke up the next morning in a daze and not knowing where I was. As I cracked my eyes open against the light coming in through the window and started to get my bearings, I realized from the smell of the wood and the forest around me, in combination with the smell of campfire smoke and the sound of voices outside, that I was in one of the cabins in the forest.

But... How did I get here?

My head was pounding, making it difficult to remember exactly what had happened last night. I remembered coming to the party with Lori and Jessica... I remembered seeing Lisa and Justin talking to one another by the fire, and that they seemed suspicious... I remembered following Justin out into the woods...

Suddenly, my eyes widened and I shot up in bed as I remembered running into Ronan in the woods. Running into him, and then feeling an impact on the side of my head followed by darkness, was the only thing that I could remember. Had Enzo come and saved me? Did he bring me into one of the cabins to recover?

I looked around frantically for Enzo, but he wasn't there.

In fact, there was no sign of Enzo anywhere.

But as I looked down at myself, I realized that I wasn't wearing my clothes. I was dressed in nothing but my underwear. My jeans, my sweater, my socks, and my boots were strewn haphazardly across the cabin as though they had been ripped off frantically.

What had happened after I blacked out?

My head still reeling, I climbed out of the rickety wooden cabin bed and looked around for my phone, finally spotting it on the floor in the corner — thankfully, it was still intact. I opened it to see dozens of notifications from Lori, Jessica, and... Twitter.

I felt a lump form in my throat as I opened Twitter, pressing my hand over my mouth when I saw what had been posted about me.

There were dozens of pictures and videos circulating of me, but not innocent pictures like the ones that had been taken in the past of Enzo and I months before. No, these were worse. Far worse, worse even than the pictures that Richard's assistant took when she was stalking me.

And I didn't remember any of them.

My eyes widened as I scrolled through the countless pictures of me walking back to the party hand-in-hand with Ronan, a wide smile plastered across my face as I leaned on his arm. Videos of me dancing with him by the fire, grinding myself on him erotically. Pictures of us pressing our lips together drunkenly, stumbling into this very cabin...

I let out an indescribable sound as my shaking hands dropped my phone onto the cabin floor, not caring if I actually broke the screen this time as I quickly ran over to my pile of clothes and started pulling my jeans on.

"No..." I whispered to myself. "No, no, no... I don't remember any of that!"

Surely there was some sort of explanation behind this. Ronan must have done something to me, used some sort of werewolf spell on me. He, Lisa, and Justin must have set this up as a way to get under my skin — I was sure of it.

As if a lightbulb went off above my head, I picked my phone back up off the floor as I hopped around the cabin, pulling my socks on, and dialed Enzo. Surely he would have some sort of explanation for all

of this. Surely he would believe me.

The phone rang... And rang. It went to voicemail. I tried again, and this time, it went straight to voicemail after just one ring.

Enzo was deliberately ignoring me.

I decided to leave him a voicemail.

“Enzo, I don’t know what happened, but I wasn’t conscious last night,” I said frantically, yanking one of my boots on. “Please listen to me. I don’t know what happened. Ronan came after me in the woods, and I don’t remember anything after that. You have to believe me. Please, please call me back.”

I hung up, my heart racing, and pocketed my phone before swinging the cabin door open.

“Well, well, well,” Lisa said from the fire pit. She stood with an evil smirk on her face and sauntered up to me as I ran down the cabin steps. “If it isn’t the whore who thought that she could steal my boyfriend.”

“Fuck off, Lisa,” I growled, storming past her.

“Aww, looks like someone got up on the wrong side of the cabin,” she said in a condescending voice, making her friends giggle.

I stopped in my tracks, feeling my hands curl up into fists at my sides as rage took over me. Without considering the consequences, as though something took over me, I spun around on my heel and stormed up to Lisa.

“You bitch,” I snarled, then slapped her as hard as I could across the face.

Lisa’s friends erupted into a chorus of gasps. Lisa, her mouth hanging open, raised her shaking hand to her reddening cheek. “You hit me!” she screamed, tears streaming down her cheeks.

“You’re fucking insane!” one of Lisa’s friends said, running up to Lisa and wrapping her in her arms. “Get the fuck out of here!”

“I– I didn’t mean to–” I stammered, but it was no use trying to explain myself; I just needed to get away. I turned on my heel and took off, glancing one last time over my shoulder to see Lisa being swarmed by her friends... And she looked up at me with an evil smirk on her face.

...

Students pointed and laughed as I ran across campus, tears streaming down my cheeks. They took photos of me to post to social media, to make fun of me for being a “whore” even though they only knew half of the story.

I didn't care, though. They could take all the pictures they wanted. They could laugh all they wanted. What mattered was that I knew the truth, and the truth was that I never slept with Ronan.

Unless... I did sleep with him, and I just didn't remember him taking advantage of my body.

My sobs intensified as I came to this realization. I stopped in my tracks by the fountain in the quad, doubled over in mental anguish as my vision began to blur and my head began to reel.

Had Ronan sexually assaulted me?

The thought of it made me feel like I was going to throw up. And I did. Thankfully, I made it to a trash can, but the people around me only filmed that, too.

"Oh, go ahead!" I yelled when I was finished, wiping the vomit off of my mouth with the back of my hand and whirling around to face the other students around me. "Take all the pictures and videos you want! Go on! Make sure to really rub it in that I'm just a lunatic who doesn't deserve basic human decency!"

Suddenly, as I was yelling at the amused students holding up their phones, I felt a hand on my shoulder. Was Enzo coming to help me?

It wasn't Enzo.

It was Edward.

I wanted to scream, to run away, but I couldn't. I was frozen as he looked down at me, his eyes glowing subtly with his grip tightening on my hand.

"Come along, Nina," he said with a warm smile that only I could see the evil behind. "I think you need some help."

## **Chapter 95 The Missing Piece**

Enzo

I hadn't been planning on going to the party, but Matt dragged me along; I figured it could also be a good chance to try to observe Justin or to interrogate Lisa, so I agreed to go. It wasn't long after I got there, however, that rumors started making their way over to me... Rumors of Nina being with someone else, less than twenty-four hours after she had found her ex's body in a basement, and hardly a couple of weeks since our last kiss. Not to mention the time we spent in the lodge, holding each other in the middle of the night because she was scared of the dark.

Sure, we were supposed to just be friends, but it still hurt.

“Trouble in paradise?” Lisa said, sauntering up to me at the bonfire.

I took a swig of my beer, deciding not to answer. Lisa was wearing a skimpy pair of denim shorts, even though it was cold out, and had a flannel on top that was buttoned down just enough to show a bit of the lace trim on her bra. Not only that, but in typical Lisa fashion, she looked like she had a fresh spray tan and a pound of makeup on.

“What’s wrong?” she asked, twirling a bit of hair around her finger. “I know we’ve been broken up for a long time now, but you know you can always talk to me, right?”

I shrugged. “I’m fine. Nina and I are just friends. She’s allowed to be with whoever she wants.”

A grin spread across Lisa’s face. “I didn’t mention Nina,” she said with a sparkle in her eye. “But if you want to talk about her...” she gestured over to one of the cabins. Nina was disappearing into it with Ronan, and it made my blood boil.

Before I could stop her, Lisa took my hand and pulled me after her, leading me behind one of the cabins. My head was reeling from the pain of seeing Nina with Ronan. How could she sleep with him,

knowing that he was a Crescent who was out to kidnap her for some mystery woman?

As soon as the were alone in the dark behind the cabin, Lisa pounced on me, knocking the half-empty beer bottle out of my hand. I gritted my teeth as she started to kiss all over my neck, running her fingers through my hair and ripping at my shirt.

She stood up on her tiptoes and tried to kiss me on my lips. I quickly jerked my head away.

“Ugh, still got some hangups, huh?” she snarled, stepping away and folding her arms across her chest for a moment before an evil smirk came across her face. “I’ll fix that,” she said, then started to reach for my groin.

I grabbed her wrist just before she touched me, taking her by surprise and pinning her up against the wall.

“Ooh!” she exclaimed, licking her lips. “You want it rough this time?”

She tried to kiss me again, but this time I grabbed her by the neck and pinned her against the wall even harder, channeling my anger into my interrogation skills.

“Tell me who you’re working for,” I growled.

Lisa recoiled, narrowing her eyes. "What the fuck?" she said. She started to struggle, but even with her newfound werewolf abilities, she wasn't nearly as strong as me with her small size.

"You heard me," I said, pinning her harder as my grip tightened on her throat. "Tell me who you're working for, and tell me what the fuck happened to Justin. I know that you know."

"I don't know what the fuck you're talking about," she responded, her voice becoming strained beneath the pressure of my hand.

"Don't bullshit me, Lisa," I said. "I know that you've been up to something. The Mad Wolf serum alone isn't enough to make someone anything more than a rogue. Someone had to have bitten you, and you're hiding it. So who was it?"

Lisa struggled some more. I loosened my grip on her neck slightly so she could breathe properly.

"Fine," she said, rolling her eyes. "I'll tell you. But can we sit down, at least?"

Reluctantly, I released Lisa and blocked the door so she couldn't leave. She rolled her eyes again and walked over to a tree stump, sitting down on the edge with her legs crossed.

"You know," she said, glancing back at the party, "you do realize that she only slept with you to get back at Justin in the first place, right?" she asked, once again twirling a bit of hair around her finger. "What makes you so sure that her whole fling with you hasn't all been just an act?"

I glanced over my shoulder back at the cabin where Nina and Ronan had gone. They appeared to still be inside. I shook my head, trying to get the image of them sleeping together out of my mind. Nina and I were just friends... She could get with whoever she wanted to.

Lisa chuckled again and stood, sauntering up to me. I kept my gaze fixed on the cabin as I felt her slim hand run along my chest. She pressed her body up against mine and twisted her hips in such a way that she rubbed up against my groin, making me shiver.

"I would never betray you like that," Lisa whispered in my ear, pausing to nibble at my earlobe. "Besides, I'm a werewolf now, just like you. Nina is nothing but an ordinary little human... Why would you ever choose her over someone who can really be your mate?"

I shook my head again, trying to back away, but Lisa clung to my body like her life depended on it. I felt her fingers brush my groin, making me shiver again.

"C'mon, baby," she whispered, biting her lip. "Let's do it. For old times' sake."



I felt my body grow weak as goosebumps lined my skin. It almost felt as though Lisa was releasing some sort of pheromone, something that was making me susceptible to her seduction... And it was working. I bent my head down to kiss Lisa softly on the lips, the feeling of our lips brushing making me feel even weaker.

But as I closed my eyes and felt our lips lock together, the only thing I saw in my mind was Nina.

I quickly pulled away from the kiss and roughly shoved Lisa off of me, wiping my mouth with the back of my hand. "Fuck you," I growled, backing away. "I would never sleep with you again."

Without another word, I turned on my heel and stormed away.

...

I spent the entire night in the hockey rink, because that was the only place where I could think clearly. At least when I was there, it was just me and the puck and nothing else. The peace of the dark arena, with only a single spotlight shining down, was enough to calm me — at least temporarily, as I tried to sort my feelings out.

Suddenly, I heard the door open and close.

"Well, you're here early, aren't you?" a familiar voice echoed from the doorway. I looked up to see my father slowly walking up to me with his hands in his suit pants pockets. "I heard about your little 'friend'. I told you that humans are trouble. You see, they don't have the concept of mates like we do, so they don't always understand the importance of faithfulness."

I looked down at the ice, my mind racing with a million thoughts. Being without Nina made me feel like a piece of me was missing, but maybe my father was right. Maybe Nina was just another human who

would only hurt me in the end.

"Just accept the arranged marriage, son," my father said, leaning on the railing as I continued to stare numbly down at the ice. "This new woman will be your fated mate. You'll be glad that you listened to me when you finally meet her."

## **Chapter 96 Trapped**

Nina

I woke up in a dimly lit room that smelled oddly of lemon cleaning solution. My throat felt raw and sore, and it took longer than usual after opening my eyes for my vision to come back into focus. Finally, when it did, I realized that it seemed as though I was in some

sort of brightly lit prison cell. It almost felt like something out of a science fiction movie, like I had been abducted by aliens. There were no windows.

“H-Hello?” I croaked. I tried to sit up, only to realize that my wrists and ankles were being held in place by leather straps that were attached to the bed. “Hello? Let me out!” I shouted, struggling against the restraints.

No one came.

I wasn't sure how long I thrashed against the restraints as I tried desperately to get free, screaming and practically foaming at the mouth. Eventually, I tired myself out. I knew, now, that no one was coming for me.

Where was I? It appeared to be some sort of strange prison-like room, but... Where was I? And why was I here? I couldn't remember anything past seeing Edward's cold, glowing eyes fixed on me. That was it: he must've hypnotized me and had me locked up somewhere.

Maybe Enzo would come for me. Surely, being one of my closest friends, he would know that something was wrong and he would come straight for me. But as I remembered what had happened at the party... Would he even care to come and look for me? Had whatever Ronan did to me on the night of the party broken any trust that Enzo had left in me?

I wanted to hope that Enzo would come for me, but at the same time, I couldn't know for sure. What if I was trapped somewhere far away, somewhere that he would never find me even if he tried?

There was no way I could just lay here and pray that someone would come for me. I would have to get out on my own.

I started by looking around the room for something, anything, that could eventually help me to escape. At the same time, I started memorizing everything that could be even remotely important for the future, just in case I did somehow get out and would have to give a report to the police: the number of ceiling tiles, the number of fluorescent lightbulbs on the ceiling, the sound of water dripping from a pipe...

Suddenly, I heard footsteps approaching. I quickly shut my eyes and pretended to be asleep. I heard the door to my containment cell slide open in an oddly mechanical manner, then heard the footsteps approach the side of my bed.

“Wake up. I know you're faking it.”

Edward.

I opened my eyes wide and began to scream, but he only sighed, rolled his eyes, and stuffed something in my mouth to muffle my screams. I watched then in horror as he pulled a small, metal rolling table up to the side of my bed and retrieved a syringe from a drawer, which he filled with some sort of yellowish solution.

“What is that?” I murmured through the cloth in my mouth, struggling against the restraints again as he flicked the syringe.

He didn’t answer. Edward bent down over me, avoiding eye contact, and gripped the skin of my upper arm. I thrashed harder and managed to spit the cloth out of my mouth.

“Get away from me!”

Edward merely sighed and looked into my eyes.

“Calm down. This will only take a second.”

“Get off!” I screamed, throwing my head back repeatedly against the bed as I struggled with all my might, to no avail. My screams intensified as Edward pinched the skin on my upper arm again, then shoved the needle in.

I was suddenly overcome with intense dizziness.

“What did you give me...” I muttered, my speech slurred. My tongue felt heavy and dry in my mouth, like it was made out of chalk. I watched as Edward straightened and tossed the syringe down onto the rolling cart before walking over to the end of my bed. He picked up a clipboard, speaking to me in hushed tones as he made notes on the board. Something about hallucinations...

And werewolves.

I tried to speak again, but I couldn’t. I couldn’t move, either, as though my body was slowly becoming paralyzed.

Then, everything went black again.

I woke up again in another dark room, but this one was different from the “bedroom” that I woke up in originally. This room was darker, and the restraints didn’t just stop at my ankles and wrists. He had me strapped down to some sort of cold, metal table, with leather straps running across my abdomen, my shoulders, and even my head, rendering me completely unable to move.

I couldn’t see much around me aside from a single, bright spotlight that shined down from above. I could hear some murmuring from the darkness before footsteps approached. A large, meaty hand reached out and grabbed the light, swiveling it so that it now shined down directly on my face and blinded me.

Squinting my eyes, I tried to call out into the darkness — but I couldn't. There was a gag in my mouth that not only kept me from speaking in anything more than incoherent mumbles, but there was also a leather strip affixed to the front that kept my teeth from touching.

The muttering around me continued. As my heart rate quickened, I could hear the sound of metal instruments being moved around on a cart beside my head.

Suddenly, Edward's face came into view. He was wearing a surgical mask, but as he stared down at me and pulled the latex gloves onto his hands with a snap, he stared down into my panicked eyes with such a look of cool indifference that it was almost sickening.

"This'll hurt a bit," he said, reaching for something out of my view. "Just try to relax. Struggling won't help you any."

I felt something cold and wet touch on either side of my temple. A scream erupted from the depths of my throat as I began to thrash, but all of the straps holding me down kept me from moving.

Then... Agony. It felt as though my body was being relentlessly electrocuted from the inside. I couldn't move, couldn't react; I could only tremble, feeling as though my eyeballs were vibrating in their sockets.

The pain stopped momentarily.

"I think I'll turn it up another notch," I heard Edward say, as though he was simply having a casual conversation with me.

I felt a bit of drool run down my cheek and drip into my ear. The pain began again, but this time, it felt as though I somehow managed to escape from my body. It was like I was looking down at myself, watching everything that was happening to me, completely detached from my pain.

I had always been told that electroshock therapy had been outlawed for decades. What sort of hell had Edward imprisoned me in?

"I think that's enough for now," Edward said after a few more agonizingly long minutes as he turned off the machine. "Come on now, Nina. Let's get you back to your room, and get you some more medicine."

## **Chapter 97 Mountainview Psychiatric Facility**

Nina

I don't know how long I was asleep. All I remembered was an immense amount of pain, Edward's face looming over me, and then... darkness.

When I woke up, I was back in that same room that I was in before. My wrists and ankles were bound to the table, and the lights were blindingly bright. My brain felt as though it was in a heavy fog, like I had hit my head against a wall countless times. I wanted to sleep again, but the lights were too bright — as though he was trying to keep me awake.

Even though the lights were so bright it hurt through my closed eyelids, I still occasionally fell unconscious from time to time. I would fall into a half-asleep state, during which I would feel as though my body was floating through space, and then I would come back to consciousness again with a pounding headache from a combination of the electroshock therapy, the drugs that Edward gave me, and the bright fluorescent lights.

I started to cry, but as time went on, no more tears eventually came. I couldn't even lift my hand to wipe them out of my eyes; I could only lay there and feel them slowly dry on my cheeks and in my ears, where they had pooled up from my laying down position. Was Edward going to keep me like this forever, all over a simple file taken from his basement?

Just as I was beginning to think that I was going to die in here, alone and afraid, I heard the mechanical door slide open. I weakly lifted my head to see Edward standing in the doorway.

"Good morning, Nina," he said. His voice was as sweet as honey, as though I was just another patient sitting in his office of my own volition and not a prisoner being kept in some strange medical facility with no windows. "Did you sleep well?"

"Sleep?" I croaked. My throat felt dry and hoarse from the time I had spent screaming when he shocked my brain. "How can I sleep like this?"

Edward clicked his tongue disappointedly as he approached my bed. He stood at the end of the bed, so that I had to continue to hold my head up to see him.

"You'll find it's not so difficult to sleep here soon," he said. "You're safe here. You can trust me."

"Where am I, then?" I replied. "Where is Enzo?"

Edward merely shook his head. "Here we go again with the imaginary friends. Enzo this, Enzo that... You've been talking about this person that doesn't exist for months."

I furrowed my brow and laid my head back down on the bed, staring up at the ceiling. Enzo was real... He had to be. "You're just trying to mess with my head," I growled.

“Nina, we’ve been over this,” Edward replied. “You’ve been here for months. Why would I be messing with your head, hm?”

“What about Justin, then?” I asked. “He disappeared for weeks, and when he came back, he was like a completely different person. He said you ‘fixed’ him.”

Edward scoffed. “Justin? As in your old bunkmate?”

“Bunkmate?”

“Unlike you, he was receptive to the treatment, so he went home to his family. You must have been having another one of your hallucinations when you thought you saw him outside of here... He’s perfectly fine, and is likely having breakfast with his family as we speak. That could be you, if you would only stop resisting my help.”

Edward came around the side of my bed then and pulled up a rolling stool. He sat on it and took my hand in his. I tried to pull away, but I couldn’t with the wrist restraints. With a sigh, he took my chin in his hand and turned my head so that I was looking at him.

“Look me in the eyes,” he said softly. “You are suffering from schizophrenic hallucinations and delusions. The university, the werewolves, the talking skeletons... These are all fantasies of yours. Things you’ve made up in your mind to protect yourself from the horrors of your past trauma. None of it is real, and you are safe here. I’m only here to protect you...”

The longer I looked into Edward’s eyes, the more I started to believe him. Everything he described felt so fuzzy and far away, like a bad dream... Maybe he was right; maybe these were all just fantasies of mine.

“H-How long have I been here?” I asked. My voice shook as a lump grew in my throat.

Edward squeezed my hand comfortingly and reached up to brush a hair out of my eyes. “Four years,” he said.

“So does that mean...”

“Yes,” he interjected with a solemn nod. “Everything — everyone — that you think you’ve come to know in this fantasyland you’ve created in your head, ‘Mountainview University’, isn’t real. You’re really in Mountainview Psychiatric Facility... It’s not a university.”

As Edward spoke, more tears came to my eyes and a sob caught in my throat.

“Shh...” he whispered, his voice strangely comforting. I began to realize that his voice was so comforting because he had comforted me just like this so many times — I could remember it, now that I thought about it. Edward was my doctor.

“Repeat after me,” he continued. “My name is Nina Harper.”

“M-My n-name is Nina H-Harper...”

“I am being cared for at Mountainview Psychiatric Facility.”

“I am being cared for at Mountainview Psychiatric Facility...”

“I suffer from schizophrenic hallucinations and delusions, and have spent the past four years in a fantasy created in my own mind.”

“I suffer from schizophrenic hallucinations and delusions, and have spent the past four years in a fantasy created in my own mind...”

“Werewolves are not real.”

“Werewolves are not...” Just then, as I repeated Edward’s words, I realized that it wasn’t right. No... Werewolves were real. I knew it. I had seen them with my own eyes, experienced their powers. I could still feel Enzo’s touch, the way he held me as we slept not even two weeks ago, when I closed my eyes. I could still see the way that Luke looked up at the moon when the witch performed the ritual that gave him his human skin. It was all real, and I knew it.

“Nina...?”

“No!” I snarled. I began to thrash at the restraints, desperate to get free. “You’re a liar. You’re a liar!!”

Edward abruptly stood up from his chair, pulling his hands away from me as I screamed and struggled against the restraints binding me to the bed. “You’re a monster!” I screamed. “You’re trying to hypnotize me!”

With a sigh, Edward simply reached down and tightened the straps around my ankles and wrists. “Nina, we’ve been over this,” he said, circling around the bed to tighten the other side. “And to think that you were improving...”

“You’re a dirty liar!!” I continued. I couldn’t move now without immense pain in my ankles and wrists from the straps, but at least I still had my voice. Spit flew out of my mouth as I screamed wildly, watching Edward’s back as he briskly walked toward the door.

He stopped just as he was about to leave and looked over his shoulder. “I’ll return when you’re ready to cooperate with your treatment.”

With that, he left me alone.

And I screamed until my throat couldn't take it anymore. My screams turned to pained moans, and then... Silence

## Chapter 98 Hypnotherapy

Nina

Minutes passed, then hours. Soon, it could've even been days; I had no way of knowing how long I was down there. As time ticked on, the bright fluorescent lights in my cell never faded, making me lose all sense of time. I felt myself beginning to lose my grip on reality.

I couldn't cry or scream anymore. Not only did my tears dry up and my throat became too sore to make another sound, but also I began to realize that it was useless. No one was coming for me. Maybe Edward was right; maybe none of the people who I had come to know over the past four years were even real. Maybe it was all just a figment of my imagination...

If they were real, wouldn't they have come to save me by now?

After an indistinguishable amount of time passed, the voices began. They were soft at first, barely even whispers.

"Nina..."

A voice called my name. I ignored it at first, but it grew stronger over time.

"Nina."

I shook my head. "It's not real," I whispered to myself, my throat so raw and sore from screaming that the words hardly came out. "It's not real..."

"Nina!!"

I jumped. I knew that voice: it was Jessica. She sounded scared, like she was screaming for help. "Jessica?" I called out, but there was no answer.

The voices stopped for quite some time. I eventually began to think that I never had really heard them to begin with. Maybe I was dreaming; somehow, I must've fallen asleep despite the bright fluorescent lights beaming down at me from the ceiling.

But then, they started again. And it wasn't just a voice this time.

Jessica stood in front of my bed, clear as day. Her clothes and hair were disheveled. Her skin was bloody and bruised, and there was dirt under her fingernails. Her eyes had a whitish color to them, as if they had been glazed over with a thin coat of white paint.



“It’s your fault that I died,” she said. “It’s your fault that all of us died.”

I swallowed the knot in my throat. It hurt to even swallow. “You’re not dead,” I whispered, shaking my head. She couldn’t be dead. Surely Jessica was home right now with Lori, if they were even real...

“You’re selfish,” Jessica continued. She walked over to the side of my bed and reached out her cold, dead hand. It smelled like dirt and congealed blood. “All you ever cared about was yourself. You should die, too. Make it easier on the world.”

I pulled my head away and scrunched my eyes shut, repeating my mantra in my head.

This isn’t real... This isn’t real...

When I opened my eyes, Jessica was no longer alone. Behind her stood Lori, James, and Matt. They all reached their dirty hands for my throat. I tried to scream, but nothing came out — so I turned my head in the other direction and waited for them to strangle me, because that was all I could do.

On the other side of the bed, however, stood my mother and my brother. My mother was holding a baby wrapped in the strangely patterned blanket from the photograph. She was bouncing it and shushing it, but it kept crying louder and louder.

“Shut up!” she screamed as she began to shake the baby violently.

Its screams turned into animalistic snarls. I went to open my mouth to tell her to stop, that she was going to kill it, but only the same snarls came out of my mouth. Then, to my horror, she lifted the baby over her head and threw it as hard as she could down to the floor.

All the while, Taylor choked to death behind her. I watched as his body withered into nothing. His flesh melted off of his bones, leaving only a skeleton.

The skeleton stared at me. It opened its jaws to speak, but only worms came out.

I shut my eyes again, wishing I could cover my ears as the wails of my loved ones filled my ears.

This isn’t real... This isn’t real...

Then, all of a sudden: silence.

I opened one eye first, then the other. I slowly looked around and let out a sigh of relief to see that I was alone once more; for the first time, being alone was a comfort.

“I loved you, you know.”

Enzo's voice made me jump. I lifted my head, my eyes wide, to see him standing at the foot of my bed. He looked exactly the same as when I last saw him, when we retrieved Justin's file from Edward's house. He was even wearing the same all-black clothing. His curly brown hair was still ruffled from running through the streets as we sprinted away. If I lifted my head more, I could even smell him: smoke and leather. He had smelled like that when I laid my head on his back during our midnight motorcycle ride all those weeks ago.

"I loved you..." His voice was distant, bitter. "...And you couldn't bear to love me back."

I shook my head and opened my mouth to speak, but I couldn't. I gagged. Worms spilled out onto my chest in a wriggling, muddy heap. I gagged again, and more came out. If I kept gagging, I was certain that I would soon be buried in the disgusting things.

Enzo walked around my bed to look down at me. There was a deep pain in his eyes, and I knew then and there that I had been the one to cause that pain.

"Are you ready to cooperate now?" he said.

I furrowed my brow. "Cooperate with what?" I asked. My mouth was no longer full of worms, and when I looked down, my chest was clean. There were no worms. My voice was my voice, not a strangled, animalistic snarl, although my throat was still raw and it burned when I spoke as though I had swallowed hot coals.

"With your treatment."

I looked back up. Enzo's voice had changed, and so had his appearance. He was no longer Enzo.

Enzo had become Edward.

"I-I thought you were—"

"Enzo, I know," Edward said. He pulled the rolling stool back up to the side of my bed and sat down with a gentle, open expression on his face. He almost seemed to pity me. "Well?" he asked. "Do you want to give it another go?"

I hesitated, looking down at the leather straps around my wrists and ankles. I had struggled so hard against them that my skin was now dark purple underneath where the leather met my wrists, but I couldn't feel the pain. In the same way that I couldn't feel the pain, I imagined that it was perhaps indicative of my mental state. If I couldn't feel the pain in my own body, how could I trust the images in

my own mind? One moment ago, my room had been filled with people who I thought I knew, but now, it was empty again. It was just me and Edward, and I was sick. Edward could fix me, just like how he fixed Justin.

I looked back up at Edward and nodded slowly.

“Yes,” I whispered, my voice still a weak croak. “I’m ready to cooperate with my treatment.”

## **Chapter 99 Finding Nina**

Enzo

Several days passed after my father found me in the hockey rink, and I didn’t see or hear from Nina. I didn’t particularly want to, either. In my mind, she was probably with Ronan. I knew I wasn’t supposed to feel negatively about it and that we were just supposed to be friends all this time, but how could I not? Even with the promise of the bride of the arranged marriage being my fated mate, I couldn’t stop thinking about Nina. I couldn’t sleep without imagining her small body curled up in my arms. I couldn’t close my eyes without remembering how beautiful she looked that day when I told my team about werewolves, and yet I was so angry and hurt by her refusal to admit her true feelings for me that I didn’t want to see her at the same time.

Maybe learning about the arranged marriage pushed her away from me, but it didn’t make the pain of her choosing Ronan over me hurt any less. And as the days ticked on, the memories of her going on that date to the fair with Ronan, of her entertaining Justin’s pleas for her to get back together with him, of the way that she saved Ronan’s life even when he had just been trying to kill me... It all made me realize that I never truly had a chance with her to begin with.

I was sitting on my couch one night, drowning my sorrows in a bad scary movie and a cheese pizza, when I was suddenly alerted by the loud and abrupt sounds of someone banging relentlessly on my door. Cursing under my breath, I paused my movie and stood, peering through the peephole to see none other than Luke standing on the other side. His face was pressed up against the peep hole, as though he was trying to see through the wrong end, then he pulled away and started knocking even harder.

Had Nina sent him to try to talk to me?

“Open the door, Enzo,” Luke said, banging on the door again. “I can see the shadow of your feet under the door, and I heard you watching that awful movie. I know you’re in there.”

Sighing, I unlocked the door and swung it open. Luke pushed past me and stormed in, whirling around to face me in my kitchen.

“You’re eating pizza at a time like this?” he said incredulously.

I furrowed my brow. “What are you talking about?”

“You don’t know?” he asked. “Nina just fucking disappeared.”

“Yeah, she probably holed herself up in her dorm, or went back to stay with her mom for all I know,” I replied. “She’s probably just trying to get away from all of the social media bullshit until it passes. Either that, or she ran off into the sunset with her new boyfriend, Ronan.”

Luke passed his hand over his face and groaned. “I can’t believe you’re being so nonchalant about this,” he said, then walked up to me and took me by both shoulders, shaking me back and forth as he spoke. “Nina. Is. Gone. I would know if she just went home or is hiding in her dorm. She’s gone, gone. Like, poof into thin air gone, and the last person I saw her with was Edward.”

My eyes widened. “Fuck,” I muttered.

“Yeah, fuck is right, you big idiot,” Luke said. “We have to find her now, before that psycho does something horrible to her and does the same thing to her that he did to Justin.”

Panic started to set in. Sure, I was angry with Nina for what she did, but... I loved her. I knew I loved her, and I had to protect her. As I ran around my apartment, throwing on the first clothes I could find, all I could think about was how much of an idiot I had been for assuming that Nina hadn’t actually been in serious trouble all of this time. It was almost as if whatever Lisa said to me at the party that night actually got in my head. Had Edward taught her some ability that I didn’t know about, or was I really just that stupid?

“If we hurry, we can get Edward before he leaves his office,” Luke said as I got dressed. “I’m not sure what we’ll do after that—”

I tugged my shoes on, racking my brain as to what we could do once we cornered Edward. He was powerful, but most of his abilities relied on his mind and not his body. Between Luke and I, maybe we could tackle him and knock him out before he had a chance to shift or use any of his hypnotic abilities.

I paused, then, realized how foolish all of this was. I turned to face Luke and shook my head.

“We can’t stand a chance against Edward,” I said. “He’s too smart. He’ll be on the lookout for us, and he’ll know we’re coming.”

Luke frowned. “What do you suggest, then?”

Again, I thought back to the night of the party, when Lisa had somehow convinced me that Nina was with Ronan of her own volition. Surely she had learned that from Edward, especially since he was the one who likely gave both her and Justin the Mad Wolf serum.

“I think I know someone who can give us the information we need,” I said.

...

I found Lisa at her usual haunt that night. She always liked to hang out near the cabins where she could drink and do drugs freely, and had been spending even more time since she became a werewolf. She was sitting at the fire with her gaggle of friends when I arrived, like some sort of queen bee in her little kingdom made of lies and manipulation. If only these girls knew just how evil she truly was.

“Oh, look who it is!” Lisa said as I approached. “Who’s your cute friend, Enzo?” She was referring to Luke. I didn’t answer.

“Lisa, I need to talk to you,” I said, stopping to stand in front of her.

Lisa narrowed her eyes and hesitated for a moment. I had a plan set in place in case she refused to talk to me alone, but thankfully, she stood.

“Lead the way,” she said with a smirk.

I walked over to one of the cabins and opened the door, letting her in ahead of me before going in after her. I kept myself between her and the door. She nonchalantly walked over to the bed and sat down as she twirled a bit of her hair around her finger.

“I’m assuming you didn’t come here for old times’ sake,” she said.

I shook my head and folded my arms.

“What is it, then?” she asked.

I knew that I couldn’t just blatantly ask Lisa where Nina was — she would never tell me outright. Instead, I had to at least try to pretend to be on her side.

“You were right about Nina,” I lied, employing some of my own persuasion abilities to help my case. I wasn’t entirely sure if it would work on her, but I had to try. “In fact, I’ve decided that I’ve spent far too long working on the wrong side.”

“Oh?” Lisa leaned back on her palms. As she did so, her skirt pulled up slightly to expose her thighs, which I could tell she did on purpose.

“Yes,” I replied, ignoring her pathetic attempt at seduction. “I know you’ve been working with Edward. He’s a crescent, right?”

“Something like that,” she said.

I walked away from the door and approached Lisa. As I did, I borrowed some of Fio's power to help me convince her even further. Her eyes seemed to soften, which indicated that she was starting to believe me.

"I want to work with you," I said. "My father is trying to force me into an arranged marriage, but I don't want that..." I employed more of Fio's power now. "...I want you, Lisa. But I think that only Edward can help me. I need him to teach me some of his abilities so that I can take down my father."

Lisa was silent for several long moments. She slowly looked me up and down, processing. I felt my heart start to race a bit as I urged myself to stay calm and collected.

Finally, she stood and grinned.

"I can bring you to him," she whispered, leaning toward me and nibbling on my ear seductively. "Do you want me to show you?"

## **Chapter 100 Stockholm Syndrome**

Nina

"I'm ready to cooperate with my treatment."

A smile spread across Edward's face at my words. "I'm so glad, Nina," he said, giving my hand a squeeze. "Shall we begin?"

I nodded.

"Repeat after me..."

...

Over the course of the next several treatment sessions, Edward's treatment began to work. Slowly but surely, my 'memories' of the university, of Lori and Jessica, Tiffany and James, Enzo and everyone else who I had created in my mind, started to become foggy.

I slowly began to learn that I had been having these hallucinations and delusions for a long time, which was why my loving mother sent me to Mountainview Psychiatric Facility. I had been there for four years, but was stuck inside of a fantasy in my head that Edward couldn't get me out of. My electroshock therapy must have freed my mind from this fantasy just enough for his treatment to work, he said. I was so grateful for Edward; soon, I would be home with my family. I would be fixed. Just like Justin.

Eventually, he took the restraints off of my wrists and ankles and allowed me to walk around my room. He told me that, in time, he would let me meet the other patients and doctors — but for now, I had to stay in my room in case I had another delusion. He said that the last time he let me roam with the other patients, I had a delusion and hurt someone really badly. I didn't want to hurt anyone again.

Our sessions increased in frequency and intensity. Sometimes it became too intense and the delusions would start to come back; I would start to think that Edward was holding me hostage somewhere and that my friends were looking for me, but over time, I started to get better at controlling the delusions by repeating the mantra that Edward taught me.

"My name is Nina Harper. I am a patient at Mountainview Psychiatric Facility. I am sick, but Edward will fix me and make me better. When I'm better, I can go home to my family."

Sometimes, my mantra still didn't work. Once, Evil Nina, as I had come to call her, gained too much control and made me bite Edward. He hit me really hard in the face and left me in my room for hours, but once I calmed down, he came back and told me how he only hit me to bring me back to my senses. He gave me some medicine, and then I felt completely better. Evil Nina didn't come out as strongly after that, although Edward kept giving me the medicine from that point forward. I felt immense peace, thanks to Edward and the medicine he gave me.

"Are you ready for another session?" Edward asked one day. I nodded vigorously and dropped the crayons he had given me, then held a drawing I had been working on for him behind my back before running up to him with a childlike grin on my face.

"I'm ready," I said.

Edward peered over my shoulder to see what I was holding behind my back. "What's that you've got there, Nina?"

I grinned even wider and held the drawing out for him to see.

"I drew this for you," I said.

"Oh, how sweet." Edward took the drawing and studied it, but his smile faded as he did so, instead turning into a deep and twisted scowl. Without a word, he crumpled up the paper and tossed it on the

floor. "Go sit down."

I felt my eyes well up with tears. "What did I do wrong?" I asked.

"I said to go sit down!"

I jumped and ran over to my bed, where I sat cross-legged in the center. Edward sighed and kicked the crumpled drawing aside as he came over to sit on his stool across from me. I held my tears in, just like how he taught me to, and prepared myself for our session. I must have drawn something he didn't like, but it was okay; Edward would help me make sure I didn't do it again.

"Now," he said, pulling the chair up to me. "Let's begin. Repeat after me..."

He began to speak, but abruptly stopped as there was a knock on the door. I felt my heart leap into my throat. Since I had been here, I had only seen Edward. Why would one of the other doctors be coming into my room? Was my drawing so bad that Edward didn't want to be my doctor anymore?

Much to my surprise, however, Edward cursed under his breath. He grabbed me by the wrist and dragged me off the bed.

"Ow!" I exclaimed.

"Shut the fuck up," Edward growled. He dragged me over to the closet where he locked me up once when Evil Nina came out and threw me in there. "Stay here, and stay quiet."

I clapped a hand over my mouth as he closed the door. Being in the darkness made Evil Nina want to come out, but I pushed her back down as I listened.

There was a female voice.

"I brought someone for you."

"Oh? Who?"

"Mr. Rivers himself. In the flesh."

There was a long pause. Then, Edward spoke again. "Bring him here."

Suddenly, I heard an all-too-familiar voice. "Let Nina go before I kill you."

Enzo.

Evil Nina came out momentarily. She started to scream and bang on the door before I could stop her. I heard Enzo shout something, followed by what sounded like a violent scuffle. A crash, a grunt, and the sound of a body hitting the floor.

Then... Silence.



Evil Nina kept screaming, but no one came for a long time. She got up and paced in the closet. She chewed her nails and slammed her body weight against the door in a desperate, but futile, attempt to get out. She ripped at her hair and sank down to the floor, where she buried her head in her knees and sobbed, calling Enzo's name until her throat was hoarse.

Finally, after what must have been hours, Edward opened the door. Evil Nina leaped to her feet and lunged toward him, but he was prepared. He had a syringe in his hand and jabbed it into her neck, making her stumble and fall onto the floor. Her vision started to fade in and out.

When Edward's face came into view, she used the last bit of her strength to spit at him.

"Repeat after me," he said, wiping the spit away and cradling her in his arms. "My name is Nina Harper. Come on, I know you're in there. Say it."

I felt myself beginning to take control again over Evil Nina. "M-My name is Nina Harper..."

"I am a patient at Mountainview Psychiatric Facility. I am sick, but Edward will fix me and make me better. When I'm better, I can go home to my family."

With each word of my mantra, I felt myself coming back into control. Evil Nina went quiet, and she went away. But then, Edward added something new to the mantra: "Enzo Rivers is a bad man, but Edward has him locked up where he can't hurt me. Edward is my savior."

Before I could repeat the words, the medicine kicked in and everything went dark