

Letters Sent To Eternity

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Chapter 241

8 – Greta

There was something about this guy that just got under my skin, no matter how hard I tried to ignore it. Day after day, I found myself watching him spar, even though he didn't seem to bring anything new or refined to the pack. He showed up late, ignored the rules, and completely disregarded the protocols I had painstakingly set in place. Yet, despite all that, he kept winning—taking down some of the best fighters I had trained. That made it impossible to discipline him, no matter how much I wanted to.

“Do it again,” I called out, trying to sound disinterested, but inside I was curious. I wanted to see if today would be the day I finally broke him. “Try to execute the moves properly this time, Rookie.”

“If I'm winning, does perfect execution really matter, ma'am?” he shot back, eyes locked on Bobby, his current opponent.

“Only if you're too much of a coward to do it right,” I snapped. “I'm guessing you're just making up for a lack of other skills.” That got his attention. I nodded sharply to Bobby, who lunged at Finn's exposed side.

They both rolled expertly, but Finn's reflexes were on another level. The problem was, his fighting style was rough and unpolished at best, though his stamina was off the charts. It was obvious these rogues were self-taught, using whatever moves they picked up along the way. I had managed to break many bad habits in others, but for some reason, this rookie clung to his like they were lifelines.

“No! Again! Jameson, you're up,” I shouted to a warrior waiting on the sidelines.

“You've got to be kidding me,” Jameson groaned, throwing his hands up before resting them on his hips.

He was a sight—covered in sweat and dirt, his sandy blonde hair falling loose from his ponytail. He'd taken his shirt off a while ago, and his shorts hung low, dangerously close to slipping off. I mentally slapped myself for the third time in ten minutes. He was incredibly distracting, but I couldn't afford to think about that. He'd been mated to the enemy, stolen our luna, attacked our pack, and couldn't follow simple instructions to save his life. He was a liability, and I didn't trust him to work well with a team. The only reason he was still here was because Kennedy had basically claimed him as Bennet's second. That was another thing I didn't understand. Bennet was getting closer to the rookie as a favor to Kennedy, but I knew Bennet was still haunted by that capture. She had been right beside him—no one should have gotten that close. But that was in the past; there was no changing it now.

Taking a deep breath, I tried to summon the calm, authoritative voice I used when teaching pups. “I’ll pair you up with as many fighters as it takes until you fall in line. Just do the move right, and you’re done. It’s a simple release technique. Do it properly, and you’re free to go.” I spread my hands in a ‘what are you gonna do’ gesture.

He brushed off the dirt casually and gave me a look through his lashes that made me want to look away. He knew exactly what he was doing—he’d caught me staring, and it annoyed me. “Like I said before, if I’m getting out of the holds and winning my matches, why does it matter if I release exactly how you taught me? A win’s a win.” He shrugged, standing tall, his broad chest puffing out.

“Do. It. Again. Rookie.” I stepped closer, curling my lip in challenge.

“Make me, ma’am,” he said, closing the distance between us. His arms crossed over his massive chest, leaving barely an inch between us.

I opened my mouth to scold him for his insubordination when Josh’s voice cut through the tension. “Greta. Finn! Your stare down’s gonna have to wait. Let’s go. The Alpha wants to see you both in his office.”

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Chapter 242

“Saved by the Alpha,” Finn teased with a sly wink as he strode past me, heading after Josh. My wolf growled low in my chest—such an arrogant jerk.

Now, I was stuck trailing behind him, inhaling the sharp mix of his minty-pine cologne blended with the raw scent of sweat and earth, evidence of the brutal training he’d just endured. And honestly, the muscle definition on his back was as captivating as the front. Damn it! Not again. I seriously needed to stop staring at this infuriating idiot.

“Hey, you okay back there, ma’am?” Finn called over his shoulder.

“What?” I quickened my pace to catch up beside him.

“You’ve been muttering to yourself nonstop. Don’t like being dragged into the Alpha’s office?” Was that a chuckle I heard in his voice?

“No! I talk to the Alpha all the time,” I snapped, trying to sound casual.

“Then why the grumpy face? Something’s clearly bothering you.”

“You’re not the person I’m going to vent to,” I replied firmly.

“Why not? I’m a great listener,” he said, patting his chest proudly. My eyes couldn’t help but follow the motion.

I blinked and shook my head. “Actually, you’ve proven the opposite. You don’t listen at all. We’re not friends, so no, I’m not talking to you.”

“That seems to be the theme around here,” he muttered, picking up his pace to get ahead of me.

What the hell was that supposed to mean? Was he mad at me now just because I didn’t want to sit and have girl talk with him?

I moved faster to catch up, but before I could, he slipped into Ryker’s office.

Ryker glanced up from his computer screen. “Perfect timing. Rory just reached out—there’s a pack of wolves causing trouble in his territory. They’ve been sneaking in like renegades, wrecking things, then vanishing. Yesterday, some pups and caretakers got caught in the chaos. Rory’s warriors can’t tell if these are pack members or rogues. No one’s been captured to question yet. Their scent doesn’t match rogues, but it doesn’t match any known pack nearby either.”

“What’s the plan?” I asked immediately, eager to get involved.

“We need intel. You’ll gather information and relay it to Rory and his warriors. Rory has to lead the response, but he can’t do it blindly. His team is inexperienced with this kind of threat and needs guidance from us.”

“So, we’re doing reconnaissance for them?”

“Yes and no. Your mission is to survey the area, identify any patterns, and then help Rory’s group take down this rogue faction.”

“When do I leave?” I asked, wanting to get away from the tension simmering beside me.

“You both leave as soon as you’re packed,” Ryker said.

“Wait, what?”

“Expect to be out there for about a week, maybe longer. Rory has a cabin on the edge of his territory you can use.”

“Both of us?” I repeated, confused.

Finn’s group had passed through that area on their way here. It’s possible they cleared the path for this new pack. Ryker shot Finn a sharp look. “He knows the terrain and how to move unseen.”

“I can handle it alone, Alpha,” I interrupted, sensing Ryker’s irritation. But we’d been friends long enough that he wouldn’t punish me for speaking up.

“It’ll be faster if you work together. Besides, it sounds like you two have some issues to sort out. Dismissed.”

What the hell?!

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Chapter 243

9 – Greta

“What exactly did he mean by ‘it sounds like,’ Josh?” I glance over at the Beta, fully aware that he’s probably been giving Ryker a detailed report on every little thing happening within the pack. Josh’s knack for observation borders on annoying sometimes.

“Just what I said, Greta,” he replies, his tone dripping with sarcasm as he snaps my name. “You and Finn need to get past whatever this... whatever *thing* is between you two,” he gestures vaguely between us, “and start working together. You’re both incredibly skilled. Stop wasting your energy fighting and channel it into something productive. Now, get your stuff packed. You’ve got a two-hour drive to check in with Rory, then another hour out to the cabin. Grant’s got your SUV waiting right outside.”

Without waiting for a response, he turns and strides away, leaving Finn and me alone in the quiet room. I can feel the tension thickening the air between us. “This should be interesting,” Finn mutters, stepping past me toward the car.

“Want to drive, control freak?” he asks with a grin over his shoulder.

Oh, absolutely thrilling. I jog around to the driver’s side, glad that Finn has at least figured out one thing—I’m the one in charge of this mission. First stop: my place.

“Just wait here. I’ll be five minutes tops,” I say, grabbing my go bag.

Finn smirks, clearly amused. “I’ve never seen a pack girl pack anything in five minutes. This’ll be good.”

“We’re not going on vacation. It’s not that complicated.”

“We’ll see about that. Ready? Go!” He grins like a kid daring me to prove him wrong.

I shoot him a challenging look. “I’m timing you, and you’ve already lost thirty seconds. Just saying.”

My heart races as I leap out of the car. I try not to rise to his bait, but I hate being underestimated. Backing down isn’t in my nature anymore. I grab my go bag, which is always packed with essentials, and toss in a few extra layers since the weather’s starting to turn colder. I have no idea what this ‘cabin’ is like—it could be a luxury retreat or some rundown shack in the woods. Better safe than sorry. As I rush back to the car, I catch the half-smile on Finn’s face that tells me he’s enjoying this little competition far more than he should.

“Five-oh-three. Not bad. I’ll give you three seconds for not catching on right away,” he says, winking again. What is with all the winking?

“Nope, five-oh-three it is. I don’t accept handouts, especially when they’re going to be held over my head later. Let’s see if you can beat that, rookie,” I reply, pulling out onto the road.

Finn chuckles. “You forget, I ran the rogues who moved through your pack six times in one year.”

“Well, then this should be easy for you. Ready? Go!” I say, pulling into the parking lot near the apartments above the shops.

He jumps out and sprints up the stairwell. Moments later, he’s back with a backpack that looks nearly empty. I raise an eyebrow, skeptical, as he tosses it into the back seat.

“What? Didn’t meet your expectations again?” he asks, grinning.

I exhale audibly. “Four-fifty-two. And the look is for your almost empty pack. When have I ever said you didn’t meet my expectations?”

He laughs, shaking his head. “I win. Remember, we were nomads for most of five years. I don’t carry a lot of stuff. And, if I recall correctly,” he turns to face me fully as I drive south out of our pack territory, “an hour ago you said you’d pair me with as many people as it takes to get me to fall in line.”

He switches to a high-pitched voice, mocking me. “Just do the move right, and you’re free to go. It’s a simple release move.’ Pretty sure those were your exact words.”

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Chapter 244

“That’s not about me falling short of your expectations,” I said firmly, “That’s you deliberately messing things up just to get under my skin.”

He looked almost genuinely hurt by the accusation, his voice softening. “I would never do something like that.” Yet, the playful glint in his eyes betrayed him, and for a moment, I almost forgot why I was irritated with him in the first place.

“Let’s just agree to disagree,” I replied, crossing my arms. “Now, tell me what you actually know about the territory we’re scouting.”

He chuckled, shaking his head. “You sound like I should be fluent in all these pack names and land claims you keep throwing around.” His laughter was easy and warm. “Give me a little background, and maybe I can share something useful.”

The rest of the drive was spent with me attempting to paint a clear picture of Ryker’s territory. I described the lands we’d claimed, the delicate balance of power, and the

complicated relationship between Ryker and Rory—all without the aid of a map. It was a lot to take in, but I did my best to simplify it.

“Wait, does Alpha Ryker really control all that land? That sounds insane. Who even needs that much space? And how many people does he have under his wing?” he asked, genuinely curious.

“Most people don’t believe it, but Ryker isn’t out hunting for more territory. Usually, these lands come to him by chance—like when an Alpha dies without an heir, and the pack fragments into chaos. Instead of diplomacy, they fight for control. Or, sometimes, like with my old pack, the Alpha was just a brutal tyrant who needed to be taken down.”

He gave me a long, searching look. “I’m guessing you’re not going to talk about your old pack, huh?”

I felt his gaze burning into the side of my head, but I refused to meet his eyes. “Look! There’s Rory’s packhouse. Let’s check in and then head to the cabin so we can start planning,” I said quickly, pulling the SUV into the driveway, shifting into park, and hopping out.

He muttered under his breath, “I’ll take that as a no.”

I didn’t bother responding. No way was I going to share anything about my past pack. That secret belonged only to Ryker. Even Josh and Bennet knew just the basics.

“Gunner! It’s so good to see you!” I called out as I ran forward and wrapped my arms around Rory’s beta.

“Hey, Greta! Who’s this?” Gunner asked, holding me steady as he noticed Finn standing nearby.

Finn stepped forward, extending a hand. “I’m Finn. Alpha Ryker assigned me as backup for this mission.”

Gunner eyed Finn’s hand for a moment, then glanced back at me for confirmation. “He’s one of our newest warriors. This is his first mission with us, but he’s been in the field for a while. Alpha Ryker thinks he might have some insight into these rogues.”

“Ah, Rory’s this way. Come on in,” Gunner said, leading us inside.

We followed him to Rory’s office, where Rory was bent over a large map, deep in discussion with his mother, Antonia, along with Delta Kade and Gamma Liam.

We barely squeezed in around the table when Finn spoke up. “They won’t be hiding in that grove. If they’re holed up anywhere, it’s going to be here.” He pointed to a different section of dense forest.

“That’s where they’ve been spotted, but thanks for the suggestion, new guy,” Kade said with a skeptical look, as if no one should dare to voice an opinion without solid intel.

Finn didn't back down. "They're obviously using that area to mislead you."

"That part of the forest is too thick to move through, let alone camp in," Liam added.

"Exactly," Finn said, locking eyes with me as if I were the only one in the room. "That's the whole point. It keeps people from looking too closely. They're probably using the clearing we made when we came through."

Rory frowned, confused. "What do you mean, 'when you came through'?"

Miss L

Author

Thank you so much for reading. I appreciate every thoughtful comment and kind word. I can't respond here, but if you want to chat, you can find me on social media at [Miss.L.Writes](#).

I Like

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Chapter 245

10 – Finn

"We've carved a route to reach the Dark Moon pack, Alpha Rory," I announced, trying to keep my voice steady despite the tension thickening the air.

"Hold on a second! You were part of the group that attacked Ryker and Kennedy?!" The room instantly filled with low, threatening growls, the kind that warned of potential violence. I planted my feet firmly, muscles coiled and ready to spring if necessary. My expression remained calm, neither indifferent nor cocky, just neutral—careful not to provoke further hostility. Honestly, I had no clue why I was even here. To them, I would always be the leader of the pack that tried—and failed—to take down Ryker's. I braced myself for interrogation and suspicion.

"Hey! Gunner. Kade. Cut it out." Greta's voice cut through the tension like a blade. "Ryker vetted him. He's been working with us for six months now. That's why he's here. Besides, he clearly slipped past all of you without being noticed." She positioned herself between me and the beta and delta, as if creating a buffer zone. I couldn't hide my surprise. Did Greta just stand up for me? "That's where we should start," she added, glancing at Rory, as if nothing hostile was about to unfold. He gave a slight nod. "Is there any other information we need before moving forward?" Greta's urgency was clear—she wanted to get me away from her friends as quickly as possible.

"No, I think you're set. The cabin isn't too far, but you'll have to hike up the mountainside. No vehicles can reach it, and the weather is expected to turn sour in the next couple of days. The guys have stocked you up with everything you'll need. Hopefully, the bad weather

will work in your favor and keep those rogues contained.” Rory’s tone was serious, but there was a flicker of hope in his eyes.

“What kind of details do you want about the rogues?” I asked, shifting my weight as I prepared to take notes mentally.

“Right now, I need to know the size of their group. Every time they show up, the number of rogues varies. I need demographics too—ages, genders, any patterns. They haven’t taken anyone yet, but last time they came close. Their target was some of our girls, though I don’t think it was a planned attack. That’s the only sign of disorganization we’ve seen from them so far. We managed to kill two of their men, but I was hoping to have someone alive to interrogate. I haven’t been in charge long, but I can’t let pack members be taken on my watch, especially not in my first year, Greta.” His gaze shifted to my partner, and I recognized the same helplessness I’d felt countless times when innocent people got hurt following Amy and Claude’s reckless orders.

I couldn’t hold back my voice any longer. “We can help with that, Alpha. How will we stay in contact? I’m not sure about Greta, but I don’t have the ability to mindlink within Ryker’s pack just yet.” I ignored the disgruntled huff from Gunner. This mission could very well decide whether my people get to stay in Dark Moon. I wasn’t about to sabotage it over someone’s attitude.

“I’ve set up two-way radios in the cabin for you. Just let us know if you need anything else.”

“Thank you, Alpha.” I nodded and turned toward the exit. If Greta had more to discuss, I wasn’t needed, and maybe she’d get better information without me hovering. I grabbed my bag from the SUV and waited.

She emerged moments later, carrying another bag. “Here, you can carry the food in your mostly empty bag,” she said with a playful roll of her eyes.

“You say that like it’s a bad thing. What’s wrong with my bag being mostly empty?” I glanced over the top of the truck as she pulled out her own pack.

“What’s the point of a bag if there’s nothing inside?” She arched an eyebrow and began walking away.

“Are we just leaving the truck here?” I asked, watching her move.

“Huh? No, one of the guys will move it later.”

“You just let other people handle your stuff? Why not take care of your own things and make sure it’s done right?” Pack dynamics sometimes baffled me.

“Since when did you become the control freak in this relationship?” she teased, glancing back over her shoulder.

“Wait, we’re in a relationship?” I snapped my head toward her, raising my voice with mock excitement.

“There he is! I was worried you might be taking something seriously for a moment.” Her teasing tone was new to me, and I realized it was the woods that gave her this playful edge. I’d never heard her like this before.

“I do take things seriously. I don’t get why training has to start at the crack of dawn, but I still show up and do the work. Protecting the pack is serious business, but doing the same drills over and over gets boring. After a while, training alone isn’t enough, and I haven’t been given any other responsibilities. I’ve been moving around constantly for the last five years. I’m just trying to adapt.”

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Chapter 246

“Still nothing in your pack? You only grabbed a bag to one-up me and be difficult,” Greta accused, her tone sharp as she caught up to me.

I let out an exasperated sigh, dropping my bag to the forest floor with a soft thud. The faint rustling of water bottles and small packets of food echoed from inside. With a quick unzip, I revealed the contents. “Greta, I have three sets of clothes—three shirts, three pairs of shorts, and underwear. That’s all. Amy and Claude made sure no one hoards too much. I gave up more of my stuff so others could carry what they needed. I haven’t spent this much time in my human form in five years, and my wolf doesn’t need clothes anyway. This pack is small so I can wear it while shifting. My wolf can easily carry it. So no, my pack isn’t full, and honestly, I doubt I’ll ever be anywhere long enough to fill it up.” I zipped it back up and pressed forward, following Gunner’s trail deeper into the woods.

“Finn! Finn! Wait! What the hell?” Greta’s footsteps pounded behind me, frustration clear in her voice. “Where exactly are you going?”

“I’m following Gunner’s trail to the cabin. Where else would I be headed? We have a mission to complete, and I need to do my part so all of our people can stay. There’s only a year to prove ourselves, and I refuse to be the reason they’re kicked out—even if some of you don’t want me around.”

I shook off the tension settling in my chest. Life had thrown so much crap at us, so many battles fought and scars earned. We always found a way to push through the nonsense. I wasn’t about to let one stubborn female warrior get under my skin now. Taking a deep breath, I scanned the surroundings, alert to every sound and shadow. If the camp had been coming and going for weeks, there was no way they hadn’t noticed this hidden cabin before.

“Finn! Stop! What do you mean, if we don’t want you around?” Greta’s voice was sharp, almost pleading.

I didn’t answer. Instead, I asked, “How much farther? It’s getting dark, and if what Rory said is true, those wolves will be out soon. I don’t want a fight in unfamiliar woods.”

She sighed, clearly annoyed. Good. I didn’t need her pity or sympathy. My focus was on the mission—showing we could be trusted and follow the orders of a real alpha.

“It should be close. I can smell the juniper and cedar they use around their buildings. The scent’s strong—it’ll help mask us.”

I nodded, pressing forward. After about twenty more feet, we crested a small hill and spotted the cabin—a tiny structure tucked between two trees. The weathered exterior was covered in moss, looking fragile enough to collapse if I sneezed too hard. I stopped, eyeing it carefully. “That’s not going to fit both of us.”

“What do you mean? Rory said his guys use it all the time when they’re out here late.”

“His guys probably come alone. There’s no way both of us will fit. You’ll be lucky if there’s a bed and a toilet in the same room.”

“Gross!”

“Have you never had to pee where you sleep?” I teased, knowing her pampered life probably never forced her to rough it. She just rolled her eyes in reply.

Reaching the door, I noticed that despite its old, worn look, the cabin was surprisingly sturdy. Maybe the shabby facade was meant to keep wandering wolves away. Greta pulled a key from her pack and unlocked the door, and we were immediately hit by a strong scent of air freshener.

“What the hell is that?” I asked, wrinkling my nose.

“That’s the last guy’s failed attempt to mask his scent—and then he left all that crap behind.” Greta grimaced as we stepped inside. “Look on the bright side—no toilet next to the bed.”

“Yeah, but I only see one bed.” I leaned close to her ear, a sly smile tugging at my lips. “So, where exactly are you planning to sleep?”

Without waiting for an answer, I pushed past her and flopped down on the full-sized mattress, grinning as I lay back.

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Chapter 247

Greta

“Forget about where we’re going to sleep for now, Rookie. Right now, we need to focus on the mission.” I dropped my bag beside the tiny table in the cramped kitchen area. Despite my protests, Finn wasn’t entirely wrong when he joked that the cabin likely combined the toilet and bed in one tiny room. It was clear this place was designed for a single occupant to spend the night—no frills, no space to spare.

I began rummaging through my bag, searching for the map Gunner had handed me earlier. Once I found it, I let the bag fall to the floor and unfolded the map carefully across the table’s surface. “You coming to help, or just going to watch?” I glanced over my shoulder.

Finn was standing there, eyes fixed on me—or maybe the map—but he wasn't moving to assist. All his earlier talk about wanting to prove himself seemed to vanish now that he had a bed to crash in. Whatever. I wasn't going to waste energy on that.

The map detailed the Valley View Pack's territory with impressive topographical precision. It showed dense clusters of trees, and though I wouldn't admit it to Finn, I agreed with his earlier suggestion: those thick woods he pointed out would be the perfect hideout for a large rogue group. If they had any inkling of Rory's growing influence over his pack, now would be the ideal moment to strike and try to take him down.

"The quickest route from here is this narrow trail," I said, tracing a faint line on the map. Suddenly, I jumped, nearly stumbling backward into Finn. I stepped aside quickly, uncomfortable with someone lurking just out of my direct sight. He, however, acted as if nothing had happened and continued talking casually. "Assuming it's not overgrown. My pack hasn't been through here in over a year. Who knows how long these rogues have been hiding around. They might've carved out other paths by now. So, what's first on the agenda tonight?"

"What?" My mind scrambled, resisting the sudden jolt of panic. It was just Finn—he wouldn't hurt me. I told myself to stop slipping back into that nightmare. But the headache that had been lurking at the edges of my thoughts was trying to take over, and I fought to keep it at bay.

"I asked, what's first on the agenda tonight? You okay? You look like you've seen a ghost." He took a step closer, and I instinctively stepped back, bumping into the kitchen cabinets. "Okay, okay, you want space," he said, raising his hands in surrender. I was still struggling to focus, blinking rapidly to clear the pounding in my head. No one could see me like this—not a leader, not someone who wanted to inspire trust. Panic attacks were a weakness I couldn't afford.

I shook my head, trying to pull myself together. "Uh... let's check out the trails you remember—see if the rogues are using the same paths your pack made, or if they've created new ones."

Without meeting his eyes, I stepped past him and headed out the front door, moving toward the side of the cabin. I needed to shift, to clear the tension that had settled in my chest. Finn followed silently, not commenting on the change in my mood.

We ran for nearly five miles until we reached a narrow river marking the boundary between the Valley View and Oak Lake pack territories. All the alphas within Ryker's alliance had agreed on this neutral zone—a buffer where packs respected each other's lands, allowing friendly rogues to travel and live nomadically without conflict. Most rogues posed no threat, but a few bitter exiles or those born rogue harbored deep resentment toward pack life. Their mission was often to dismantle packs or harm pack members whenever possible. I didn't judge either lifestyle, as long as peace was maintained.

The air was crisp, the river's gentle flow the only sound breaking the stillness around us. I took a deep breath and steadied myself, knowing the real challenge was just beginning.

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I shifted uneasily at the water's edge, my eyes scanning the opposite bank. There were no clear paths leading into the dense thicket of trees, but honestly, I hadn't expected it to be that simple. If Rory's men hadn't uncovered anything, it was unlikely I would either.

Suddenly, a large t-shirt was thrust toward me. "Here," came the voice. "If they've got someone scouting over there, they don't get the privilege of seeing you without clothes." His tone was matter-of-fact, answering the question I hadn't even voiced aloud.

"Who said I care if they look?" I shot back, holding the shirt at arm's length. The scent of cinnamon and ginger—his signature mix—wafted off the fabric. This was the very shirt he had worn earlier today.

He sighed, a little exasperated. "Can you just stop fighting me for once and put it on?" My gaze locked with his, and despite myself, I glanced down to check if he'd covered up too. He'd pulled on shorts, but my eyes were drawn to his broad chest and defined abs. "Please, Greta. Cover yourself."

His use of my real name—only the second time today—caught me off guard. There was genuine concern in his eyes, worry about someone seeing me vulnerable. Taking a deep breath, I slipped the shirt over my head, folding away my stubborn pride for the moment.

"Did your pack come through here at all?" I asked, looking back toward the forest. He was a distracting presence, to say the least. If it were just his body, I might be able to keep my composure, but now his sandy blonde hair was loose, cascading in waves over his shoulders after being down from the man bun. My long-forgotten lady bits stirred at the sight. I clenched my thighs together and began pacing along the riverbank.

He tried—and failed—to hide his quiet chuckle behind me, but was smart enough to keep his mouth shut. I didn't have time to deal with jerks or anyone who threatened my pack. Even though he'd eventually let Kennedy go, he'd been the one pulling the strings to get her captured and was mated to the psycho who'd tried to force herself on my alpha. I still couldn't believe he was so blinded by the mate bond that he hadn't noticed what Amy was really up to.

"We camped a little further south," he said, his voice lowering as he spoke. "If you follow this river north, it splits and leads to a low mountain range. That's the route we took. All the other packs avoid that area—I'm not sure why—but it wasn't hard to slip through their patrol schedules. There's a small clearing southwest of here, with a stream running through it. We even built a little dam to collect water. It would have been perfect for a permanent camp if others hadn't had different plans." His voice trailed off, and I fought the urge to glance back at him. I refused to let him use this moment to make me pity him.

"Let's head that way, then," I said, gesturing south and hoping he'd take the lead.

"Do you want to shift for travel?" he asked.

“Uh, no,” I replied quickly. “Actually, I want to know what you understand about this area. Are there any good spots to hide or set up an ambush? Maybe a vantage point where we can watch from above?”

“This way, ma’am,” he said with a smirk.

There he was—my asshole. I rolled my eyes. No, not my asshole. Just a regular asshole acting like one, currently striding ahead without me.

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Chapter 249

I apologize for being away so long. Our entire household fell ill, but it was my son who struggled the most. This time of year, the usual flu, cold, and relentless mucus that seem to circulate endlessly through the public school system hit him harder than ever. For two exhausting weeks, we endured countless tests—each one coming back negative for everything they could check. Yet, despite the negative results, his fever would soar dangerously high every few days. It was a worrying rollercoaster of ups and downs. Finally, after much persistence and concern, the doctors discovered he was battling pneumonia.

Those past weeks have been a whirlwind of sleepless nights, hospital visits, and constant care. But now, thankfully, it seems we’re finally on the road to recovery. This afternoon marks the first time in two weeks that I’ve even opened my laptop. I’m determined to use the next few days of quiet moments to dive back into Finn and Greta’s story. I’ve truly missed them—their world, their struggles, and their triumphs. It feels good to reconnect with something familiar after such a taxing time.

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Chapter 250

12 – Greta

Ugh, this guy is seriously irritating. We’ve been trekking for nearly forty-five minutes, and not a single word has come from him. I thought he was supposed to be guiding me through the terrain, not just taking a slow, aimless walk.

“Finn!” I hiss, barely able to keep my voice down. “What exactly are you doing? We need a solid plan and to properly scout this area. Talk to me—what’s the move?” I break into a quiet jog, closing the distance between us.

He glances back without slowing. “I’m leading you to the spot by the stream where we used to gather water. I didn’t think you needed a play-by-play commentary. No one’s been traveling through here—at least, I can tell by the smell. You can smell it too, right? No need to discuss it.” He shrugs casually and keeps walking. “You’re a trained warrior; I assumed you could handle basic observations on your own.”

I bite back a growl, frustration bubbling beneath the surface. “How many people were living in the area you cleared? Did you follow specific paths? How long were you stationed here? We need to have a plan in case we get separated or if we run into trouble.”

“That’s something you should have brought up before we left, if it’s such a big concern.” He doesn’t slow down. “For now, we’re just winging it. You’re a fighter, and so am I. If we get separated, head back to the cabin—but take a long route. Isn’t that stuff drilled into you during your fancy warrior training?” He tosses the words over his shoulder like a challenge.

“Yeah, asshole,” I snap back. “I’m not used to working with someone who can’t mindlink and is on their first mission. I’ve only fought alongside you once, and most of that time I was telling you to get off your ass and help out. We can’t just wing this. Rory needs intel, not for you to come back in a body bag.”

“I’ve survived this long. I think I’ve proven to more than just you that I can handle myself.” He shoots me a look over his shoulder, raising an eyebrow. “If I remember correctly, you had me kneeling in handcuffs just before you asked me for help.”

“I had the enemy in cuffs. That’s all.” I match his gaze. “If memory serves, you were released by me to fight on our side.”

“You only let me go because the Luna told you to. Don’t pretend it was your decision. She made you do it because she wasn’t about to ask her mate. I’m lucky she believed me, or he would have torn my head off when I surrendered.”

“That was her doing too.”

“I know. Even the enemy needs someone watching their back, right? Even if it’s not someone from their own side.” His laugh is dry, self-mocking. But there’s something else, something deeper in the tone.

I open my mouth to respond, but he suddenly stops right in front of me. I run straight into his broad back, barely able to stop myself. I try not to think about the fact that I’m pressed against his bare skin. “Finn?!” I start, but before I can finish, he reaches behind and pulls me close, pressing my face against him. “Fi…” His grip tightens as the wind shifts, and suddenly I catch the scent. The rogues are close.

He’s too tall for me to see comfortably over his shoulder, but I can’t resist trying. I feel his chest rise and fall steadily with his breath—calm, controlled, but ready. He’s not panicked, but he’s definitely bracing for a fight. There’s no way the rogues have spotted us and haven’t made a move, yet here we are, stuck in a vulnerable spot.

Taking a risk, I peek over one shoulder. Through the dense, rough forest, I spot a large bonfire, roughly thrown together. The only thing stopping it from setting the forest ablaze is the time of year. It’s late fall, and this season has been unusually wet, soaking the ground and dampening the flames.