

Letters Sent To Eternity

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Chapter 271

23 – Greta

I find myself sitting motionless, my gaze fixed on the closed door ahead. There's complete silence beyond it—no shower running, no movement—just a quiet waiting, as if he's silently urging me to leave. I should feel a sense of relief, especially since he told me to go. Yet, my body refuses to obey, rooted in place by an invisible force. My wolf senses his presence, silently pleading for him to come out. But his wolf is standing guard, blocking her path, and I can feel the sharp sting of heartbreak radiating from her. Something has shifted between us, and it's painful. I add this to the ever-growing list of reasons to blame myself.

Frustrated, I push myself up and take a deep breath, inhaling the faint scent he left behind. Suddenly, an idea sparks in my mind. I run my hands over the pillows and blankets scattered around the room, touching every soft surface I can find. Maybe, just maybe, this small gesture will help him rest better tonight. I know I need to talk to Kennedy soon—this situation is unfamiliar territory, and I'm at a loss for how to handle it. I still don't want a mate. It wouldn't be fair to Finn, knowing I'm broken and beyond repair. The thought of causing him pain over this is unbearable.

Weeks have passed, and Finn remains nowhere to be seen. I can sense him when he's close, but he's been avoiding me completely. I had hoped to catch him during training so we could talk, but luck hasn't been on my side. Not even a glimpse of him at the far end of the training field. If he is training, it's somewhere I don't attend. He's been taking on missions from Ryker—many of them, in fact. The only reason I know this is because of Ryker's wolf. Kennedy refuses to discuss Finn's situation with me. She simply says he's been through enough and needs time. Since she's friends with both of us, she won't act as a messenger between us. My alpha seems to have some unspoken 'guy code' with Finn and only informs me when Finn will be away from the pack, preparing me for the inevitable separation. He doesn't share where or for how long, just that Finn is leaving.

I've been running patrols as often as possible, desperate to catch his scent and get my daily fix. When did my life become this? Trailing after a guy just to know if he's nearby, worrying about when he'll return. He doesn't even acknowledge me anymore, not giving me the time of day. My wolf huffs in irritation.

"You good, Greta?" Danny's voice breaks through my thoughts.

"I'm fine, Danny. Stop asking," I snap without turning.

"Then stop sounding like you're not," he replies, clearly unconvinced.

"Shut up and run, Delta," I retort, my wolf sighing again. Lately, I can't tell if she's annoyed with me or at me.

Suddenly, a heavy impact knocks me sideways. My wolf scrambles to focus on our attacker. Where the hell did that come from? I can't detect anyone unfamiliar nearby. Before I can react, we're slammed down repeatedly.

"You can't even fight back properly! What's going on with you, Greta?!" Danny demands, his wolf pinning me down, muzzle pressed against my neck.

"It's nothing," I mumble.

"Try again," he insists, tightening his grip slightly.

"Drop it, Delta, or I swear I'll kick your ass," I warn.

"No way! I never would've pinned you before. You're slow, distracted. Something changed after that rogue mission with Finn. You're a liability. Go home. You're on probation until we figure this out. Better yet, go see Ryker. He's expecting you," Danny says sharply.

"Asshole! You tattled?! How old are you?" I snap back.

"Old enough to know you're going to get yourself killed—and others hurt—if you keep this up. You're benched. Figure yourself out. Now go!" he orders.

"Let me finish patrols. You can't run alone," I plead.

"Brian and Sammy are already on their way. Go before I really beat your ass and make you talk," he threatens with a smirk.

"You're not that good at interrogations," I tease, letting out a half-laugh.

"Maybe not. But something's definitely wrong. If you want to talk, I'm here," he offers.

"I'm good," I say firmly, forcing my wolf to turn and walk away, determined to face whatever speech Ryker has waiting for me. We rush back to our apartment, shifting and changing quickly—it's better not to keep him waiting.

Entering the packhouse is always an experience in itself. Since Kennedy became Luna, it's like a revolving door of activity. Ryker has always provided meals for the warriors and anyone who wanted to join, but before, it was mostly just eat and leave. Now, it's a lively hub. Teens come in to work on homework, warriors mostly eat and leave, but with the looming threat from Janelle, they've been busier than ever. Many of the older wolves treat it like a coffee shop—a place to see and be seen. The overall atmosphere is warm and happy. It's the close-knit pack feeling our wolves crave, which explains why the rogue wolves we've adopted spend so much time here. They never had that before. From what I understand, Amy did her best to keep them suspicious of one another, fostering division and mistrust to maintain control. Now, that's slowly changing.

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As I made my way past the dining room, several familiar faces greeted me with waves. I could sense Ryker's presence intensifying, his Alpha energy practically radiating down the hallway as I approached his office. What could be causing his agitation? It couldn't be Danny reporting that I was distracted—Ryker had far more patience than that. Still, the mounting pressure was giving me a pounding headache. I raised a hand to rub my forehead before knocking gently on his door.

"Come in," he called.

I stepped inside, closing my eyes briefly to steady myself against the overwhelming Alpha aura. This office was so familiar I could navigate it blindfolded if I had to. "What's going on, Bossman? Why the serious vibe?" I asked, my voice tinged with curiosity.

"You wouldn't have come any other way," Ryker replied, his tone low.

I blinked, pulling my fingers away from my face and opening my eyes fully. That's when I saw Finn standing there, his back turned to me. The tension in his posture was unmistakable—his shoulders were tight, fists clenched, and I could almost feel the anger simmering beneath the surface.

Ryker circled his desk and approached me. "You cornered me once," he said, his voice steady but firm. "I think I told you to stop acting like a chickensh*t." He gave my shoulder a brief, firm pat. "You've become a liability. And Finn's got a death wish. Both of you are sidelined until you sort this out. There's a guest room on the second floor all set up. Yes, you're both staying here. Yes, you're staying together. Figure your shit out. Don't make me bring in reinforcements."

"Alpha, with all due respect..." I started to argue.

"Seriously?!" Ryker cut me off.

We both protested, but he was unmoved.

"I'm alpha commanding both of you. Now go."

I exhaled deeply, staring up at the ceiling as Ryker exited his office. One slow breath in, then out. I turned and walked away, leaving Finn to decide whether to follow. Either way, he'd end up in our enforced confinement eventually. This wasn't like the situation with him and Kennedy. Back then, he'd been worried about her safety and just didn't know how to express it. But this? I shouldn't even have a mate, and Finn clearly didn't want to be here, judging by how many missions he'd pulled himself from the pack.

No sooner had I stepped out than Robin appeared. "This way, you two."

"Robin, I'm sure we can find the room ourselves," I said with a scoff.

"You forget—Ryker knows you better than anyone. You're getting an escort," she said, flashing a teasing smile.

“I’m thrilled you’re enjoying this so much,” I grumbled.

“You’ll thank us later. Ryker did, remember?”

“Completely different situation,” I muttered.

“Do I? Sounds like two stubborn souls refusing to accept their Goddess-given mates,” she teased.

I swallowed a growl. “Where exactly are we going? Ryker said ‘a room on the second floor,’” I asked as she led us out the front door.

“Yeah, about that,” she said, opening the back door of an SUV. “The Luna decided different accommodations were necessary. Grant will take you where you need to go.”

“What about our stuff? Clothes, toiletries? Or are you planning to dump us in the woods and let our wolves fend for themselves?” I asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Tempting, but no,” she laughed, waving us inside.

I climbed into the vehicle and threw a pointed glance across the seats. “Wipe that smirk off your face, Jeeves, or I’ll do it for you,” I warned, settling into my seat.

“Hey, don’t kill the driver. We’re just following orders,” he replied with a grin. “Keep that in mind.”

“Where exactly are we headed?” I asked.

“You’ll see,” he said, eyes on the road.

“By the way, what’s with the ‘Jeeves’ thing?” Finn asked, sounding more relaxed than he had in Ryker’s office. “I’ve heard it a couple of times now.”

“That’s Kennedy’s driver. She gave him the name,” I said sharply, catching Grant’s amused look in the rearview mirror.

“Hey, don’t knock the nickname. There was a time when our Alpha struggled with his matebond—not unlike some others I know. I wasn’t even allowed to talk to her, not even to introduce myself. So that’s what she called me the whole ride from her home pack here,” Grant explained with a shrug.

That wasn’t even half the story, and I was about to say so when he cut me off. “Now that we’re on the road, I’m not allowed to speak. You two are supposed to work through whatever’s going on. Oh, and the whole team knows about the mate situation, so no need for code words.”

“What the f*ck? How? Who?” I blurted.

“Well, it’s kind of obvious if you really think about it. But the Alpha confirmed it, so you can’t hide it from us anymore. Welcome to the family, man,” he said, glancing at Finn.

“Don’t congratulate me just yet. My mates tend to be difficult,” Finn muttered, and I could feel his glare burning into the side of my face.

“Yeah, well, your first mate was a traitorous b*tch who had you kidnap our Luna,” Grant said bluntly.

“And my second thinks I’m…” Finn began.

“We’re here, lovebirds,” Grant interrupted as we pulled up to a stunning home perched atop a hill.

“Where exactly is ‘here’?” Finn asked, and for once, I found myself sharing his curiosity.

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Chapter 273

24 – Finn

I slipped out of the SUV, scanning my surroundings cautiously. Something about this place felt off—like a trap waiting to snap shut. Yet, oddly enough, none of my usual warning signals were flashing. My wolf and I have honed a pretty reliable instinct for danger, and steering clear of trouble has always been our top priority. But with Kennedy and Ryker, there’s been something different. Since joining the Dark Moon pack, I haven’t once felt even a flicker of suspicion toward either of them.

“Greta! Finn!” I spun around at the sound of Kennedy’s voice, her figure perched at the top of a ridiculously steep staircase. “Well, don’t just stand there—come on up!” She waved us forward, her excitement practically bubbling over.

It felt strange, almost foreign, to be greeted with such enthusiasm. Aside from the pups at Dark Moon, who are always thrilled to see everyone, and Nan—if memory serves—no one had ever welcomed me like this. I usually count on Sammy and a few of the other guys. We fight side by side, silently hoping each of us makes it out alive. We’ve lost people along the way, had to leave some behind, moving on to the next fight, the next location. I couldn’t tell you where those fallen warriors rest or even recall all their names.

“This should be interesting,” Greta muttered beside me, and I felt a surge of irritation.

I’m exhausted from trying. I’ve poured everything I have into getting close to her. I attended every training session she led or joined, sat near her at meals, cracking jokes and trying to bond with the warriors she spends most time with. I even volunteered for a duo mission with her, only to get ambushed by traitors who ran off to save themselves. I’ve been there for her during those moments when memories trap her, comforting her as best I could. But nothing changed. No explanation, no response—just the automatic physical reaction her body can’t fight. She’s told the healer to keep my mate status a secret. She’s told me countless times

she doesn't want a mate. I don't know why I ever thought this time would be any different. Different pack, different upbringing, different mate—it's all the same.

"Yeah, well, get ready. We're stuck here until she says we can leave," I said, brushing past Greta. "Jeeves dropped our stuff and took off," I added over my shoulder as I grabbed my bag and left hers lying in the gravel.

So far, I've been good at avoiding her. This place shouldn't be any harder. I just need Kennedy to understand it's not me who's resisting—it's her friend. Once she sees that, maybe she'll let it go.

"Who designed these stairs, Ken?! Just these alone would keep most people out," Greta shouted from behind me, and I hated the way my skin tingled at the sound of her sweet, deep voice. I inhaled deeply, then exhaled slowly, forcing my body to relax.

"I think that's exactly why Ryker gave them to me," Kennedy giggled from over the railing. She's only a couple of years younger than me, but right now she looked so young, so lively—and definitely up to something.

We reached the landing, only to find another flight of stairs just ten feet away. "You've got to be kidding me! This place is like a castle out of a fairytale," I called up to her. "Where's your hair, Rapunzel?"

"I know! Isn't it the best?!" She ignored my princess joke completely.

"That's not exactly what comes to my mind. More like a pain in the ass," I tried to sound annoyed, but the look on her face when we finally reached the top was too adorable to maintain the act. Then I really took it all in. "Oh shit! Seriously?!" I dropped my bag in disbelief.

"Yeah!" she grinned.

"How did I miss that?!" I asked incredulously.

"Miss what?" Greta called over my shoulder, and I barely managed to suppress an eye roll.

"Your Luna is pregnant. How did I miss that?"

"You've been busy, avoiding the pack like the plague," Greta teased.

"Well," Kennedy stepped between us, cutting off the silent challenge Greta was trying to start with me. "We didn't exactly announce it to anyone. Especially with Janelle still on the loose." She pulled me toward the cabin. "I've been here a lot, and I plan to stay until the end since it's easier for healers to come to me. Like you both noticed, the cabin is designed for safety and defense. But enough about me. We need to get you both settled—there's work to do."

Apparently, neither of us could be trusted to follow directions properly, because she linked an arm with each of ours. "You're walking way too fast for this part of the tour," I laughed.

“I was thinking the same thing. Where’s the fire?” Greta’s voice held a teasing smile.

“You’re both smart enough to find the living room and kitchen on your own later,” Kennedy said, practically dragging us through the open-concept main floor toward another staircase. “There’s an office here, but it’s being renovated.” She pointed to a door beneath the stairs as we passed. “The rooms are upstairs. Alpha Edward kept things simple—he wanted the focus on his pack and the forest.”

We reached the landing of the floating stairs and stepped into a narrow hallway. Two doors on the right, two on the left. That was it—just four doors. Really minimal for an alpha’s house.

“Here we go!” Kennedy’s voice cracked unexpectedly. “Your room.”

“Whose room?” Greta asked, looking between us with disbelief.

“Yours and Finn’s.”

“Why?” I managed to choke out, my mind racing while my wolf danced with happiness.

“A few reasons,” Kennedy explained. “One is Ryker’s and mine, obviously. One belongs to Bennet. This pregnancy is stressing him almost as much as Ryker. He’s been running between the two packhouses pretty regularly. The only reason neither of them is here right now is because you two are. One of the rooms is the nursery, so that leaves just one more.”

“I’ll take the couch,” I offered.

“There’s one in your room. No one stays in the living room. I’m up and down all night right now, and I need to be able to wander without worrying about disturbing anyone. Deal?”

She practically shoved us inside and closed the door behind us. What the hell just happened?

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Chapter 274

25 – Finn

“Deal.” That was the only instruction we received—just deal with it. And now, here I am, trapped in this place with her for an unknown stretch of time. I can’t handle this. Not right now. I need to get away.

“I’m going to go look around,” I mutter, dropping my bag hastily as I make a beeline for the door.

“Finn, wait—” she calls after me, but I don’t catch the rest. I bolt down the hallway like a frightened animal, rushing past a bewildered Kennedy, racing down the stairs, and bursting out onto the sprawling patio. My chest heaves; my lungs burn as if they refuse to draw in

air. This is unbearable. Being near her is suffocating. Even the faint trace of her scent in the car was enough to shake me. Right now, I'm caught in a strange paradox—more relaxed and yet more tense than I've felt in weeks.

"You need to calm down. This is a good thing," she says softly, her voice trying to soothe me.

"How can this be good?!" I snap back. "I was finally getting used to not having her around."

"You get another chance. That's why it's good!" she insists.

"I don't want it," I say, voice low and bitter. "She doesn't want me. I'm a rogue with nothing to offer. Just let me reject her so we can move on. The rest of our group is settled, and Ryker will have everyone packed up soon enough."

"No!" she counters firmly. "I let you reject Amy because she wasn't right for us or our kind. We set her wolf free to be with someone better. Greta is different—she's a good person. She's just scared."

"Scared of what?" I demand, frustration bubbling over. "That's the problem! You get to know things about her that I don't. She won't even talk to me. I can tell she needs help, but she's too stubborn to ask for it."

I pace the deck like a trapped animal, restless and agitated. The elastic holding my hair snapped, leaving a bothersome strand brushing against my neck, adding to my irritation.

"Did you know you make funny sounds when you fight with your wolf?" she says with a nervous laugh. I stiffen at the sound, and the delicate scent of cherries surrounds me, wrapping around my frayed nerves like a fragile embrace. I can't handle this—not yet. I turn away from the comforting fragrance.

"Finn, please, wait." She grabs my arm, and the sudden contact sends an electric shock through me, awakening something inside. The entire forest seems to come alive—the colors deepen, the sky brightens, and every sound sharpens with clarity. It's the first time she's touched me willingly, not because of duty or training.

"I need to go," I say, pulling free from her grasp and edging toward the stairs.

"Just listen, please," she pleads.

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"Not if you're just going to list every reason you don't want me," I say, cutting her off. "I get it—you don't want a mate. Fine. I'll keep my distance, and you can keep pretending this isn't real. I'm tired of hearing it."

"No, Finn, listen," she insists.

"I don't want to fight with you. I don't want to hear how worthless I am. Trust me, I already know. It's been made painfully clear. After my pack was attacked, no one came for me. That's the one thing I remember from my childhood with absolute certainty. I had family in other packs, but none of them wanted me enough to come find me. I waited—days, even—hiding from the assholes who destroyed my pack, hoping someone would claim me. No one did. No one missed me. No one wanted me." My words tumble out in a frantic rush, maybe hoping that if I lay it all bare, she'll finally reject me.

"Will you shut up for five fucking minutes?!" she snaps, exasperated. "I'm trying to talk to you. You've been avoiding me since the hospital. I'm sick of chasing you around." She glances over my shoulder. "Luna, are you okay if we take a walk?"

"What's wrong with you?!" I spin to face Greta, my glare sharp. "We can't just leave her here alone. It's our job to protect her. That's the only reason the alpha and beta aren't here."

"She's fine," Greta replies coolly. "Why are you so protective? For someone who claims to hate the pack so much, you sure are attached to its very heart."

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Chapter 275

"I don't hate your pack!" I shout, clutching my hair tightly at the roots in frustration. "I've been part of Dark Moon longer than anywhere else. Why would I stick around if I didn't like it?"

She narrows her eyes. "You spend a lot of time away from the pack. What's up with that? Scoping out new territories to conquer?"

I spin around, anger bubbling beneath the surface. "Screw you!" The young warrior princess will never truly understand what it means to be a rogue. She can't fathom the constant fear, the crushing loneliness, or the way suspicion clings to every interaction. Deep down, I actually care about Dark Moon. I just won't say it aloud. And despite everything, she and her luna have become a big part of why I've stayed. Even if she doesn't want me, I'm starting to find a purpose here. I just have to figure out how to live with this unwanted matebond, and maybe, just maybe, things will be okay.

Suddenly, a sharp breath leaves me as the wind is knocked out of my lungs. I stumble, barely catching myself before my face hits the deck.

"Take it to the ground, both of you. I don't want one of you accidentally flying off the balcony," Greta orders firmly.

"But—" I begin, but before I can finish, I feel a strong tug at the back of my shirt, pulling me down onto all fours.

"You heard the Luna. Let's settle this down on the ground. Maybe by the time we reach the bottom of these thousand steps, you'll be calmer," Greta says, her grip tightening. My wolf stirs, refusing to resist her touch. I rise to my feet reluctantly, and she leads us forward.

The long descent down the wide stairway gives me time—more than enough—to take deep breaths and try to clear my mind while my mate follows silently behind. When we finally reach the bottom, I start pacing over the gravel, refusing to stand still. If she wants to talk, she can do it while I'm moving. It helps keep her scent from overwhelming my senses and makes it easier to avoid direct eye contact.

"You're giving me whiplash and vertigo at the same time. Can you stop moving?" she complains.

"No. You say what you need to say, and then we can figure out how to handle this," I reply firmly.

"Well, I hate to burst your bubble, but it looks like we're stuck together," she says, her voice steady.

"Why?" I ask, genuinely puzzled.

"We have to protect the Luna. Janelle is still out there, and she's hungry for revenge."

"Why us, though? Dark Moon has plenty of warriors who can protect her."

"Because you have a target on your back, too. You betrayed them, sold them out. They want you dead just as much as Kennedy."

"Why not just let them have me? It would save everyone a lot of trouble. You wouldn't even have to reject me," I say bitterly.

"I'm not going to reject you. Will you stop saying that?" she snaps.

"Great. Another mate who won't cut me loose but won't accept me either," I mutter, exhaling my frustration and staring up at the sky.

"I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAVE A MATE! You asshole," I yell, the anger and hurt spilling out.

"Then reject me. Kill me. Do whatever. Just end this," I plead.

"You don't even want to know why? You're ready to give up that easily?" she asks, surprised.

"There's nothing left to give up, Warrior Princess. I've been doing this alone for so long. I thought Amy would make me whole when I found her, but you saw how that turned out. My wolf won't let me walk away, and he won't let me reject you. The ball's in your court, Princess."

"Stop calling me a f*cking princess," she growls.

“Why not? Isn’t that what you are? Better than me, with your pack of warriors you can choose from. An alpha and luna who care about you. I don’t belong in your world. That’s been made painfully clear.”

“Are you seriously jealous?” she asks, disbelief coloring her tone.

“Maybe.” I let my arms drop to my sides. “You have everything you want. I’m not on that list, and I’m trying my best to give you space.”

“I don’t need space. I need time. Can you handle that?” she says quietly.

My head snaps toward her. “What?”

Suddenly, a sharp voice breaks through the tension. “Greta... Finn! Get up here, now!!”

The urgency in the call cuts through the charged atmosphere, leaving us both momentarily stunned.

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Chapter 276

26 – Finn

It felt like we couldn’t catch a single break. Every time I managed to get Greta to open up about this whole mate situation, something would inevitably interrupt us. Neither of us was foolish enough to defy our heavily pregnant Luna, though. That was a line we weren’t willing to cross.

“What’s going on, Boss lady?” Greta asked, clearly winded as she tried to catch her breath. Even she wasn’t immune to the brutal climb up these damn stairs.

“Samuel and Seth found some abandoned pups near the border,” Kennedy’s voice cracked as she blurted out the news, her tone urgent and sharp.

I took a cautious step forward but stayed just behind Greta’s shoulder. I hadn’t spent much time around pregnant she-wolves, but I’d heard enough to know their moods could flip from sweet to violent in an instant. Kennedy was still adjusting to the emotional rollercoaster her wolf was putting her through, and in this moment, I figured she was less likely to lash out at Greta.

“They need your help! What part of that don’t you get?!” Kennedy ran her fingers through her hair in frustration, pacing back and forth like a caged animal. I was at a loss for words, glancing sideways at my mate. Greta’s eyes were glassy, as if she was trying to draw some insight from the alpha’s presence through Kennedy.

“Luna... LUNA!” Greta finally snapped, locking eyes with me. “Can you give me more details? Are the pups being chased? Hurt? Are they a threat?” I caught a sharp glance from

Kennedy at that last question, but at least Greta had my attention now. “What kind of help do they actually need? Give me something concrete to work with, Luna.”

“There are four of them,” Kennedy said, her voice trembling. “They seem to be alone. Three of the pups have come out of hiding in a small grove of trees, but the youngest one refuses to come out. None of us can fit into the space to get her.” She moved over and grabbed my arm tightly. “Finn, you have to help them. They’re just pups.”

Right then, Kennedy’s aura flared, and I felt my wolf start to lose control. She was trying to push us into action, but I couldn’t just leave her here alone. “Luna, hold on. Just for a second. What did the Alpha say? We can’t leave you by yourself.”

“I can handle myself,” she insisted, her voice sharp. “They’re just babies. They need you more. Go. Now.”

Without thinking, my body moved on its own. I took a step forward and felt a sharp tingle shoot up my arm. “Hold on, hero boy,” Greta said, grabbing my arm firmly. “The Alpha said no moving until backup arrives.” She released me and turned to Kennedy, who was glaring daggers at her. “Luna, stop. You know he’s right. You and your pup are important too. This could be a trap. No one knows if anyone’s aware of your pregnancy. You’ve done a good job hiding it, but this might be a way to get to you without your guards.” She raised her hand in Kennedy’s face. “Only Dark Moon warriors can keep Ryker calm. Don’t even suggest anyone else.”

Kennedy’s desperate need to save those pups was so intense my entire body started trembling from the sheer force of it. I couldn’t understand how Greta was standing so calmly beside her. “Can... I... go?” I managed to whisper. “Just me. If it’s a trap, you’ll be able to alert the Alpha.” I exhaled slowly, the anxiety in the room almost suffocating me. “His backup is on the way, right?” I sank to my knees, feeling like a mountain of weight was pressing down on my shoulders.

“Finn!” I felt the tingling in my shoulder again, but I was trapped in a tunnel of panic and couldn’t focus. “Luna... Kennedy! You need to stop or relax or something. You’re hurting him!”

Suddenly, the pressure in my chest snapped like a stretched rubber band. Falling onto my hands, I took several deep breaths to regain control before looking up at Kennedy. “I’ll go if it means that much to you. Let the Alpha know. If I were in his shoes, I’d be pissed, but he’s not here right now—and you’re literally trying to kill me.”

“Ryker said no. You have to stay here. Protect the Luna at all costs. That’s a direct quote,” Greta added firmly, still standing beside me.

A surge of anger ignited every muscle in my body. I was so damn tired of this emotional whiplash. Tired of feeling trapped in a cage with no choices. Someone else always got to decide if I stayed or went, if I kept my mate safe or risked everything. I wasn’t going to let anyone tell me whether I could help those pups—pups that could be just like me, waiting for someone to find them, save them, want them.

“How far out is the Alpha?” I asked, standing up and locking eyes with Greta. I didn’t trust Kennedy to be honest right now. Her hormones were clouding her judgment. “Don’t try to negotiate. How. Far. Out?”

Greta took two deep breaths, both of us ignoring Kennedy now, before rolling her eyes. “He’s already halfway here.”

“And how far away are the pups?”

“About twenty minutes southeast, on the edge of Oak Lake. The border is with a pack outside Ryker’s territory—we don’t have much info on them.” I nodded and glanced at Kennedy.

“You have to be my point of contact with Samuel and Seth. Can you handle that? I need you focused because your mate is going to beat my ass when I get back. This has to be quick. The less time I’m away from you, the better for all of us.” Without waiting for a response, I turned and started the long trek down the thousand stairs before anyone could stop me again.

“Can you check in with Kennedy’s wolf?” Greta asked quietly.

“They’re already giving directions, and I’ve been told to tell you to hurry,” came a chuckle in response.

At the bottom of the stairs, I stripped off my shirt and shorts, then shifted into my wolf form. My wolf grabbed our shorts, and we took off, following the secondhand directions from Kennedy. Keeping her calm and focused was all my wolf could concentrate on.

The forest thinned as we neared the outskirts of Oak Lake territory, and finally, I caught the scent of a few warriors. I assumed it was Samuel and Seth, but I wasn’t about to take any chances. We slipped into some thick brush, and my wolf reached out mentally to Kennedy. It might sound ridiculous, but I needed them to follow a very simple instruction that only I could send through Kennedy to the others.

“Are you serious?!” I heard a voice shout about ten feet to my left. I couldn’t see them yet, but their scent was unmistakable. I stayed upwind on purpose. “I’m not doing a damn ballet dance to prove we’re legit to your rogue kiss-ass!” the voice yelled into the air. “There’s no one else here. Get your ass out here, boy!”

“That’s good enough for me,” my wolf laughed. I shifted back to human form, pulled on my shorts, and stepped out.

“I’m here. Can’t be too careful. How can I help you?” I called out, ready for whatever was coming next.

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Chapter 277

27 – Finn

A gruff “jackass” muttered from one of the men nearby catches my attention. I fight back a smile, barely managing it. “The Luna said you needed help. What can I do? The Alpha’s already plotting how to rip my head off for leaving my partner alone to guard the Luna...” I say, half-joking.

“WHAT?! Why on earth would you leave her?” The bigger of the two warriors steps forward, his expression hard.

I throw my hands up in surrender. “Because she threw a full-blown pregnant tantrum about rescuing these kids! I figured it was better to annoy the lesser of two evils. Have either of you ever dealt with a pregnant she-wolf?” Both men freeze for a moment, exchanging a look before bursting out laughing.

“Wait, what did I miss here?” one asks.

“Let me guess—you don’t have kids?” the leaner man questions.

“Nope,” I reply.

“The Luna’s intense enough on her own, but the pregnancy hormones are making her ten times worse,” the larger warrior explains, extending his hand. “Name’s Samuel.”

I shake his hand, a little surprised. “Finn. Nice to meet you, I guess.”

That’s it? Just telling them their Luna scared me stiff, and suddenly I’m not a threat? Interesting.

The leaner man follows suit, offering his hand. “Seth. We found these kids on a routine patrol. There are four of them. The oldest can’t be more than ten, but they won’t give us any information, and they refuse to leave the youngest behind.”

“What’s wrong with the little one?” I ask, falling in step with them.

“Nothing physically wrong, at least nothing we can see. But she’s holed up so far back that nobody can get to her. You’ll see.” Samuel gestures ahead.

In the distance, I spot the head of one of the kids.

We only have to walk about five minutes from where I first found them, but the forest thickens quickly. The trees grow dense, and the underbrush becomes a tangled mess. We have to scramble over fallen branches or take a much longer detour. I can see why the kids picked this spot, especially if they were on the run. A full-grown wolf would struggle to move through this thicket, giving the kids precious time to escape while any pursuer got stuck.

“They’ve managed to find food, but they need help—and soon. They won’t last much longer on their own,” Seth adds quietly.

“What do you want me to do?” I ask. These two clearly know what they’re doing; I’m not sure why they called for backup.

“We’ve tried everything we can think of,” Samuel says. “Nothing that works on the older kids works on the little girl. The only response we get from her is a firm ‘no’ when we try to approach. The others follow her lead on who to trust. When we first found them, they spoke a few words, but as soon as she crawled deeper into the brush shaking her head, they all clammed up.”

Samuel shrugs. I nod slowly. If these two experienced warriors with kids can’t figure it out, what chance do I have? Still, I want to try.

As we near the small group, I take in the surroundings, trying to put myself in the kids’ shoes at their age. They’ve done a solid job here. The spot is defensible with a clear escape route. I notice signs of a recent fire, which piques my curiosity—how did they start it? To a kid, this place must feel like a fortress or a secret hideout. That’s my angle.

I approach the oldest boy, keeping an eye on the area. He stands protectively just ahead of a smaller boy and a little girl. His posture is confident, and his broad shoulders suggest he’ll grow into a strong warrior someday. His caramel eyes watch me intently, unblinking.

“Did you have to clear the opening here, or was it already like this when you arrived?” I ask, nodding toward the cave-like gap in the brush. He doesn’t break eye contact.

“When my pack was attacked, and I had to hide in the woods, there was nothing like this,” I add, tapping the sturdy structure. It’s well built—I admire their resourcefulness.

Taking a deep breath, I continue, trying to sound casual. “Mind if I sit? Looks like we might be here a while, and I’ve already had a long day on the road.” I don’t wait for an answer.

Seth, Samuel, and I settle around the fire pit. I’m pretty sure they introduced themselves already, but I offer, “I’m Finn. Nice to meet you all.”

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Chapter 278

“You don’t smell like them,” the small boy with tousled brown hair whispered nervously from behind the protective shield of his leader’s leg.

“Shh, Gabriel,” the little girl quickly hushed him with a gentle shove, giving me the opening I needed.

“Well, Gabriel,” I began, stepping forward with a calm smile, “the reason I don’t smell like your group is simple—I’m not part of their pack. Not yet, at least.”

Gabriel blinked in surprise, stepping out from behind the boy’s leg and approaching me cautiously. I patted the ground beside me, inviting him to come closer.

“You see, I lost my pack a while back, so I had to fend for myself for some time. Kind of like what you guys are doing now.” I glanced at the older boy beside Gabriel. “Do you mind if we start a fire? The sun’s about to set soon, and it’s best to get a good blaze going before darkness falls. Plus, now that we’re all together, we should make sure there’s enough wood to keep us warm, right?” I looked at him expectantly.

He let out an exaggerated eye roll before replying with a reluctant huff. “Landon. Yeah, I suppose that makes sense if you’re sticking around.”

“Great! Hey, can my buddy Seth help out? It’ll go faster with two of us.” Seth caught on immediately and jumped up before Landon could protest. “Oh! Do you have something to light the fire, or should we gather extra stuff and do it caveman-style?”

“No, I’ve got it,” Landon said, pulling a lighter from his pocket and tossing it toward me.

“Nah, you keep that. We’ll see you in a bit.” I turned away, trusting Seth to take over. Then I glanced back at the little girl. “Hey...”

“Peyton,” she replied, crossing her arms with a knowing smirk. “Let me guess—you think I’m going to cook for everyone just because I’m a girl.”

I grinned. “Nope,” I said, emphasizing the ‘P’. “I was actually wondering if you’ve seen any deer or tracks around here. I can’t survive on rabbits and little critters alone. We’re big men, right, Gabriel?” I nudged him gently in the ribs, catching a faint smile in return. “We need some serious food.”

“Oh. Uh... I’m not sure,” she admitted hesitantly.

“Have you ever hunted a deer before?” I asked.

She shook her head. “I’m only eight. I haven’t learned that yet.”

“Samuel’s a master hunter. You should go with him—he needs a scout.” She glanced between us, and Samuel looked right at home in his role. He seemed like the kind of dad who cared deeply for his kids.

Peyton hesitated, glancing nervously from the brush cave entrance to Samuel. “I don’t want to go too far from Trinity. She might get scared if we’re not there.”

“Gabriel and I will take the first watch, alright?” I offered.

She nodded, still unsure. “I promise I’ll be here when you get back. I want to hear all about your first deer hunt—every detail—so pay attention.” That earned a smile from her, and she followed Samuel into the brush.

“Alright, Gabriel. Tell me about your shy friend.” I nodded toward the brush cave entrance.

“That’s Trinity,” Gabriel said softly. “She’s just little. I think she’s sad because we didn’t find her mom in the fire.”

“A fire?” I asked, hoping his story would help me piece things together.

“Yeah,” he said, eyes wide as he recounted the memory. “All the grass died, and the trees went like BRUSHKSK!” He mimicked the crackling sound with wild hand gestures. “My mommy made me run out of the house, but we couldn’t see anything because the dirt was in the air, too.” His voice trembled slightly, as if the memory was still raw. “She told me to go by the river and wait, but she never came back. Landon found me, and we waited a little longer. Then it rained, and we had to go inside, but we didn’t want to go near the fire, so Landon found a spot close to the river where I could stay—where Mommy told me to.”

“You guys were really brave to stay safe like that,” I said warmly. “When did you find the girls?”

“Uh, I think it was after the rain stopped. We went to check on our mommies, but Peyton was just wandering around, crying because all the grown-ups were gone. Trinity was hiding under a big tractor near the barn. We searched for days, but no grown-ups showed up, so Landon said we had to find somewhere else.”

“That’s incredible. I’m so glad you made it through all that. You worked together like true warriors.” I smiled at Gabriel. “So, do you think Trinity would like to come out? Could you talk to her for me? Since all my friends are helping your friends, it might feel less scary.”

He shrugged uncertainly. “I’ll try.”

Miss L Author

Thank you so much for reading. All constructive comments and kind words are truly appreciated. I’m not able to interact here, but if you’d like to join the conversation, you can find me on social media as Miss.L.Writes.

I appreciate you.

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Chapter 279

28 Finn

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Quietly, he moves toward the narrow opening and slips inside. I catch the faint murmur of voices but resist the urge to eavesdrop. If this girl is younger than Gabriel, she must be just a child, and I have no clue what’s going on in her mind. Throughout our journey, aside from my friends, we rarely encountered pups. I always assumed that situations like Sammy’s and mine were anomalies. But now, seeing these kids, I can’t help but wonder if the reason we didn’t meet more was that many didn’t survive long enough to receive help.

A soft squeak behind me draws my attention. Gabriel settles beside me, and when I glance his way, he just shrugs. That must mean it’s my turn. I cautiously glance toward the

opening, and my breath catches in my throat. There, curled up in a tight ball near the entrance, is a tiny figure staring directly back at me. Her posture screams fear, but her eyes tell a different tale—those piercing green eyes are sharp, fierce, almost challenging me to come closer and see what she might do.

I stay grounded and lift my hand in a gentle wave. “Hi,” I say softly. “I’m Finn. My friends Seth and Samuel went off to help Landon and Peyton gather firewood and food. I’m just hanging out with Gabriel. Would you like to join us?”

She tilts her head, scrutinizing me. “Are you a good guy or a bad guy? Because we had to hide from some bad guys.” Her voice is so sure, so confident for someone so small.

“Well, we’re here to help you. That makes us good guys, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah, but the bad guys said they’d help too.” She pulls her knees tighter against her chest.

“They did!” Gabriel pipes up. I shoot him a look without turning away from Trinity. “They said they knew people who wanted kids, and since we were hungry and lost, Landon said we could go with them...”

“But then I overheard them talking about selling us. They didn’t really want to help, so we ran away in the middle of the night. Trin’s scared they’ll come after us.” Landon emerges from the woods, carrying a bundle of branches.

“That explains why she’s so nervous around us,” Seth says, following Landon to the fire pit.

“Well, we’re not here to sell you. That’s for sure. Alpha Ryker and Luna Kennedy asked us to check on you and see if you need a place to stay for a while.” I meet the gaze of all three kids.

“Yeah, but the last guys said they wanted to help too. How do we know we can trust you?”

“You don’t know. But you can trust your instincts.” I fix my attention on Landon, the leader of this small pack—they’ll follow his lead. “I lost my pack when I was six, and I had to learn to listen to that little voice inside my head.” I tap my temple. “Some people are good, some are bad, but it’s not always easy to tell by how they look or what they say, right?” Landon nods slowly. “I learned that if someone gives me a bad feeling, I should just walk away. That’s how I found Alpha Ryker and Luna Kennedy’s pack. I helped Luna out, and they told me I could stay if I wanted to.”

“Just like that? And you trust them?” Landon straightens up, standing tall. This is the moment he challenges me.

“Our story is longer than that, but we’re learning to trust each other. They’re good leaders and take care of their pack members. They even look after non-pack members like me. I have a home, food, and a job working with their warriors now.”

“Will you take us to them? To your Alpha and Luna?”

“Of course. But first, we need to eat—I’m starving. I think Peyton and Samuel are coming back.”

Seth and Landon start a fire while I show Gabriel how to pick the best sticks for roasting meat. We settle into easy, quiet conversation, and Trinity watches us, studying the scene carefully.

“Landon! Look at this deer! It was so cool!” Peyton bursts into our clearing, excitement bright in her voice. “Samuel showed me how to track one, and when we caught up, he shifted quickly and caught it in like two seconds!”

I glance at Samuel, who wears a proud, almost fatherly smile. “It wasn’t two seconds, but she did a great job helping me track it. You’re a natural, Peyton. Does anyone have a knife?” They all shake their heads ‘no.’ “Seth, can you help me out then?”

“What are you going to do?” Gabriel asks, looking nervous.

“Well, we can’t cook it whole. We have to break it into smaller pieces, or we won’t be able to eat for days.” Samuel makes a face, and Gabriel giggles. “We can shift, and our wolves’ claws can do the job, but it gets really messy. So I need Seth and his wolf to help. Can you guys get some water ready? We’ll have to clean the meat too.”

“Yeah! Let’s go, Landon!” Gabriel shouts eagerly.

“We only have a couple of bottles for water,” Landon says doubtfully.

“That’s okay. We’ll use what we have. We didn’t bring supplies to camp because we weren’t sure what you’d need or if you’d even let us help when we arrived. We’ll make do.” Samuel’s calm confidence seems to win Landon over. We haven’t tried to separate them or force anything—they’re comfortable here, and we’re showing them how to survive, whether they come with us or not.

A featherlight touch on my hand startles me, and I almost jump. Looking down, I see Trinity’s tiny fingers wrapped around mine. She looks up, her emerald eyes shining brightly. “I want to help,” she whispers.

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Chapter 280

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I gently squeeze her fingers, feeling the warmth of her small hand wrapped around my pinky as we rise to follow Landon and Gabriel toward the nearby stream for water. The number of trips we make escapes me, but luckily Landon had the foresight to set up camp close to the flowing water, so the effort isn’t as exhausting as it could have been. Meanwhile, Seth and Samuel engage the kids, patiently explaining each step of how they process the deer, emphasizing that nothing is wasted—every part has a purpose. The deer skin, for example, will be used as containers for the meat we don’t eat immediately. Throughout it all, Trinity

stays glued to my side, only breaking our contact briefly when she eats. Her tiny hand clings to my finger, and her warm little body presses gently against me, offering a comforting weight.

The children watch the food preparation with wide eyes, firing off question after question to Seth as he cooks and hands out portions of the freshly prepared meat. Their curiosity is contagious, filling the air with a sense of wonder. Once the meal is done, we all wade into the cool stream to wash off the grime of the day. The water is refreshing, and the sound of the flowing current mingles with our quiet conversations as we return to the fire pit. We settle around the flames, the flickering light casting dancing shadows on our faces as we relax and share stories.

“You know,” I say to Trinity, breaking the comfortable silence, “you remind me of someone I know.”

She looks up at me, her voice soft but gaining confidence. “Really? Who?”

“Her name is Greta,” I explain, twirling a loose strand of her fiery hair around my finger, “and your hair is almost just like hers—brown with streaks of red, like it’s burning.” She giggles at the comparison, the sound light and genuine. “Greta is a fierce warrior in Luna Kennedy’s pack. In fact, she’s the one guarding the Luna right now.”

Samuel turns to address the group of kids. “Speaking of the Luna, it’s getting late. We have a car coming to pick us up since we’ve been out here for quite some time. I know you’ve set up a great little camp here, and you’re doing an amazing job, but we have plenty of space if you want to come with us. Our Luna is really excited to meet you. She couldn’t come with us today, but she loves meeting new pups.”

The four children exchange glances, their expressions unreadable to me. I can’t quite tell what they think of the offer.

“Will she be in the car that picks you up?” Gabriel asks eagerly.

“No,” Samuel replies, “she has some things she needs to take care of. That’s why she has a team of warriors like us. It’s our job to make sure everything is safe for her and the rest of the pack.”

“What do we have to do?” Landon inquires, eyes narrowing with suspicion.

“What do you mean?” Seth asks, looking puzzled from across the fire.

“Well,” Peyton cuts in, “the last people who said they were going to help us told us we had to work to pay for our meals. They said if we don’t work, we don’t eat or have a place to sleep. Nothing is free.”

Samuel stands tall, his tone honest and reassuring. “Our Luna and Alpha don’t operate like that. They want to help anyone they can without strings attached.”

Landon mirrors Samuel's posture, his expression serious. "What about bad people? Some folks are just bad."

"You're right," Samuel nods, "and Alpha Ryker is very good at dealing with bad guys. You're more than welcome to join us. If you decide it's not for you, you're free to leave at any time."

"Promise?" Peyton asks, her voice hopeful.

"We promise," Samuel says firmly, raising an eyebrow at Landon, silently passing the responsibility of making the decision for the group to him.

Landon looks at Peyton, who nods in agreement. Gabriel follows suit, and Trinity snuggles closer to me, her silent gesture of approval clear enough.

"Is there anything you want to bring with you? Any personal belongings?" I ask gently.

"No," Peyton replies sadly, "we couldn't get into any of the houses. Everything burned down."

"We have a bit of a walk ahead," I warn them. "Are you ready?"

All four kids nod in unison. "Let's make sure this fire is completely out and then we'll conceal your hideout so no one else finds it."

About twenty minutes later, we're approaching the spot where Seth said Grant will be waiting with an SUV. Seth and Samuel take turns carrying the remaining deer meat, while Landon and Peyton pepper them with questions about the pack. Soon, Trinity asks to be carried, and before I know it, Gabriel is in my other arm. Both kids are fast asleep, their weight pulling at my arms, which are beginning to ache from the effort.

I silently thank the Goddess when the headlights of Grant's SUV come into view. The walk wasn't that long, but carrying two sleeping children feels like a marathon. Landon and Peyton climb into the third row, Samuel slides into the passenger seat after loading the deer into coolers, and Seth takes Gabriel because he tried to pull Trinity away, and she responded by putting me in a chokehold. We all settle into the middle row, each of us with a child on our lap, buckling in. Trinity's warmth seeps into me, making me drowsy; I fight the urge to nod off with her resting against my shoulder.

A gentle nudge pulls me back to awareness. "We're here. Want me to take her?" Seth whispers.

"You can try," I reply, "but she wouldn't let Samuel take her earlier." As soon as Seth's hands touch her ribs, she stiffens, and he lets go immediately.

"Figures she likes the one person here without kids," he chuckles at me. "I'll head up and tell the Luna to keep her excitement in check." I smile and roll my eyes. Kennedy is something else on most days, but when it comes to pups, there's no stopping her. I get the feeling she'd rather spend time with pups than adults most of the time.

I climb out of the vehicle and groan at the sight of the steps leading up. They look like they're going to be the death of me. Panting by the time I reach the top, I hear Ryker and Landon's voices in conversation, with Kennedy asking questions. But I'm really listening for one voice in particular. Whether it's because I want to avoid her or because I miss her, I'm not sure, but my body relaxes when I catch the faint, sweet scent of cherry—her signature fragrance.

I step inside, and the chatter stops abruptly. "She's so little!" Kennedy exclaims, covering her mouth, her eyes glistening with tears. Ryker is at her side instantly, wrapping her in a quick hug, though she only lets him hold her for a moment. Her attention is fixed entirely on the tiny girl clinging to my neck.

"Is she alright? Does she need anything?" Kennedy asks softly.

"She's okay, from what we can tell," I whisper. "Just very shy. It took a long time to get her to even talk to us. Right, Trinity?" I poke her ribs gently, and she giggles before snuggling deeper into my neck.

"Hey! Remember when I told you about my Luna and how excited she'd be to meet you?" I ask. She nods against my shoulder. I glance at Seth and Samuel, who give me a knowing look.

"Can I introduce you, or are you going to hide forever?" I tease.

That gets her to look up at me, and she nods. "This is Luna Kennedy," I say, "and behind her is Alpha Ryker. This is their pack, so if you need anything, they're in charge, got it?"

She nods but her gaze drifts past Kennedy and Ryker. "Is that Greta?" she whispers.

For the first time since we returned, I meet my mate's eyes, and she looks shocked.

"You told her about me?"