

Letters Sent To Eternity

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Chapter 281

30 – Greta

The little girl clung to Finn as tightly as a koala to a tree branch, her tiny arms wrapped firmly around his neck. She nestled her face just beneath his chin, managing to keep her gaze fixed on me without breaking their close contact. Although her posture was shy and reserved, the expression in her eyes was anything but timid—it carried a strong, almost possessive edge. My inner wolf stirred uneasily, a low growl rumbling in my mind, but I quickly reminded myself that this child had endured so much and posed no threat. Still, the fact that she knew my name caught my attention. That was intriguing.

“Oh my gosh! I’m so thrilled to see all of you!” Kennedy exclaimed, barely able to contain her excitement. “Are you hungry? Samuel mentioned you hunted before leaving your camp. Or maybe you’re tired? We’re going to set you up right here with us tonight.”

“I’m hungry!” piped up the youngest boy, and the room erupted in laughter.

“Gabriel, you’re always hungry,” teased the oldest girl with a playful grin.

“Well, Gabriel, you’re in luck. I just stocked the fridge,” Kennedy said with a giggle, rubbing her stomach. “I’m always hungry, too. Let’s grab a snack, then you can all get cleaned up and tucked into bed. Sound good?” She extended her hand to Gabriel, who glanced at the two older kids for reassurance before gently taking it. “Come on. You all need to eat and shower—the forest tends to make you pretty grimy.”

“Hey!” Seth protested, mock offended.

“I’m sure your family doesn’t mind, but after a full day of shifting, playing in the forest with these kids, and hunting, you all smell pretty awful!” Kennedy laughed again, and we all joined in as she led us toward the kitchen.

“Okay, so we know Gabriel’s name,” I said, pointing to the little boy whose light brown hair stuck up in every direction. His green eyes darted around the room, absorbing every detail. “And we know Trinity. What about you two? Tell us your names.”

“My name’s Landon, and this is Peyton,” the oldest boy said confidently. He definitely had the air of a leader’s child. I hoped he was prepared for questions about what had happened to them. But I was sure Ryker would wait until the younger ones were asleep before pressing too hard.

“Are any of you siblings? Or did you just stick together to stay safe?” I asked cautiously. Seth and Samuel had given us a play-by-play while they were gone, so I didn’t need all the details again, but I was curious about what these kids would share—or keep hidden.

“We’re not siblings,” Peyton said softly, her voice gentle but steady. “Landon and I train with the same group, and we all went to the same school.”

“Even Trinity?” I asked, surprised. She seemed too young to be in school.

“Yeah, she’s really smart, so they let her start early,” Peyton explained.

“Trinity, how old are you, sweetheart?” Kennedy asked as she prepared sandwich ingredients on the kitchen island.

“Four,” Trinity answered, clutching Finn’s neck as he tried to settle her on a stool. He looked a little uncertain, clearly unsure how to handle her clinginess. I fought back a smile. Finn was a natural with kids, but situations outside the training grounds seemed to unnerve him just a bit. The image of them together tugged at my heartstrings—they looked utterly adorable. I wished I could give him something like that. Wait—where had that thought come from? I didn’t want pups. Shaking my head, I turned my attention back to the group. Finn scanned the room for help, but Samuel and Seth just smiled knowingly at him. I wondered what had happened today that left him struggling like this. I’d have to ask later.

Eventually, Finn gave up and settled onto the stool himself, with Trinity still perched on his lap.

We all settled in comfortably, eating and chatting. Kennedy, Ryker, and I took turns asking light, surface-level questions to get to know the children better. Landon was the Gamma’s son, which explained his natural protectiveness and his bond with Seth. Peyton’s parents were healers. Gabriel’s father was a warrior, though he never mentioned his mother, which we made a mental note to ask Landon about later. Trinity’s parents were responsible for the farmland—a small detail that took some coaxing to get out of her. Her idea of farming was a big barn with many men who worked early mornings. Landon and Peyton helped fill in the gaps when we clearly didn’t understand what she was trying to explain.

When Gabriel started nodding off while sitting up, we decided it was time to call it a night. Kennedy took Peyton upstairs to shower, Ryker led Landon to Bennet’s room, and Finn and I took the little ones to our room since it was clear there was no way to separate him from Trinity, even if she was half asleep.

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“So, Gabriel, are you all set to shower on your own, or would you like a hand with washing up?” I asked gently, standing at the bathroom doorway.

He lifted his small hand, signaling me to stop. “I’m big now. I can handle everything myself,” he said confidently.

“Alright then, little man. Just holler if you need help reaching your back, and Finn will come in, okay?” I added with a smile. Gabriel gave me a thumbs-up in response, but I caught the look of sheer panic on Finn’s face. “What’s wrong?” I asked, sensing something was off.

“How am I supposed to help him?!” Finn whispered urgently, almost yelling. “I’ve never done any of this before!”

I chuckled softly. “Calm down. It’s not rocket science. Didn’t you have pups in your little rogue pack?”

Finn’s expression darkened. “After Sammy and me, not really. Most pups only stayed long enough to move on to another pack. It was safer for them to be in the bigger group. Either we never found any pups, or our amazing leaders just ignored them. I’m betting on the latter.”

Suddenly, Gabriel’s voice rang out. “Finn! Help! I got soap in my eyes!”

I scooped up Trinity, who willingly curled into my arms, her tiny body relaxing against me. It was reassuring to know she’d cooperate when it really mattered. I heard Gabriel’s giggles echoing through the bathroom and smiled to myself. Finn was definitely in trouble. I began pacing slowly outside the bathroom door, cradling Trinity. She looked exhausted, but I was determined to wash away every bit of grime and check carefully for any injuries or scrapes that might need attention.

About five minutes later, the water stopped running. I heard the soft rustle of movement and hushed voices mixed with more giggles just before the door creaked open. I couldn’t hold back my laughter, which startled Trinity awake.

“Which one of you was supposed to be in the shower?” I asked through my amusement.

“Ha ha, very funny,” Finn shot back, smirking. “Let’s see how good you are at reaching for the soap without slipping.”

“Is that a challenge?” I stepped closer, locking eyes with him, those warm navy-blue eyes sparkling.

He closed the distance as much as he could, Trinity still between us. His breath, warm and scented with spicy clove and ginger, brushed against my face, making a flush rise to my cheeks. I inhaled deeply, savoring the scent, then walked past him and shut the bathroom door behind me.

“Alright, sweetheart, let’s get you cleaned up. We’ll be quick because I want to win my challenge—and because you look so sleepy. Sound good?” I whispered.

She smiled softly and gave a tired nod. I had her test the water temperature, then rolled up my pants and set my shirt aside. Sports bra and leggings—perfect for this little adventure. We stepped into the shower together, and I positioned her under the warm stream while I gathered everything we’d need.

Her hair fell to mid-back, and I braced myself for what I might find tangled in it. She soaped up carefully, and I helped her double-check all the important spots before moving on to her hair. I worked slowly, gently detangling and removing bits of leaves and dirt from the forest. Peyton had done a decent job caring for her—it wasn’t nearly as bad as I’d feared.

Once we finished, I called out, “Finn! Can you bring my bag in here, please?”

A muffled “Yeah,” came from the other side before the door swung open. “Wait a minute! I didn’t realize clothes were optional when we were helping them! You cheated!” Finn exclaimed, tossing my bag onto the counter.

“You’re such a sore loser,” I laughed, pulling out a t-shirt for Trinity to wear to bed. “Here you go.” As I slipped it over her head, I noticed she was smiling at Finn again. I rolled my eyes playfully, dressed her fully, and ran a brush gently through her hair. It was a lighter shade than mine—where I had nearly black hair with red highlights, hers was a rich dark chocolate brown with subtle red tones. I wondered how much lighter it would look once dry. “Alright, let’s get you tucked in.”

“Can I stay with Finn?” Trinity asked, glancing nervously between us.

Finn looked toward me with the same uncertainty. When he didn’t respond, I turned to her. “I think that would be okay. Do you mind sharing the bed with me too?” I held out my hand. Without hesitation, she took it and followed me down the hall.

Gabriel was fast asleep, sprawled out in the middle of the king-sized bed. I helped Trinity climb up beside him, and she snuggled under the fluffy covers. She patted the spot on her other side, inviting Finn to join.

“I’m going to check on the others, then I’ll be in,” Finn said quietly, adjusting to having the four-year-old cling to his arm as he got comfortable.

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Chapter 283

31 – Greta

As I walked down the dimly lit hallway, the faint voices of Landon and Ryker reached my ears. “Yeah, we don’t really know exactly what happened,” Landon was saying. “The fire was massive, and everyone was running around in chaos. Peyton and I were at training when someone burst in shouting ‘FIRE!’ Suddenly, all the kids panicked. Peyton and I ran together since we’re neighbors, but the wind was fierce, and sparks were flying everywhere. I got burned on my arm, and she told me we couldn’t keep searching anymore. We already told you how we found Gabriel and Trinity. Do you think our parents could still be alive?” His voice softened at the end, the uncertainty of a little boy shining through his words.

“I hope so, buddy,” Ryker replied gently. “But you’re safe here now, and you can stay as long as you want. Tomorrow morning, I’ll have my team start investigating what happened to your pack, now that we have a clearer picture. You’ve done an amazing job protecting your pack. Your parents and your alpha would be so proud of you.”

Hearing this, I stepped quietly into Bennet’s room, where the two boys were sitting on the bed. Both glanced over at me, and I noticed the familiar mask sliding back onto Landon’s face. It made my heart ache, but at least he had allowed Ryker to see past it. “I’ve got them

set up in Finn's and my bedroom," I said. "Do you want to stay there with us, or would you prefer your own bed?"

"Can I have my own?!" Landon's eyes lit up with excitement.

"Of course you can, buddy," Ryker said, giving his shoulder a reassuring pat. "Bennet's out on patrol tonight. When he comes back, he'll just crash next to you if that's okay."

"Yeah!" Landon beamed at both of us, pure joy radiating from him.

"Alright then, let's get you tucked in," I laughed softly. "Then I need to check on Peyton." Landon threw his arms around me in a hug that melted my heart, then gave Ryker a cheerful fist bump. Before we even reached the door, he was fast asleep. I closed the door gently behind us and looked at my best friend. "These poor kids... and kids like Finn. None of them should have to endure any of this."

"I know," Ryker said, giving me a firm slap on the back. "And you don't have to worry about Peyton. She's on Luna duty. Apparently, her mom is a maternity healer, and the apple didn't fall far from the tree. She actually said Kennedy is, and I quote, 'almost ready.'"

I stopped dead in my tracks. "How does she know that?!"

"No idea," Ryker shrugged, "but I'm inclined to believe her. Kennedy's scent has been shifting as the pup grows, but it's been almost overwhelming the last two days."

"Really? I noticed a difference, but it hasn't seemed stronger to me."

"Peyton says it's a mate thing—to make sure I stay close when she's vulnerable."

"That's both amazing and terrifying at the same time."

"The really scary thing is you holding back."

"What?!" I exclaimed, feeling like I might get whiplash from his bluntness tonight. "What are you talking about?"

"Look at him, Greta. Really look." Ryker spun me around as he pushed open the door to my room. "This man is here for you, and you won't let him get close."

"You know better than anyone why I can't let him in."

"I know a good portion of your story, but not all of it. I'm pretty sure the parts I don't know are what's driving you to torture Finn."

"I'm not torturing him. Screw you!" I muttered under my breath.

"Aren't you, though?" He turned my shoulder so I faced the room. The soft light revealed Trinity lying across Finn's chest, her feet resting on Gabriel. "You won't accept him. You

won't reject him. You won't even try to be friendly with him. You're not much better than Amy."

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Chapter 284

A sharp growl bursts from my throat. "Don't you dare compare me to that b*tch!"

Ryker's voice is calm but firm. "Then stop acting like her. You had every reason to keep your distance from men for a long time. But Finn isn't like those others. He senses when something's wrong. He's not the jerk I ripped off you ten years ago. He wouldn't even touch you without your say-so. And now that I have Ken, I understand how difficult it is to control those urges. Finn's practically a saint."

I shake my head, frustration bubbling up. "Saint or not, he won't want me once he realizes I can't give him this." I gesture vaguely around the room.

Ryker's brow furrows. "Give him what, exactly? You keep tossing that phrase around, but it means nothing without context."

"Children, Ryker," I choke out, my voice cracking. "A family. I can't give him that." A sob fights its way up, but I swallow it hard, wiping away the single tear that escapes, determined to avoid his pity.

"He told me about the nightmare you had in the cave," Ryker says softly. "He knows someone hurt you. He even asked what he could do to help. He's aware of more than you think, and he's still here, trying. How do you know you can't have a family?"

I take a shaky breath, the weight of my scars pressing down on me. "The healer you brought me to when I first arrived at Dark Moon said there's too much scar tissue for me to carry a pup. Those bastards did too much damage. I can't recover from it." I exhale slowly, feeling the sting of hopelessness. Only Ryker has ever seen me this vulnerable. He found me broken and helped me grow stronger. I glance toward my mate, peacefully sleeping on the bed, two kids quietly vying for his attention, their little faces glowing with affection.

"Look at him," I whisper. "He deserves to have a pup of his own."

Ryker's eyes soften. "Have you even asked him if it matters? He's been through his own hell. Maybe that's not even on his list of priorities."

"But it will be, someday," I argue quietly. "And I don't want him to resent me for not being able to give him that..." Before I can finish, Ryker's hand gently covers my mouth.

"If he doesn't resent you for everything else you've been through, I doubt this will ever be the breaking point. Kennedy forgave me after I finally got my act together—thanks to you and my mom." A small smile tugs at Ryker's lips as he remembers. "Besides, the whole family thing may not even be an issue."

I tilt my head, curious. “What do you mean?”

“I think Trinity might have imprinted on him,” Ryker says quietly.

I blink in surprise, turning to face him fully. “What?”

“Her reaction is different from the other three,” he explains. “Seth told me she didn’t talk to anyone until Finn came around, and since then she hasn’t been out of his reach.”

I interrupt, “But she let me shower her.”

“That’s because she senses you’re his mate. You’re an extension of him. I don’t think her parents survived, and she’s too young to be alone. Her instincts chose Finn—and apparently you—to be her protectors, her guardians.”

“Oh, Goddess,” I murmur, feeling a wave of compassion for the little girl.

Ryker nods. “I need to look into it more, but I’m pretty sure I’m right. So... go be with your family. Give him a chance. You might be stuck with him for the next fourteen years.” With that, he gently pushes me into the room, closing the door behind me and leaving me alone in the quiet darkness.

After several uneven breaths, I finally give in and climb into the bed beside Gabriel. At least they left me some blankets. I curl onto my side, sliding my hand beneath the pillow to support my head, only to be startled by a sudden warmth as Finn intertwines our fingers. A fresh sob threatens to spill out, but he squeezes my hand softly, a silent reassurance that he’s here. He heard me. And maybe, just maybe, he understands.

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Chapter 285

32 – Greta

A sudden burst of sunlight floods my face, making me squint sharply. I try to move, but my body feels frozen in place. What’s happening? Slowly, my eyelids flutter open, and I take in the cozy bedroom around me. It doesn’t take long to figure out why I’m trapped in this awkward position. I’m tangled in what can only be described as a human pretzel involving four people. Gabriel’s head is resting gently on my stomach, his backside pointed toward Finn, who still holds my right hand in his own, his hand resting lightly on his chest.

I tilt my head a bit more and notice Trinity woven snugly between my legs. Her head lies softly on my left thigh, yet she’s tucked beneath my right leg. Her feet are nestled under Finn’s leg, completing the knot of limbs. No wonder the blanket is missing — their combined body heat is enough to keep me warm.

“How did you manage not to get tangled up in all this?” I whisper quietly to Finn.

He lets out a soft huff before replying, "I was caught in it at first, but I had to go pee. When I came back, they had you completely pinned down. None of them have moved since."

I bite my lip, hesitant to bring up the more personal part of the earlier conversation. "Did you hear what Ryker said about their pack?" I ask, careful not to mention the part about me.

Finn nods. "Yeah, I did. I think we should let him and Josh handle their business first. Once we have some answers, then we can talk things through with them. Sound good?" His fingers tighten around mine in a reassuring squeeze.

I swallow nervously and respond, "Okay."

"Hey." He tugs gently on my hand, coaxing me to look at him. His deep blue eyes hold a serious, contemplative expression. "I've been waiting a long time for my mate. I can wait a little longer." A soft smile spreads across his face as he presses a tender kiss to the back of my hand. A shiver runs through me, unexpected and electric.

"That's an interesting reaction," he teases, raising his eyebrows playfully. "I wonder if it only happens when I kiss your hand."

I yank my arm back quickly as he laughs. "There are children here," I scold half-heartedly, reaching over Gabriel's still form to try and free myself from the pile. It's a struggle—he's surprisingly heavy and flexible. After a few moments of effort, I finally manage to stand up beside the bed.

"I was thinking of kissing you on the cheek," Finn says with a grin. "Why are you all flustered?"

He sits up smoothly, grabbing his t-shirt from the floor and pulling it over his head. My gaze drifts over the defined lines of his abs, now hidden beneath the fabric. "Do you approve?" he asks, laughing.

My eyes snap back to his, and I gasp, caught red-handed checking him out. I should feel embarrassed or shy, but the way he looks at me makes it impossible.

Clearing my throat, I force myself to focus elsewhere. "We should head downstairs and check on everyone. Peyton mentioned that Kennedy is close to delivering. I have no idea how an eight-year-old knows that, but she seems to have some sharp instincts." I gesture toward the two sleeping figures before me. "Should we wake them up and get them some breakfast?"

"Yeah, I'm not sure what time it is, but I'm pretty sure everyone let us sleep in."

"More likely, my meddling alpha and Luna told everyone to leave us alone," I say with a roll of my eyes, glancing at Finn. Though he masks it well, there's a flicker of uncertainty in his gaze again.

"Is that really so bad?" he murmurs, his eyes fixed on Gabriel as he asks. I tilt my head, studying him carefully. He's avoiding meeting my eyes.

Taking a deep breath, I say softly, "I guess not." I lean down, gently pulling Trinity closer to me.

"Really?!" His voice carries a hint of disbelief. He's still unsure, and honestly, so am I. But I heard what Ryker said, and I don't know how much longer I can keep fighting this.

"Yeah, really," I mumble. Gabriel nuzzles into Finn's shoulder as Finn steps toward me quickly. "But I'm still—"

He silences me with a gentle kiss on my temple, then presses his forehead against mine, careful not to disturb the kids we're holding. "That's all I needed to hear. Like I said, I'm a patient man."

"But—" I start to protest again, but he interrupts me with a kiss on the cheek, so close to my lips that my breath catches in my throat.

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Chapter 286

"I love that I can silence you with just a kiss... anywhere, anytime. I'm definitely going to have to explore that more." His warm breath tickled my ear, sending a fresh wave of shivers cascading down my spine. Then, without another word, he turned and walked away. Even though I couldn't see his face, I could feel the smug grin he wore like a badge of honor.

The kitchen was alive with the chatter and laughter of our friends, but two very important faces were noticeably absent. "Where are Ryker and Kennedy?" I asked, scanning the room.

Josh, focused on his laptop, looked up. "Peyton was right. Ken went into labor a few hours ago."

"WHAT?!" Trinity gasped, instantly wide awake. I carefully set her down on a stool. "Why didn't anyone come to get us?"

Josh shrugged. "What for? So you could pace around like Bennet?" He nodded toward the Gamma, who looked like he was about to tear his hair out.

Curious, I lowered my voice. "What's wrong with him?"

"There's nothing he can do for her right now. His pacing and constant complaining made the lead healer mad enough to kick him out," Josh said with a laugh.

"Shut up, asshole," Bennet shot back, though there was a hint of a smile.

"Hey!" Finn and I both exclaimed at the same time. I gestured toward Gabriel and Trinity.

Bennet rolled his eyes but gave a reluctant nod. "Sorry. It's weird having you be the language police, Greta." I stuck my tongue out, making him chuckle.

Finn handed the kids a bowl of cereal, then quietly slipped behind me. His closeness was overwhelming; I could feel the heat radiating from his body, warming every inch of me. Suddenly, it hit me—Ryker was right. Finn never touched me without my permission. That small act of respect felt incredibly empowering. I took a deep breath and leaned back against him. His solid chest softened as he wrapped me in a protective embrace. His hand rested gently on my waist, and I could feel his breath whispering through my hair.

I tried to push aside my self-consciousness with our teammates still in the room. Bennet had resumed his pacing, though his eyes were constantly scanning the area. Josh sat nearby, watching everything with a quiet intensity. He was far too observant for his own good, and I knew Ryker had probably filled him in on our conversation from last night.

“Hey, everyone. I know you’re all busy with the Luna, but we’ve got a situation,” Jensen’s voice cut through the noise, linking us all together.

“What’s going on?” Josh asked, eyes narrowing.

We exchanged glances, tension rippling through the room.

“What is it?” Finn whispered into my ear, sensing the shift in energy.

“Jensen just checked in. Something’s up,” I replied softly.

“We caught a path yesterday and have been tracking it closely. This morning, I picked up Janelle’s scent. She’s here.”

“Oh shit,” I muttered, glancing at Finn.

“Language, warrior,” Bennet teased, grinning at me. “You and Finn should head out since you have experience with them and can identify more of the scents. We’ll alert the alpha and follow up from here.”

I nodded, turning to leave, but a small hand caught mine. Trinity’s brilliant green eyes were wide with fear.

“You’re leaving?” she asked softly.

I crouched down to meet her gaze. “Finn and I need to check something out in the pack. This is how warriors keep everyone safe. Some of our guys need help, alright?” She nodded, as if she understood that was the answer she was supposed to give. “We need you to stay here and help out when the Luna gets home. Can you keep her and the new pup company while we’re gone?” Her eyes lit up with enthusiasm as she nodded again.

“Are we running?” Finn asked, glancing at Josh.

“Nah, you can take a truck. Save your energy.” Josh stood, fishing a set of keys from his pocket. “Here. The sooner you leave, the sooner you can come back.”

I squeezed Trinity in a quick hug. “We’ll be as fast as we can, okay?” She nodded once more. Then I moved over to Gabriel and pulled him into a hug as well. “Hey, Bennet?” I called, catching his attention and nodding toward the kids. Hopefully, it would distract him too.

He came over, nodding. “Who wants a tour of the waterfall?!”

“You have a waterfall?! That’s so awesome!” Gabriel exclaimed.

Bennet kept chatting with the kids as Finn and I quietly slipped out the door.

Miss L Author

Thank you so much for reading. I appreciate all your constructive comments and kind words. I can’t interact here, but if you want to join the conversation, you can find me on social media at Miss.L.Writes.

I like

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Chapter 287

33 – Finn

As we approached the SUV, a piercing scream shattered the tense silence—Finn’s name echoed desperately from behind us. We both spun around just in time to see the child launch herself toward him, her small body wrapping around him with surprising strength.

“No, don’t go,” she sobbed repeatedly, clutching him with all the tiny strength her fingers could muster.

Finn glanced at me, his expression searching for guidance, but I was just as lost. Neither of us knew how to handle this raw, overwhelming emotion. Deep down, a part of me wished Ryker’s assumptions about her parents were wrong. We were completely out of our depths when it came to raising a pup or managing these intense emotional outbursts.

“Hey,” I said softly, stepping closer and gently tucking a stray lock of hair behind her ear. She responded with a muffled ‘humph’ and burrowed even deeper into Finn’s neck. Taking a steadying breath, I exchanged a look with Finn. Janelle was our immediate problem, but Trinity was our responsibility now. The weight of that truth pressed down on me, and I felt utterly clueless about what to do next.

Finn rubbed her back soothingly. “Trin, why can’t we leave?”

“Because you won’t come back,” she whimpered, her voice muffled against his skin.

I pressed my hand over Finn’s on her back and asked gently, “What makes you think that?”

“Gramma and Grampa didn’t come back. Then Mommy and Daddy didn’t come back. Auntie Jo didn’t come back either. Grown-ups don’t come back when the bad stuff happens.”

“Oh, sweet girl,” I murmured, moving closer to surround her between Finn and myself. Finn’s free arm encircled us protectively. “I can’t promise anything. Pack attacks are dangerous. But I can promise that we’ll both do everything possible to come back to you as soon as we can.” I kissed her cheek softly and pulled back, meeting Finn’s eyes. He looked just as shattered by her reaction—maybe even more so. He had lived this reality before and understood the storm raging inside her.

A cough interrupted the moment. “Sorry, I should have held her all the way down to the falls,” Bennet said quietly, barely masking his sorrow. He held out his hands to take her, and I stepped aside. But when Finn moved to hand her over, she screamed again, inconsolable. Bennet had to pry her off him, her body kicking and writhing. I fought the urge to scoop her back into our arms. Instead, I turned us both toward the SUV.

“Let’s go. Want me to drive?” I whispered.

Finn shook his head, his face hard as stone. We climbed inside silently. He started the engine without a word, and we pulled away. Her screams echoed faintly in my ears, haunting me. I closed my eyes, sinking back into my seat, struggling to keep it together. That was one of the most gut-wrenching moments I’d ever experienced. A tear slipped down my cheek, and I felt Finn’s hand rest gently on my thigh. Opening my eyes slowly, I looked to my left. His eyes were rimmed red, but he stared straight ahead. Holding onto his arm, I whispered, “What did you do to me?”

“Hmm?” He glanced at me, confusion flickering briefly before his gaze returned to the road.

“Before you, I was never this emotional. Honestly, I don’t think I’ve felt anything like this in over ten years. Then I find my mate, and suddenly I’m a blubbing mess every five minutes.”

He let out a watery laugh. “Maybe if you didn’t fight the mate bond so hard, you wouldn’t be this emotional.”

I squeezed his hand. “Let’s kick Janelle’s ass first, then I’ll see what I can do about that.” I relaxed into the comforting tingles spreading through me.

The two-hour drive blurred past in silence until we neared our destination, where business had to take priority. We had a child to bring home. I gasped softly, and my wolf chuckled playfully in my mind.

“What?” Finn scanned the surroundings from the driver’s seat.

“Oh, uh, nothing. My wolf is being unhelpful.”

“I didn’t have the thought you did,” he teased as I giggled.

“Shut up.”

“You alright over there?”

“Huh? Oh, yeah, sorry. Jensen should be close.” I directed him to pull off the road. My wolf and I needed something to focus on, a distraction from the growing storm of my imagination. We climbed out and surveyed the area.

“Let’s go! We found their camp. We want to ambush them before they realize we’re onto them.”

“Sometimes I wish I was part of your pack,” Finn muttered, walking around to my side of the SUV. I glanced between Jensen’s wolf and Finn, then made a sudden, impulsive decision.

Wrapping my arms around Finn’s neck, I laced my fingers in his hair. His arms instinctively wrapped around me. Before he could ask what I was doing, my fangs slipped out, my wolf surging forward as we marked him. His fingers dug into my skin, and the sensation was overwhelmingly pleasurable. Without hesitation, he returned the mark. I inhaled deeply, holding the breath as a wave of euphoria washed over me. He held me close, pressing me against him as we both came down from the high.

“All right, lovebirds, you can f*ck later. Finn, welcome to the noise—you might regret it here, real soon.”

“Oh sh*t!”

A chorus of voices shouting ‘Finn’ and ‘welcome to the family’ filled our ears.

“It’s about time, Greta.”

“Shut up, Ryker, you’re one to talk.”

“We can all give Greta a hard time later. Right now, we have a rogue to take down.” I nodded my thanks to Jensen, even though we both knew it was only delaying the inevitable.

Finn and I shifted and followed him. Our wolves ran side by side, close enough that our shoulders brushed as we moved.

“They’re not far from here. They’re not as stealthy as when your group came through, Finn. I just can’t tell if that’s intentional, and we’re being set up, or if they’re really this stupid.”

“It could be either. Janelle never seemed like the planner type, but I didn’t think she was the idiot of the group either.”

“LOOK OUT!” Brian’s shout rang out just before a blur of fur streaked past us, followed by a wolf crashing into me.

“GRETA!” Finn yelled.

“Go! I’ve got this asshole.” I didn’t wait for a response, turning to face whoever had just knocked me down.

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Chapter 288

34 – Finn

We were tangled in a chaotic mess of fur and snapping jaws. The foul odor of this rogue was so overwhelming it almost made me gag, but I refused to relent, sinking my teeth into him repeatedly. Although he moved quickly, his attacks were reckless and uncoordinated. His claws swiped wildly but never found their target because he was fueled by anger, not precision. My wolf pulled back, then lunged sideways, spinning around to clamp onto his flank. He tore into the muscle, and we were rewarded with a desperate howl as the rogue hit the ground, attempting to hobble away. My wolf wasn't about to let that happen. He leapt onto the man's back, teeth sinking into his throat again and again until the rogue finally collapsed, motionless.

Once my wolf detected the cessation of the pulse in the man's neck, he released him, dropping the body to the earth. We immediately resumed our hunt for our mate. Around me, the sounds of battle echoed—growls, snarls, and the clash of claws. This group wasn't foolish, but their plan remained unclear. They hadn't broken through our defenses to penetrate deeper into Dark Moon territory. There were no demands, no threats, and no clear objective I could discern. Yet, despite the confusion, my instincts pulled me steadily toward Greta.

Suddenly, two grey wolves darted out from the shadows toward me. They looked barely past adolescence but carried no hint of hesitation. Instead, they radiated fury, as if driven by a burning vendetta. I kept them in my sight, watching as they circled, trying to intimidate me. Their reckless bravado gave me a moment's respite from my previous skirmish. "Idiots," I thought grimly.

I could hear another pair lurking in the brush to my left. Like the first two, they were poorly trained. If this was truly Janelle's group, what was she thinking? Their lack of discipline was a death sentence for all of us. When Sammy and I were part of her rogue pack, training was rigorous. Not as strict as Dark Moon's, but enough to keep us coordinated and alive in battle.

The first wolf lunged, claws like razor blades slashing through the air. He missed, but his attack pushed me dangerously close to his partner. She sprang onto my back. Instead of resisting, I let her momentum carry us to the ground, rolling toward her companion. She hadn't expected the sudden drop, and her paws lost their grip. I completed the roll and swiped at her underbelly with my claws, tearing through exposed flesh. A sharp huff escaped her as the other two wolves rushed to join the fight.

I quickly assessed the situation and pivoted as one wolf leapt into the air and the other darted toward my back flank. The airborne wolf didn't land on me directly but managed to rake my muzzle with his hind claws. I was lucky to avoid more serious injury to my legs.

Now, all four wolves were on me—a whirlwind of claws, teeth, and thrashing tails. The largest wolf attacked again, this time succeeding in knocking me to the ground. A searing,

blinding pain erupted in my side as his teeth sank in. The agony forced my body to buck violently, dislodging him. But before I could recover, the bigger wolf lunged once more. A wave of nausea and dread crashed over me.

Yet, fear didn't take hold. Something was wrong with Greta. She was terrified—terrified of only one thing. My mind shifted into autopilot as adrenaline surged through me. I had to reach her. These wolves had to be stopped. My consciousness receded to the backseat; my wolf took full control, driven by the same desperate need to protect Greta.

We charged at the first two smaller wolves, tearing the throat out of one and hurling his lifeless body into the other. It was a swift, brutal dance of teeth and claws. There was no time to restrain them—only to end this quickly and move on to her. Capturing was irrelevant when her safety was at stake.

The remaining two wolves sensed the sudden shift in my ferocity. The smaller of the two retreated slowly, but there was no escaping death this time. He would never again threaten our pack or any other. My wolf pounced, pinning him to the ground. The wolf turned his head submissively, silently begging for mercy. But we don't need warriors who crumble at the first sign of defeat. We dispatched him swiftly and turned our attention to the female.

She lay sprawled over the male she had come with, likely his mate. She made no effort to defend herself anymore. I ignored her and fixed my gaze on the biggest wolf, who had been watching my every move with cold calculation.

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Chapter 289

We collide with a force that rattles every bone in our bodies, jaws snapping fiercely as claws slash through the air. He's the only one who matches me in size and speed, making this fight brutal and relentless. But Greta lingers in my thoughts, a sharp ache reminding me of her pain. I can't afford to waste time here—I have to get rid of this bastard and find her. She needs me, and she needs me now.

Fueled by that desperate urgency, I slash deep into his chest with my claws. The raw, involuntary howl of agony he emits is the opening I need. I clamp down on his neck with everything I have and tear. His body crumples beneath me, but I don't pause to check if he's dead. Greta's safety is my only concern.

We race through the dense forest, the bond between us pulling me closer to her with every step. Then, suddenly, a scream cuts through the air—sharp, painful, unmistakably human. Why did she shift back? My wolf surges forward, breaking through a tangle of low-hanging branches. What I see stops me cold and churns my stomach.

Greta is battered and bloodied, bruises darkening her skin. Three men circle her like wolves eyeing prey. Despite her stance—defiant and ready to fight—I can see the hunger in their eyes. No one but me is allowed to desire my mate.

Anger and jealousy blaze through me, hot and fierce. I charge at the wolf nearest to her. He meets me just before my wolf tackles him to the ground, claws shredding his throat mercilessly. But there's no time to savor the kill—my ears catch a grunt from Greta. I pivot quickly, moving to help her.

She's fighting with everything she has, but blood loss has weakened her, and with two men pinning her to the ground, her options are limited. Without hesitation, I grab the jerk looming over her by his hair and slam him into a tree behind me. Then I deliver a solid punch to the face of the man holding her arms above her head.

"Grant, Jensen. Greta's hurt. I'm getting her out of here," I say through the mindlink, the connection feeling strange from my end. I receive a brief confirmation—they heard me, but nothing more.

"No! We have to keep fighting. The pack needs us," she insists, trying to resist.

"The pack needs you alive to fight. Give me five minutes. You have to heal. But seriously, why were you human in the first place?"

"Silver," she whispers. "One of them cut me with silver. It was deep enough to force the shift."

I can't help but joke, trying to lighten the mood despite the tension. "Well, you're already sounding better."

Finding a spot that seems just outside the chaos of battle, I duck into some thick brush and pull her gently into my lap, holding her close. I bury her face in the crook of my neck, and she teases softly, "Too bad we're in the middle of a fight, or I'd make a suggestive comment right now."

I chuckle, feeling the warmth of her despite the cold fear gnawing at me.

"Thanks for that," she murmurs. "How am I supposed to fight now?"

I tighten my hold, even though it only makes my own situation harder—and I don't regret it one bit.

"I'm sure you'll think of something," she giggles.

"Ugh, no sex right now. First, we get rid of Janelle and her minions. Only after that will I pound you into the nearest tree."

"Promises, promises," she laughs again, but this time I press my lips to hers, silencing her with a kiss. I can feel her strength beginning to return.

"Ready to go kick some more ass?"

"After you, mate," she replies, determination shining in her eyes.

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Chapter 290

35 – Finn

Words fail to capture the overwhelming comfort I feel holding Greta close in my arms. Yet, there's no time to dwell on that warmth now; this battle is far from over. Sliding my fingers gently through her hair, I press a soft kiss to her lips one last time before easing her off my lap and rising to my feet. She catches on quickly, grasping my hand tightly, and together we sprint into the dense forest, the sounds of snarling wolves and snapping jaws echoing behind us.

"They knew we were coming," Greta murmurs, a rare trace of worry threading through her voice—something I'm not accustomed to hearing.

"I'm aware," I reply, frustration thick in my tone. "I think your warriors got outmaneuvered." Ryker's team is notoriously skilled, so it's baffling how this could have happened.

"Could they be using any of your old hideouts or secret routes to infiltrate the pack?" she asks, eyes scanning the shadows.

"I doubt it," I say thoughtfully. "Amy's father was extremely secretive about our movements. There was a heavy reliance on magic to mask our travel. No one really knew where or how we moved until we reached the destination he chose."

"He really pushed the magic, didn't he?" Greta comments, shaking her head.

"Yeah, he had plenty of weaknesses, but his powers made up for them. That's how he kept control over us most of the time. We were always numb, thanks to whatever he slipped into our food. The worst part? We knew what he was doing—and we let it happen." Bitterness seeps into my voice despite my efforts to suppress it.

He used to give us these long, hollow speeches about safety and focus, about how it was necessary to keep us from distractions while we fulfilled our destiny against Ryker's pack. It was all lies—nothing but a load of bullsh*t.

We reach a small clearing where at least ten wolves are locked in fierce combat. Now that I bear Greta's mark, I can easily distinguish between the rogues and those loyal to the pack by scent alone. It's a crucial advantage to know who stands with me and who stands against me. Turning to my mate, I ask, "Ready to finish this?"

She giggles softly, a spark of determination lighting her eyes. "Absolutely. Let's see who's the better fighter now."

With that, we both shift, our forms blurring, and dive into the fray, taking down as many enemies as we can.

After dispatching two more wolves, I come face to face with a massive beast—no doubt Janelle’s mate. His muscles bulge beneath thick fur, and his wild, bloodshot eyes betray a mind clouded by something stronger than rage. He sizes me up with a grunt before charging headlong into battle.

Like the others I’ve fought today, he’s all raw aggression and reckless moves. Even Sammy and I fought with more precision when we faced the pack. Something’s off—they don’t know what they’re doing, and it’s going to be their downfall.

He uses his bulk to his advantage, tackling me to the ground and pressing a heavy paw against my chest. But I’m smaller and more agile, slipping free from his grasp. Rolling beneath him, I slash at his underbelly, but his thick, matted fur shields his skin from my claws.

We circle each other endlessly, exchanging bites and scratches. The fight drags on, and I start to grow bored with his predictable tactics. He lunges forward, misses, then pulls back, only to try again moments later. When I can’t stand it any longer, I time his next attack perfectly and meet him head-on, snapping my powerful jaws at his muzzle.

Suddenly, a smaller gray wolf charges in to assist him, but he shoves her away with a hind leg. I’m not sure if it’s to protect her or because he wants to fight me alone. It must be Janelle, trying to shield her mate from further harm. I can smell the blood on him, but his injuries remain hidden, giving me no advantage.

He lunges once more, mouth wide open, fangs gleaming as he aims for my throat.

I rear up and slash a claw across his muzzle, eliciting a sharp whimper from the gray wolf and a pained howl from him. Following through, I aim to pin his neck down when suddenly, a desperate voice breaks through the chaos.

“No, Finn, don’t hurt him!” Janelle’s sobs cut through the air.

My mind races with thoughts I dare not voice aloud: *You should’ve thought this through before launching another attack on this pack. They’ve never wronged you. They never harmed us. I don’t even understand why you came here. Claude was a fool for bringing you all, and you’re fools for staying and trying this again.*

I clamp my jaws tighter around his neck, knowing he’s a threat in this state.

“No! You can’t take him from me! He’s the only good thing in this entire mess!” Janelle cries, her voice breaking with anguish.

The forest seems to hold its breath as the fight reaches a painful, fragile pause.