

Letters Sent To Eternity

chapter 4

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4 – Kennedy

Stepping into the gym, I flick on the lights and, at least in theory, decide to warm up before diving into anything intense. I crank up some aggressive rock music, grab my speed rope, and begin jumping, trying to get my blood pumping and muscles loose. But despite the physical effort, my mind spirals with relentless negative thoughts—words like Weak, Orphan, Alone, Replaced, Unwanted echo over and over in my head, each jump of the rope marking another painful reminder.

After a good sweat breaks out, I shift my focus to the heavy bag. I double-check my wrapped hands, then move through the usual punching routine to warm up. Soon, I'm pounding the bag with everything I have—punches, kicks, full-body movements—until my limbs go numb and I can't push myself any further. I collapse against the bag, pressing my forehead into its worn surface, breathing heavily. Unlike my werewolf friends, my human body doesn't have the stamina to keep up. Frustration bubbles up again, and my inner voice sneers, Not Enough.

Ben approaches, dressed in his own workout clothes, and hands me a water bottle. "Did you get it all out?" he asks. I hadn't noticed he stayed behind. He's sweaty too, so at least I didn't ruin his workout by needing him to watch over me.

"For now," I reply, "but only because my arms feel like lead." I roll my eyes at him.

"You've been at it for three hours. I'd hope you're feeling something by now. Honestly, I don't think I've ever seen you move like this. You're getting stronger, faster. Looks like your anger's your secret weapon." He winks, though the amusement fades quickly.

"Well, at least one of you finally noticed," I mutter, scrunching my eyes shut and taking a deep breath. "Sorry, you didn't deserve that. I'm not mad at you—just at the situation." I sink down onto the bench beside the bag, and he sits next to me.

Out of the corner of my eye, I spot Tommy and Jason approaching. They stayed too? Now I feel guilty for interrupting their night. They should be bonding with their new Luna, hanging out with Jer.

"Is it safe to come closer, or am I going to lose the jewels?" Tommy jokes, pointing to his most prized possession.

"Shut up. You'll be fine," I reply, rolling my eyes but almost smiling. Not quite there yet, though.

"But will you?" Ben asks quietly, and all I can do is shrug.

"We haven't talked for two days. Two whole days. We've never gone that long without speaking. What if she tells him he can't see me, can't talk to me, can't be friends with me? What if she kicks me out of the pack house?" I take another sip of water, my voice shaky. "I'm not going to make him choose. Because he wouldn't choose me. He couldn't. Mates are special—once in a lifetime." Tears spill down my cheeks as I try to suppress the hurt and panic that's been simmering since Jason pulled me out of class.

"He didn't even tell her about me. I know it shouldn't be a big deal, but I'm his human, female, best friend living in his house. That's not normal in any way, and she didn't even know. You could see the surprise on her face. He's never been ashamed of me before, but maybe her pack isn't as accepting of humans. She was pissed I hugged him—pissed I was near him at all. She won't accept me in their lives, and I don't know what to do. I can't get between them, but I can't just stand by and watch him pull away from me slowly. That will kill me."

Ben wraps an arm around my shoulder, pulling me close. I rest my head against him, letting the tears fall freely now, staring ahead but not really seeing anything. Jason sits on my other side, holding my hand, while Tommy kneels in front of me, offering silent support.

"Ken, we'll figure this out. You're important to him, you know that. A new mate bond can be overwhelming, and I'm sure he's not thinking clearly right now," Tommy says, squeezing my hand gently.

"That much I figured out on my own. But what am I supposed to do in the meantime? I can't wait forever for him to get his head straight. And you guys will eventually find your mates and go through the same thing." Fresh tears start falling again. I close my eyes, lean back against the wall, silently willing the pain to ease.

"We would never leave you hanging, you know that," Jason murmurs, leaning closer.

"I knew that about Jeremiah too. And look where that got me." I breathe out slowly, opening my eyes to stare at the ceiling. "I just need to train more, keep busy until I can get out of here, go to college, live a normal human life. We all knew this was coming. I just didn't expect it to hit so suddenly or hurt this much." I try to stand, but Ben gently holds me back.

"This isn't forever. Just give him some time. And stop trying to run away."

"I'll try. But I'm not going to stand around getting growled at, either. And I'm not running away—we all needed space."

What I don't say is that I'm also preparing myself mentally to cut ties with all of them if that's what makes their lives easier.

I wear my sweaty gym clothes home, stuffing my street clothes into a crumpled ball. I hadn't come prepared—no shower stuff, no fresh change—and the disheveled, hot mess look perfectly mirrors how I feel inside.

The guys insist on walking me back. I try not to let it annoy me, though it still feels like being babysat.

They leave me at the door, which is a relief. I slip inside through the back patio door, thinking I'll be smart enough to sneak into my room unnoticed. I'm wrong.

"Fuck, Kennedy!" I jump, clutching my damp tank top as if it will slow my racing heart. Taking a deep breath, I steady myself. "Where have you been? I was worried. You just ran off, left your phone and everything here." Jeremiah rises from his seat at the kitchen island, moving toward me. Is he angry? Why does he look so upset? He has no right to be mad for me putting distance between us to calm things down.

I ignore him and head to the fridge, grabbing a bottle of water. I open it and take a long drink before turning to answer. She's here with him—I can smell her perfume. I won't start any fight in front of her. I won't give her another reason to tell him to stay away from me.

"I was training, with an entourage of sentinels. Didn't you think to check with any of the guys? They could have told you where we were. Or, let's be honest, you're my best friend—you should have guessed where I'd go to blow off steam." My irritation bleeds into my words.

"They all blocked me. I thought something might have happened." He rubs his hands over his face, then looks back at me.

I stare at him like he's lost his mind. Something did happen, and he completely iced me out.

"You know them better than that. If something was really wrong, they'd have linked you. And if you really thought something happened, just sitting around waiting wasn't the best move, Alpha. You left them on babysitting duty before you left, and they think since your brain's one hundred percent elsewhere, that job isn't done. I needed to work out. That's where I was—the gym. Now I need to shower." And pack a bag, but I keep that to myself. I told Ben I'd call him to come get me so I could stay with him. To his credit, he didn't argue.

I try to walk past Jer, but he grabs my wrist, stopping me. A low growl comes from the other side of the island. I press my lips into a tight line, turning my face away until I can compose myself. I can't show irritation or disrespect to the future Luna.

"Kennedy, why are your hands bleeding?" His voice is soft, but I can hear the frustration barely held back beneath the surface.

I stop struggling and glance down at my hands, confused. My knuckles have bled through the wraps I never bothered to take off. None of the others mentioned it, but I know they noticed.

"Fuckers. They could have warned me." They knew he'd ask, which is why they didn't follow me in. "I did some work on the bags. Didn't even notice until now." I shrug, trying to sound calm even though I'm far from it. "I really need to clean up. Haven't slept well the last couple days, and it's catching up with me. And apparently, I have some injuries to bandage too."

Finally, I meet his eyes. A tense moment hangs between us. I try to pull my wrist free, but he holds on tighter. "Let me go, Jer," I whisper. So much meaning packed into those four words that tears fill my eyes again, but I don't look away. He needs to understand—I'm making this choice. I have to pull away now, quickly, not slowly and resentfully over time.

His expression falls, and he pulls me into a tight hug. I wrap my arms around him, clutching his shirt because my hands don't reach around his massive waist, and let the tears fall freely, soaking his shirt. If this is the last time I get to hold him, I'm going to make it count. My heart feels like it's breaking and pounding all at once. I'm sure he can feel it too.

A menacing growl rises from behind him, but for the first time, it doesn't scare me like it should. She's his mate, his future Luna. Her growl should stop me cold, but instead, it just pulls me back to reality, like someone clearing their throat.

I tuck that thought away in the "figure it out tomorrow" folder in my mind and nod into his chest, taking a deep breath of his familiar scent before pulling back. I place my hands on his firm chest and look him in the eyes.

"Jeremiah. Let. Me. Go." I say it firmly, but not cruelly. He needs to accept this. She's claimed him now. I'm not wanted here—I'm trespassing. I may not be a werewolf, but I understand territory.

"Never." His arms tighten around my waist, making this harder than it needs to be. I clench my jaw, fighting back the tears. She won't see me cry anymore.

"Well, it's not just your decision anymore. You're a packaged deal now. You need to check with your other half before making promises." I tap his chest twice, trying to lighten the mood with a smile.

Another growl, followed by a huff. Maybe she agrees with me, but I've only heard her say five words total, so I'm not sure.

I push off him, and this time he lets me step away. "I'll see you tomorrow at school, I guess. Unless that's not a thing anymore. I don't really know how this works... I guess I'll just see you around." I rub my hand over my forehead, rambling without knowing why. We've never been awkward before, but that's all this is at the moment.

I head into the common room to grab my bag, left where I dropped it earlier. My phone lies on the floor nearby, tossed carelessly. No one touched it. Another wave of sadness washes over me—discarded and overlooked, just like my phone. Man... I hate this whole situation.

I grab my things and rush to my room before another wave of tears can hit. I shower quickly, then pull on a sports bra and comfy sweats. Out of habit, I reach for Jeremiah's t-shirt on my pillow. Halfway through putting it on, I pause, take a deep breath, and pull it off again. I close my eyes, steel myself, fold it carefully, and set it on top of my dresser across the room. I have to start doing this without him.

While I'm at it, I pack a change of clothes for school tomorrow and a set of workout gear for training. I plan to spend as little time here as possible until we figure this mess out.

Once I'm ready, I text Ben to come pick me up.