

Letters Sent To Eternity

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5 – Kennedy

Ben's reply couldn't be confined to a mere text; he had to call me. "Are you sure about this? Have you even talked to Jer? He's going to be furious if you just leave without saying a word. Besides, I kind of like having you around."

His voice grated on my nerves the longer he stalled, so I snapped back, "He doesn't get a say in this, Ben. I can't stay here right now, and I need somewhere to go. If you won't help me, I'll find someone else."

There was a pause before he said, "I'm on my way. Just do me a favor and talk to him first. You matter to him."

I rolled my eyes, already feeling my patience fraying. "Sure, whatever. I'll see you in a few minutes."

"No, I mean it—talk to him."

"Or what, Ben?" My irritation flared again, mood swings joining the growing list of emotions I was wrestling with.

There was a gruff grunt on the other end. "I'll make you."

I didn't even bother responding. I hung up, too frustrated to continue this pointless back-and-forth.

Dragging my two bags down the stairs, I dropped them near the front door and clenched my jaw. I needed to tell Aunt Beth what was going on, or she'd tear the entire packhouse apart looking for me. Strange, I hadn't seen her when we arrived to meet Rayna earlier—she usually would have smoothed the introduction. Maybe that was why things felt so tense.

Following the sounds echoing from the common room, I didn't even think to announce myself before stepping inside.

A moan, a grunt, then a sharp female scream shattered the quiet. "WHAT THE HELL?!"

"Oh, sh*t! Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt." I shielded my eyes, embarrassed. "I was just looking for Aunt Beth before I left." I hurried backward, eager to escape.

"Ken, wait! Come back!" I heard frantic rustling of clothing behind me and quickened my pace.

"Nope, not happening. Keep going, I'll find her myself. Sorry for the interruption." I pushed down the sting of tears and moved swiftly down the hallway toward the front door. It was clear now—it had taken less than an hour for Jer to be so distracted that I might as well be invisible. 'Important' was a word no one could honestly use to describe how he felt about me anymore.

"Ken, stop." His voice was right behind me, firm and fast. I spun to find him blocking my path. I slammed my eyes shut, dreading what might happen next. I wasn't about to have his mate attack me for accidentally seeing him naked.

"Where are you going? Why do you have a bag packed? And why are you looking for Mom?" Suddenly, he sounded worried. I mentally rolled my eyes.

"I was going to tell her I'm leaving. Are you dressed? I prefer my eyes where they belong—in my face. I don't need them gouged out." I squeezed my eyes tighter, ignoring the rest of his questions.

He chuckled softly. "Yeah, I'm dressed. Now look at me and tell me where you're going. What's really going on?"

"I told you—I haven't been sleeping well. I'm going to stay at Ben's so I'm not a problem."

"What are you talking about? I left you my shirt; that usually helps when I'm gone. And since when have you ever been a problem?"

"Are you seriously that dense? The shirt doesn't work anymore." I lied, hoping he wouldn't see through it. "It became a problem the moment you found your mate—who, by the way, you completely forgot to tell about me. She never expected me, judging by the cold welcome when you brought her home. She doesn't want me here, and you're not going to choose."

"I'm right here, you know. Don't talk about me like I'm not in the room." Her voice was close behind me. I closed my eyes and inhaled deeply, then exhaled slowly.

Don't get an attitude. Don't get an attitude. Don't get an attitude. I repeated the mantra in my head. This wasn't her fault—she was just as much a victim in this mess as I was. If anything, she had even more reason to be angry.

"I still don't get what the problem is." Jeremiah's gaze flicked between us.

I shot him a glare and growled, even without shifting. His eyes widened, and he took a cautious step back, hands raised in surrender. At least he understood we were both upset, even if he didn't grasp why.

"Why are boys so stupid?!" I didn't shout, but my temper was teetering on the edge. I sighed and decided to get this over with. Turning to her, I said, "Rayna, I'm Kennedy. Jeremiah's best friend—his female best friend. I live here, at the packhouse." I gestured around the room. "I've been here for three years. My mom was best friends with his mom, and I'm here

because my parents died three years ago. I still have nightmares from that day, and Jeremiah usually sleeps in my room with me..."

Before I could finish, she lunged at me, snarling and grabbing for my hair. She was strong, but her movements were clumsy, like she didn't train much. We both stumbled backward, but I caught most of our combined weight and flipped us over, trying to gain the upper hand. I didn't want to hurt her, but I also couldn't let her hurt me. Her claws scraped everywhere, and her legs kicked wildly beneath me. She growled and snarled, struggling to form words.

"You b*tch! You can't have him!" she yelled, swiping at my face. Blood trickled down my cheek.

She thought I was just some random girl trying to steal her man. Even after all the time Jer had spent with her since she found out about me, he never bothered to explain who I was. Jackass. Now I understood her frustration—I'd feel the same way. I fought to get a few words out, trying to calm her while defending myself.

"I don't f*cking want him, you crazy ass. He's like a brother to me." I grunted as she landed a solid punch to my stomach. "But you'd know that if you two talked as much as you f*ck! Now stop trying to gouge my eyes out!" That finally made her hesitate long enough for me to thrust my hips and flip her onto her back.

I pinned her wrists above her head, straddling her chest, leaning in so close our noses almost touched. We both panted heavily, but she slowly stopped struggling. Maybe she realized I wasn't trying to hurt her, or maybe my words were finally sinking in. Whatever it was, it was working.

"Stop trying to kill me. He's like a brother." I repeated, breath ragged, now holding her attention. "He should've told you about me. Honestly, a heads-up about you would've been nice, too. But sometimes these boys aren't the brightest." I rolled my eyes and glanced up at Jer, who was still staring at us. That's when I noticed the entire room was watching.

"Oh Goddess! That is so f*cking hot! How did you get so lucky?" Tommy slapped Jer on the back and bit his lower lip. Such a perv.

"So all four of you assholes just stood there and let us fight? You didn't care that your best friend and your future Luna were hurting each other? We should beat the crap out of all of you instead."

Ben and Jason rolled their eyes, and then Ben stepped forward.

"You two get it out of your system?" He held out his hand to me.

"Maybe." I raised an eyebrow at Rayna, slowly releasing her arms and sitting back, still straddling her waist, waiting for a cheap shot that never came. I took Ben's hand, and Jason helped Rayna to her feet.

I straightened my clothes and ran my fingers through my hair, avoiding eye contact.

"I'm ready, Ben. Let's go." They needed to talk and figure out if this was something Rayna could handle. I didn't want to walk away, but an Alpha needed his Luna. In this case, she was more important. My friendship with Jeremiah was now entirely in her hands. If she said no, then that was it—for now, at least.

I headed toward the front door, jaw set firmly. I wouldn't cry again. I'd said my piece and could only hope she believed me. It was up to Jeremiah now to explain and fix things if he wanted me in his life. He had to make her see what we were—and convince her it wasn't romantic.

"Wait, don't go." Her voice was soft but resolute, and suddenly I wasn't sure I could do this. I shook my head and kept moving.

"Please, we should talk."

I kept my gaze locked on the door. "I really do need to try and sleep—that's not a line. Don't make this harder for me. Please. I need to go." My plea was barely audible, even to myself, but I knew they heard it. My breaths were getting shallow.

"But you live here..." She whispered right behind me. I knew the guys could hear us.

I kept staring at the door, controlling each breath. "Yeah... for now... and soon you will, too. I need to learn to deal with the nightmares and all the crap on my own anyway, but this was a shock." I bent down to grab my bags, my hands still aching from the earlier scuffle.

She stopped me, placing her hand gently over mine. The first tear slipped down my cheek. I shook my head, heart breaking.

"Let's put these away, and we can get to know each other. Looks like we'll be spending a lot of time together." She tugged on my hand, holding the strap of my duffel bag. It wasn't forceful or controlling, but something inside me just snapped. I didn't have the energy to resist anymore.

There went my tears again—damn emotions. She took my bag and slid her hand softly onto my upper arm, turning me around. I slung my backpack over one shoulder, eyes fixed on the floor, focusing on putting one foot in front of the other. We climbed the stairs to my room, Rayna close behind without a backward glance at the guys.

"Ken..." Jeremiah breathed.

I shook my head and kept walking.

"I think your girls just left you hanging. Hope you finished what you started in there, brother, or you're going to be sleeping with some serious blue balls." Tommy's always the charmer. The others laughed along.

When we reached my room, I dropped my bag by the desk and took a deep breath before turning around.

I reached to take my duffel from her and set it next to my school bag.

“Were you really just going to leave? No fight at all?” She looked shocked.

“He’s my brother, not my boyfriend.” I was growing tired of repeating it. “There’s never been anything like that between us. I might be human, but I’ve known him my whole life, and we’re tight. I get how mates work, how important they are. He’s an Alpha, and an Alpha needs his Luna. Nothing is more important for the pack’s future. I’m not going to get in the way out of selfishness. So yes, I was going to leave, because you don’t want me near him. You don’t want me here.”

I rubbed my face and sat on the bed, patting the space beside me.

“I’ve never once run at my brother like that. I’m usually more likely to throw something at him.” That broke the tension, and I let out a strangled laugh.

“But how close are you and your brother? I mean, in age?”

“Six years apart. He’s 26, I’m 20.”

I nodded. “Jer and I are the same age—literally. We were born on the same day in the same hospital. That’s how close our moms were. My mom was visiting when they both went into labor at the same time. We’re basically like twins, raised that way.”

She nodded thoughtfully. “That explains some things. Not why he sleeps in your room, but we’ll get there. What about the other guys?”

“What about them?” I tried to steady my breathing now that she wasn’t growling at me. My head throbbed from all the crying.

“Oh, come on. You didn’t leave all those hot guys alone! No mate yet? And they’re all so protective of you. Anyone can see you’re close with all of them.”

“What do you mean ‘no mate yet?’ I’m human. Do you know the odds of me being mated? I can’t even be inducted into the pack because the elders think it would kill me. Being marked would probably be just as bad.” I chose not to respond to her other comment—I didn’t know her well enough yet.

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard that before. We don’t have any humans in our pack right now, so I’m not sure how that works.”

“No idea. Aunt Beth won’t even consider it. So I’m a human living in a werewolf pack with no real connection, staying with the Alpha’s family but not blood-related,” I said darkly.

“So...I’m guessing you’ve never had romantic feelings for Jeremiah. It’s written all over your face.” She giggled, sounding like a little girl. “But you dodged my other question—that means you’ve given the other guys a test drive.” She winked, and I glanced toward the door, sure someone was eavesdropping.

“‘Test drive’ is a strong phrase.” I tried to dodge the question.

“Oh, give it up! I want to know these guys. I’ll get some of that in my own time here, but I want to see what kind of team the Goddess put around my Alpha. How they treat a woman says a lot about who they are.” She giggled again.

‘My Alpha.’ She’d already made the mental switch.

“They’re all great, but I might be biased.” I shrugged and smiled faintly.

“So, which one are you dating right now? I feel like each of them would bring something different. Who was your first?”