

# The Luna's Choice (theo and ayla) by Kat Silver Chapter 21

## Chapter 21: Theo

I had gone into town to meet with some local business **owners**. **It was** a routine catch-up to see how the pack was doing. **It was** something I actually looked forward to. They were all good, hard-working people, **and** it was nice to hear about their day-to-day lives and how they were fairing under our protection. These things reminded me that being an Alpha wasn't all about power. We had a responsibility to the people we led. Without them, an Alpha's aura meant nothing.

It was also nice to get away from the packhouse and all the usual faces.

My parents had come back from the lake house with me. My mother was spending time with Kylee and Marie working on planning the ceremony, per Kylee's insistence. My father was addressing some of the administrative aspects of the pack, including checking in on the several businesses our family controlled. We would get together that evening and go over any updates. It would be a long day. But it was a good one, and I went into it in a better mood than I had been in **weeks**.

The meetings always took place at my parent's restaurant **so** as **not** to put anyone out with the responsibility **of hosting**.

"**It's** business **as** usual for the most part," **Ozzy Evans said**. He owned our biggest contracting company and **oversaw a lot of** the housing in the area. "We haven't had any major **incidents** recently. Just **a few** run-ins with **some teenagers vandalizing a few places, but it was all** minor **damage**."

"**That's good to hear,**" I said. "**What happened with the**

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**culprits? They must not have been too difficult to deal with. I haven't seen any of them come across my desk."**

“**Yeah**, they were **just** kids being kids **for** the most part,” **Ozzy** confirmed. “**Just not** having enough to do with school being out. Once **I tracked** them down, between

me and their mothers, they were eager to clean up their act. We got them signed up in some classes down at the community center.”

I nodded. “Good.”

“There was that one tenant you told me about, Ozzy,” Mrs. Clayborn said. She owned the local hardware and gardening

stores.

“Oh, yeah, strange guy,” Ozzy replied, scratching the back of his neck. “He liked to ask questions, but he seemed harmless enough. Just **a** bit awkward, I guess.”

He made it sound like the guy was a stranger. I was about to ask for more details when we heard the sirens wailing outside. We all stood up and headed to the front of the building. I stepped out to try and get an idea of where they were coming and going.

**It** didn’t take long to figure it out. Fire trucks and an ambulance **flew** down the **street**, heading toward a plume **of** smoke billowing into the **sky**. It looked like **it** was coming **from** the library.

**I started** running **toward** the building. **I was only a few streets**

**away** and would be **faster** on foot than **navigating through traffic** in **a** vehicle.

**I was there** in **less than five** minutes and **confirmed the library was** up in flames. I rushed **to** the **entrance**, **helping guide**

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**people as they** rushed out. **The** flames **seemed to** be **concentrated** in the back **of the** building. Several stairwells on **that** side **led** to different floors that held offices. I ran up to **the** fire captain, and his men started hooking up hoses

and getting to work. Some were already inside looking for anyone who needed help.

I started calling out orders, trying to organize those who were now outside, figuring out who needed medical attention, and reigning back the bystanders that had begun to congregate.

“Alpha Theo,” some called behind me.

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I turned to see Sarah Walport rushing toward me. We had gone to high school together.

“Alpha Theo, my mother **is** still in there. She **works** the desk down in the archives. I don’t know **if** she can get out,” Sarah said desperately.

“We’ll get someone down there,” I said. “Stay here.”

I relayed the information to the captain. He radioed the information to the others inside.

“They’re bringing out a few right now, but they’ve got their hands full. They’ll have to go back to check for her.”

I made **a** split-second decision and bolted into the building. Entering through **the** side entrance, I **crouched low** to **take** the scene **of** the building.

**The smoke was** thick and **heavy** toward **the back**, but **I wasn’t far from the stairwell that led to the lower level. I shifted into my wolf to keep low to the ground better and made my way to the basement. I could barely see anything when I got down**

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**there, and the heat was** intense. It seemed like this may **have been where the fire started.**

I **crawled** along the wall, trying to remember where the desk **was** and feeling around for any sign of anyone. I felt the hand before I saw her. Trying to calm my coughing, I nudged her to get a response. She must have passed out from the smoke. I gripped the back of her shirt with my jaws, dragging her toward the stairs. When I reached the base, I shifted back. I couldn't get her up the stairs with my wolf while she was unconscious.

Within minutes I was rushing back out of the library just as my vision started to fade, and I was thoroughly lightheaded. Someone met me and grabbed the woman from my arms. I fell to the ground in a coughing fit, trying to pull in ragged breaths of clean air. Someone wrapped a blanket around me and maneuvered me further away from the building.

I wasn't sure how much time had passed when I heard the firefighters calling that they had managed to get the fire under control and doused the flames. I stood as **Ozzy** approached me with a pair of shorts.

There were only **a** few ambulances still there. **Most** must have **left** with those who had experienced the more severe injuries. I had recovered enough to walk through the crowd, ensuring everyone was accounted for and attended to.

It was hours **before** everything **settled** down and **the area** cleared out, leaving only a handful of officials **to start** investigating and cleaning up. My mother had shown up to **assist earlier**, but we **hadn't** had **time to speak** with each other **as we cared** for our **people**. Once **things** had **settled** enough, my mother **came up and threw her arms around me**.

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### Chapter 22: Theo

"Did everyone make it out?" I asked her.

"As far **as** we know," Mom said. "It seems like mostly minor injuries, primarily smoke inhalation."

"And Mrs. Walport?" I asked. "Have you heard anything about her?"

Mom shook her head. "No, not yet."

I looked around again. "Where's Kylee?"

She should have been here. As the future Luna, she should have been helping control the situation and helping the wounded. Just like my mother had.

Mom's lips pursed **for a** second before she hid her reaction. "She opted to go ahead to the hospital."

I nodded. We would be heading straight there ourselves, so I didn't bother contacting her to tell her we were okay. We took Mom's car, so I didn't have to walk back to the restaurant. I was **already** starting to crash from all the adrenaline, but I wasn't even close to being done. We had to check in at the hospital, speak to everyone and ensure their safety, ensure **all** medical needs were **met**, then **get** with the fire marshal and insurance companies.

**It was a long road ahead, and I would need to be a part of it all. Especially since Briggs hadn't returned yet.**

**"Harry is on his way. He was visiting his daughter, so he's still a**

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**couple hours away,” Mom said.**

Harry was Dad’s Beta. **He** was an uncle **to** me, and it would be a big help to have his support. And it would be easier to keep Dad from over—  
stressing himself. I knew he was probably already going crazy that he wasn’t here to help. But he had already offered to meet the officials at the packhouse when they have more to report.

I pulled into the hospital, and we headed into the emergency department. The waiting area was full of families and those with minor injuries just waiting to get checked out for the all-clear. Mom and I started making our rounds, talking to anyone we came across, allowing them to get out whatever emotions they needed to.

A nurse came out and said I could come back where others were already being treated. As I entered the area, I saw Sarah sitting in a chair down the hall. I headed straight in her direction, sitting **next** to her quietly. I could tell she had been crying.

“How is your mother?”

She immediately burst into a fresh round of tears, leaning over and burying her face in my shirt. I gently wrapped my arms around her, rubbing my hand along her back.

She didn’t need to tell me. I could feel her grief and **devastation**.

**Her mother** didn’t **make** it.

I couldn’t **let** my emotions **take over yet**. I **needed to be there** for Sarah **first**. I would **deal** with my own guilt **and grief and**

**sadness later**. So I **just** held **her** until **her sobs slowed** and **her**

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tears stopped.

“**Thank you** for trying to save her, Theo,” Sarah said when she finally pulled away, sniffling **as** she wiped at her **face**. “It was a huge risk that you took.”

“**It** was exactly what I should have done. I’m just sorry I didn’t make it in time,” I said.

She shook her head. “There was nothing more you could do.”

“Does your dad know yet?”

“Yeah, he’s on his way. He’s out in the truck making a run. He’ll be back tomorrow morning,” Sarah said.

“Why don’t you stay at the packhouse tonight, then,” I said. “I don’t want you a t home alone.”

“John is coming to get me.”

“Your both welcome. I’ll tell him to grab some clothes for you so you can go str aight there.”

She nodded, giving me a weak smile. “Thank you, Alpha.”

I stopped into **a** few more rooms. Luckily most were already recovering quickly . Only **a** handful of humans were there today, and only one was in severe enough condition to be admitted. But even she **was** doing well and would likely be **released** by the morning.

**I was just leaving a patient room when I heard my name.**

“Theo,” **Kylee yelled**, running **down** the **hall** and **throwing** herself **at me**. “**T hank goodness** you’re **okay**. **I’ve been worried sick.**”

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**I set** her back down. “**Where the hell** have you **been?**” I snapped.

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Her **eyes widened**. “I... I **was** comforting some of the wolves back at the pack house. They **were** worried about their friends in the fire.”

“You should have been there. We needed you **at** the library,” I said, not bothering to hide my anger. “We needed you here.”

“What was I supposed to do? I would just be in the way,” Kylee whined.

I opened my mouth to yell but stopped myself, not wanting to make **a** scene in front of everyone who had already been through enough. My hands clenched into fists, and I pushed past her.

“Theo,” she called after me. “Theo, wait.”

I turned on her. “You better start figuring out what you’re supposed to do if you expect to be Luna, Kylee. Because so far, I’m not impressed with your behavior.”

I didn’t even give her an opportunity to respond, storming off without another word. I did not have the patience to teach her what to do. Even if she didn’t know what she would do, it should have been obvious that she should be there. We could have guided her.

If she **couldn’t** figure out that **she** needed to be there for her pack members in **need**, then maybe **she wasn’t** much **better** than **her sister**.

**Kieran growled at that thought, and it wasn’t because I was insulting Kylee. My chest tightened as the pain spiked. It**

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hadn't been getting any better despite the distance between us. And right now, **it** was hard to handle. I didn't just need Kylee to be there for the pack. I needed her to be there for me. I missed having **a** companion, having **a** mate. Or rather what a mate should be.

Kylee hadn't been that for me lately.

I found my mother waiting near the entrance.

"Come on," I said. "I've got to go back to the library to **speak** with the fire captain and pick up my car."

Mom followed me out. "Did you find Kylee?"

"Yeah."

"Is she on her way out?" She asked, looking around.

"She **can** find **her** own way back."

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## **The Luna's Choice (theo and ayla) by Kat Silver Chapter 23**

Chapter **23**. Briggs

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**Chapter 23:** Briggs

I had left Alpha Kingston's lodge with very mixed emotions. about what I found. Despite my anger about Theo's rejection of his fated mate, I was more worried than anything else. He definitely **hadn't** been himself since he met Ayla. But if I was honest, he hadn't been himself for a while. Not since Alpha Torin's diagnosis.

He had been devastated when he first found out but had done well to keep that from his parents. It was just before he and I graduated from college. Once we were out, he threw himself into taking over some of his dad's responsibilities

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Alpha's traditionally hand down their title when their successor turns twenty-seven. And while the children of Alpha's are raised their entire lives **to** take over the role, it's those few adult years where they learn the intricacies of the day-to-day. Theo was really hoping he would be able to get those last few years with Alpha Torin guiding him.

But it seems that wouldn't happen for him. For either of us. I still had a lot to learn from Alpha Torin and Beta Harry. But at least I would have Beta Harry close for as long **as** I needed him.

But Theo was struggling more than he cared to admit, and this **situation with Kylee** and Ayla was evidence **of that**.

Theo had already been involved with **Kylee when we learned** about his **dad**. **At the time, she seemed to be really supportive** and a comfort **for** him. But **she was still** in **college** and five years **younger than us, so she wasn't** really there for him **as**

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much **as** he needed. **But** he liked **her, and** what time they did spend together **gave** him **a break from** all the **stress**. So I was grateful for her.

However, when he said he wanted to make her his chosen mate and Luna, I was hesitant to offer my approval.

It was not long after he and his parents decided Alpha Torin would need to step down sooner than they hoped. Most alpha's waited a long time to take a chosen mate, if ever. While fated mates were anything but guaranteed, they were especially important for ranking members of packs. The bond between fated mates made the whole pack stronger. It was a bond I still felt was sacred, as did many others.

But Theo was adamant he didn't want to wait for his fated mate and that Kylee was who he wanted to be his Luna. I thought she could be a bit shallow at times and a little self-absorbed. It was nothing that couldn't be attributed to her age. And she always seemed eager to please Theo, so I figured she would learn quickly what was needed from a Luna.

But I never would have advised him to reject his fated mate for her. Especially without even having a five-minute conversation with her. Kylee's side of the story should never have been the deciding factor in his actions.

I had heard Kylee's stories regarding her relationship with her **sister** growing up. I believed her because I had no reason not to. But I guess I didn't form the same opinion of Ayla **as** Theo. I wasn't impressed with Ayla, but a lot of **what Kylee** said just seemed **like** someone struggling with losing a **parent**.

But my **impression** of **her** today **had** me doubting everything.

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## Chapter 23. **Briggs**

Something **didn't** add up to me.

Ayla could have refused to **speak** with me. She had no reason or obligation to give me the time of day. Nor would she be inclined to if she was the person we had been led to believe she was.

The woman I met was polite, diplomatic, and clever. And strong. There was a strength radiating off her that I couldn't imagine anyone being blind to. Especially not her fated mate.

Alpha Kingston certainly seemed to notice. The way he had hovered over her, he was clearly staking a claim. I could smell that she was technically still a rogue, the scent was still subtle, but it was there. But that meant he had every intention of bringing her into his pack.

By the way he relished in her informality toward him, I had a feeling his interest was deeper than just bringing her into the pack. He wanted her. It explained the time and care he had invested in her after her accident. Not to mention before I left, he made it very clear I was to tell Theo that Ayla was no longer his concern and the only reason he would ever allow him near her would be to finish severing the bond and letting her go.

I hadn't **expected** him to know as much as he did when I first spoke to Pierce, but he knew everything. He likely knew a **lot** more than I did. And that made me even **less** excited about relaying the details **of** our meeting to Theo.

I wondered if I could **get** away with taking a few **days to** dig into the Garner women before heading back home. I **debated** whether **it** would be a good idea or not. **The last** thing I

wanted **was** to **make** Theo doubt a decision **that** couldn't **be**

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**fixed**. But if it was **even** remotely **possible to save** their mate **bond**, **it** would have to **be** before he marked Kylee. Or **worse**, Kingston marked **Ayla**.

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## The Luna's Choice (theo and ayla) by Kat Silver Chapter 24

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## Chapter 24: Ayla

Kingston had tried to help me unpack all my stuff, but I insisted he leave me to do it on my own. In the end, he gave in, and I spent most of the morning putting things away. It was still a weird feeling. I had agreed to stay, and I did want to. I felt safe here and I liked Kingston. But it was still his home.

I wasn't sure how I felt about being beholden to him for everything. Especially since we barely knew each other. I hadn't been dependent upon another person for so long that it made me feel more helpless than taken care of.

But it wouldn't be forever. I really was kind of helpless at the moment. Or at least very limited. I couldn't move around a **lot** for a few more days. I couldn't drive for weeks. I had no job or idea where to start looking for one. The only thing I had going for me was that I had the funds to take care of those things... – when I could actually walk again.

So, yeah, I was feeling a bit helpless.

But I had also been going non-stop since I was fourteen. I was overdue **for** some downtime and someone to take care of me for once. I would just have to figure out how to enjoy it.

When I finally emerged from my room, Kingston waved me over to **the** living room.

"I noticed your laptop didn't **make it** through **the accident** in great shape, **so** I picked you up **a new one**," **he said as he set a box on the coffee table**. "I got **you a new** phone, but I **wanted**

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**to** see if you wanted to **keep** using **the** old SIM card or if you wanted **a new number altogether**."

“Kingston, you didn’t have to do any of this,” I said. Yeah, **still** not able **to** just let him take care of me yet.

“Ayla, it’s not about having to do anything,” Kingston said. “Besides, these are things you’ll need to get back on your **feet**. So to speak.” He gave me a wink and a cheeky grin.

I rolled my eyes but couldn’t help but smile as I sat next to him on the couch. “Okay, okay. But I’m paying you back. It’s not like I’m broke, you know.”

“It’s not like I’m broke either,” he replied.

“Clearly,” I said, indicating the huge luxurious home we were currently in.

I grabbed the box and opened it up. It was a newer model of the computer I had been using. So, the setup would be easy. I also saved everything I needed to the cloud, so I didn’t have to worry about losing any data from the other device. That was a blessing because if I had lost my whole manuscript, I probably would have fallen apart.

“**I do** have to run out for a while today. There’s a home nurse scheduled to come by in about an hour.” He put a hand up, stopping **me** from saying anything. “I know you’re fine. But I know some things are hard for you to do on your own. And I’m well aware I can’t help you with everything. So, **please**, just humor me.”

“Okay,” I said. It would **be** nice **to** have **someone help me wash** my hair. **I still had stitches** that **weren’t easy to** avoid without being able **to see them**.

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## Chapter 24: Ayla

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Kingston stood from the couch. “And while I’m out, think of what you want to do tonight.”

Again, it **felt** weird to be asked that.

Once he left, I started getting the laptop up and running. The **first** thing I did was check my email. I frowned when I saw the string of emails from Zeff. Each one was more

heartwrenching than the last. I hated that he was so worried. I couldn't keep him in the dark anymore. Especially after I read one of his last emails.

I guess he talked to Theo. He found out I turned myself rogue.

I wrote him a long email, mostly apologizing for leaving the way I did but also making sure he didn't do anything stupid. I didn't want him getting in trouble over me. Especially when I was fine.

When the nurse arrived, she knocked but didn't bother waiting for me to answer, which was understandable.

"You must be Ms. Ayla," she said with a bright smile. "I'm Emma, the home nurse Alpha has hired for you."

"**It's** lovely to meet you, Emma," I said, shaking her offered hand.

"So, I hear you were in a pretty nasty car **accident**," she said, setting a bag on the floor and sitting on the **coffee** table in front of me. "Alpha filled me in on some details, and Nurse Nicole is a good friend of mine, **so** she helped catch me up on your treatment plan."

"Yeah, **I've got some** recovering to do, but **I'm feeling pretty** good," I said, returning her **friendly** smile.

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## Chapter 24: Ayla

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"**That's good to** hear. I'm just going to check some **vitals real** quick **if** you don't mind."

**“Not** at all,” I agreed.

After she was done, she returned her supplies to her bag and turned to me. “So, is there anything in particular that you would like me to help you with today? You have me for the whole afternoon. Eventually, we’ll move on to some physical therapy, but for now, I’m here for whatever you need.”

I brushed my fingers through my hair, which had been in a ponytail for days.

“I could use some help washing my hair. If you’re up for it?”

“Absolutely,” Emma said, jumping up enthusiastically.

She really was adorable with such a kind and bubbly personality. She made me feel at ease very quickly. Not only did she help me wash my hair, but she helped show me the best way to wrap my cast to make showering much more manageable. Once I was all cleaned up, we just sat around and talked for a while.

**It** was really nice.

I **got** to thinking about how long it had been since I had a good girlfriend. Zeff had been the only friend I hung out with regularly, and even that wasn’t really often outside of work meetings. I had to **tell** myself she was here for work. That she **was** being paid to **be** here. But I **still** enjoyed just having the company.

“So,” Emma **said, as she set** two **glasses** on the **table between** us and took a **seat on the deck chair next to me, “what’s** going

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**Chapter 24:** Ayla

on with **you** and Alpha Kingston?”



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### Chapter 25: Ayla

‘What?’ I replied. ‘Nothing is going on.’

‘Are you sure about that?’ Emma asked, taking a sip of 7up. ‘Alpha has been spending an awful lot of time here. Plus, he has you staying here. He’s hired a home nurse. He’s covered your medical bills.’

‘He did what?’

‘You didn’t know he covered the hospital bills?’

‘No,’ I said, shaking my head. ‘No, I did not. He really didn’t have to do any of those things.’

‘Well, he has,’ Emma confirmed. ‘Don’t get me wrong, Alpha is great, and he would do anything to take care of any pack member. But you being an outsider and a rogue

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— it’s a little unprecedented.’

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‘Yeah, I thought that too,’ I said, picking up my glass. ‘But it turns out my father saved his life when he was a kid. I had a picture of him in my car, and Kingston found it. So, I guess he just feels obligated to help.’

‘Wow, isn’t **that some** twist of **fate**, huh?’ Emma commented.

‘Yeah, I **guess so**. Plus, **it** was kind of his fault I crashed, **so** there’s probably a **little** bit of guilt **there, too**,’ I added.

“**Well, there should be,**” Emma **said** with **a** smile. “I’m glad **he was** there to help. And I’m glad he convinced you **to stay**. You’ve already become my **favorite patient**. And not **just** because

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**you’re my easiest by far.”**

We both laughed.

“So, do you have any ideas what you will do once you’re mobile again?”

“I’m not sure,” I said, taking a drink. “I’ve thought about enrolling in a university. I didn’t get **a** chance to go *to* college after I graduated, which kind of sucked because I got **a** couple scholarships offered.”

“That’s awesome,” Emma exclaimed. “Why didn’t you take them?”

“That’s **a** long story.

In the end, it just wasn’t in the cards for me **at** the time,” I said.

“Well, then you should definitely go for it now.”

“Yeah, it’s still on the list. I was also thinking about starting my **own** publishing company. I know the industry well and have some good contacts,” I threw out there. “But these are all just ideas. I’ll need to take care of the whole rogue situation before any of that can be addressed.”

“Alpha has offered to bring you into the pack, hasn’t he?” Emma **asked**.

“Yeah, but **he** wants to make **a** thing of it. Do the whole ceremony thing and all that.”

“You **don’t** sound **too enthusiastic** about it.”

“No, **it’s** fine and **kind of** sweet,” I rushed. “I **just** think **it’s a bit** much, I **guess**. **It’s just not something I’m used to.**”

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**“Then tell Alpha that,” Emma suggested. “If he wants you to do something you’re uncomfortable with, he should know. He’ll respect it.”**

“You’re probably right,” I said with a smile.

“And you’re sure there’s nothing more going on with him?” Emma asked intently.

I rolled my eyes. “No, nothing else is going on.”

“Yet...” Emma gave me a wink, making us both laugh again.

I guess I could see why Emma thought something was going on between me and Kingston. But I wasn’t sure how I felt about that. I was still bound to someone. Whether I could or even wanted to be with him didn’t really matter. It was hard to picture myself having feelings for anyone else while the bond was still in place. And that wouldn’t be fair to Kingston if he thought something more was happening.

Not that I didn’t **like** him.

I did. I liked him a lot. He was kind and thoughtful. We had great conversations. He made me laugh. He was very attractive. If we were in any other circumstance, I could easily see myself falling for him. But knowing my luck, Kingston probably wasn’t even interested in me that way.

Or **wouldn’t be...** even if I could have feelings for **him**.

Could I have feelings for him?

“You’re blushing,” **Emma commented. “What were you thinking about?”**

“Nothing,” **I said, feeling my cheeks get hotter.**

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**Chapter 25. Ayla**

**“Mhmm,” Emma** hummed. **“So, what do** you two have planned tonight?”

I shrugged. “I don’t know. Kingston wanted me to think **of** something for us to do together, but I have no idea what we can do sitting around here.”

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“We just met, and I like you – plus you’re my patient – so I’m going to pretend you didn’t just walk into that one,” Emma said through giggles. “But since it seems taking advantage of our gorgeous Alpha isn’t on your radar, what about a game night?”

I thought about it for **a** moment. “What kind of game **night**?”

“Anything you want. You could do board games, card games, trivia games,” Emma listed. “Oh, or a murder mystery game. They’ve got some really fun ones for adults these days. That sounds like something that could be right up your alley, being a writer and all.”

“I’m not a mystery writer, Emma,” I clarified.

“No, but you know how to tell a good story, and that’s really the key to those things.”

“Yeah, that does actually sound like fun,” I said.

“Good,” Emma said with a huge smile. “I’ll **message** Alpha to pick up a game and something nice for dinner on his way **back**. It’ll be **the** perfect first **date**.”

**“Date?” I exclaimed. “No, no, we’re just hanging out since I’m stuck here until I’m healed enough. I don’t even think Kingston thinks of me like that. Besides, he knows I... He knows recent events mean that I’m not exactly available.”**

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## Chapter 25: Ayla

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“Girl, you’re adorable,” Emma said **sweetly**. “He absolutely thinks of you **like** that. He may be **taking** it slow because **of** whatever you’ve been through, but **he’s** definitely into you.”

Okay, what was I going to do with that information?

The ache from the bond was still just as present as before, so it wasn’t like I could just forget about it. Well, except when I was with Kingston. Although, that effect seemed to only occur when he touched me.

Maybe he had that effect because I liked him? Or because he liked me? Or both?

I didn’t know, but maybe it meant something.

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