

The Quadruplets' Rejected Doctor

CH 1 – Katherine

KATHERINE POV I stared at the girl in the mirror and barely recognized her. My olive green eyes—too bright, too wide—searched the reflection for something that wasn't there yet. Something I'd been waiting for my entire life. My wolf. My other half. My salvation. Tomorrow, I would turn eighteen. And the torment of not shifting, of being half this, half that, would finally end. That was the hope, at least. The desperate prayer I hadn't dared whisper aloud. The small bathroom mirror was fogged from the hot shower. I wiped it with a towel, revealing the dark waves of my hair, still damp and curling at the ends. I hadn't bothered with makeup—not in this weather, not in this life—but I looked healthier than usual. Maybe a little sleep and a lot of hope had worked some kind of magic overnight. The sound of footsteps on the creaky floorboards made me jump. "Trouble!" my father's booming voice echoed from downstairs. "Come on, breakfast is ready! And I don't want you to be late for school." I smiled despite myself. Only he still called me that. I threw on my usual layers: black jeans lined with fleece, a thick green sweater that matched my eyes, and my snow jacket. Everything practical, everything built to last. I laced up my worn snow boots, grabbed my backpack, and hurried downstairs, drawn by the scent of eggs and bacon. My father was already at the table, reading the old, battered newspaper he insisted on buying every morning. The scent of coffee and sizzling bacon filled the cabin's warm kitchen, a sharp contrast to the frozen world beyond the frosted windows. I kissed his cheek and stole his breakfast plate right from under his nose. "Hey!" he chuckled, mock-offended. I sat beside him and took a full bite. "Thanks, Dad." He ruffled my hair, the way he always did when he was proud of me but trying not to show it. "Five minutes, Trouble. Don't make me chase you out the door again." I nodded, sipping my coffee the way I always liked it—black, with cinnamon and a dash of cocoa powder. It wasn't the sugary kind you got in coffee shops. It was earthy, bitter, and warm. Like a memory I refused to let go of. We didn't talk much over breakfast. We never needed to. He watched me with those soft, weathered eyes—the same ones that looked haunted every time someone mentioned Mom. She'd died giving birth to me. The pain of that never left him, no matter how much time passed. I never wanted to add to that pain. That's why I never told him how they treated me at school. How the other wolves whispered behind my back, calling me halfling, runt, or worse. How I never got invited to the runs, the parties, the ceremonies. They all assumed I'd be dead weight. Just a human in a wolf's world. But I wasn't. Not yet. Not definitely. The cabin groaned under the weight of fresh snow as we stepped outside. The cold hit me like a slap, sharp and real. The landscape was blanketed in white, the trees coated in hoarfrost, their limbs bowing under the weight of winter. The sky above was a pale gray, the kind that promised more snow by nightfall. My dad's old pickup truck coughed like a dying animal before it finally roared to life. The heat took a while to kick in, but he turned on the radio anyway, filling the cab with classic rock. He tapped his fingers on the steering wheel as we drove through the snowy forest roads toward Bloodhound High. As the school came into view—an ugly, squat building half-

swallowed by the frost—I felt the same clench in my gut I always did. I forced a smile as we pulled up. “See you later, old man,” I said, leaning over to kiss his cheek. “Give 'em hell, Trouble,” he replied, squeezing my hand. I stepped out of the truck, taking a deep breath of icy air, and squared my shoulders. Don't let it show. Don't let him see. I walked fast, weaving through the parking lot with my head down, hoping not to catch anyone's eye. The fewer people I spoke to, the better. They all thought they knew me, but none of them had ever looked past the label on my back: hybrid orphan, wolfless, weak. I could take their cruelty. What I couldn't take was the thought of my father seeing it. He had given up so much for me. Trained harder, fought longer, protected me from every whisper he heard. But he couldn't protect me from the ones I heard when he wasn't around. As I reached the steps leading into the school, I felt it. A prickling heat on the back of my neck. Eyes. Watching me. I froze mid-step, then forced myself to keep walking. But I knew who it was. I always knew. No matter how early I arrived, or how quiet I moved, those eyes found me. Jonas fuc.ing Hound. The Alpha's son. The next in line. The golden boy of the Bloodhound Pack. Tall, arrogant, cruel—and yet those damn eyes never stopped tracking me. There was something in his gaze I didn't understand. A heat. A weight. A warning. I climbed the steps without turning around. I wouldn't give him the satisfaction of knowing he got under my skin. But the back of my neck still burned. I exhaled slowly as the door closed behind me, muffling the buzz of the parking lot. The halls were quiet—just the way I liked them—early enough that most students were still dragging their feet through the snow outside. My boots squeaked slightly on the freshly mopped floor as I headed toward my locker, the numbers etched into the metal more familiar than most faces in this place. I spun the dial with practiced fingers and opened it, grateful for the small sense of normalcy. Inside, everything was neatly arranged—textbooks lined up in order of period, a black spiral notebook covered in doodles of molecular structures, and a battered thermos that still held some of the cinnamon-cocoa coffee from earlier. I grabbed my chemistry book and notebook, then slipped them into my backpack. The bell hadn't rung yet, but I didn't feel like standing around in the hallway, dodging sneers and pitying glances. I adjusted the strap over my shoulder and made a beeline for one of the only places in this godsforsaken school where I actually felt like myself. AP Chemistry. My favorite class. The lights inside the lab were already on, the scent of bleach and graphite thick in the air. Rows of black countertops gleamed under the harsh fluorescents, and the periodic table stretched across the far wall like a promise. It was quiet, orderly, logical. Unlike everything else in my life. I took my usual seat near the window and unpacked my notebook, flipping to the half-scribbled page of yesterday's formulas. The teacher hadn't arrived yet, but I didn't mind the silence. It gave me space to breathe. To be. Out there, I was the freak. The mistake. The wolfless girl from a motherless birth. But in here? I was just a student. Just a girl who happened to be damn good at solving chemical equations and memorizing reaction patterns. No one cared what blood ran through my veins when I aced every test. I let my fingers drum against the edge of the lab table, trying to shake off the lingering tension from the steps outside. Jonas Hound. His name burned through my mind like acid on paper. I didn't understand what he wanted from me—or why he always looked at me like he was trying to solve a puzzle he hated having to think about. The bell rang, jolting me slightly. Voices filtered in from the hallway as students began to file in. I kept my head down, eyes locked on my notebook, pen poised to take notes that

hadn't even been assigned yet. I could feel someone's gaze again. Not just curiosity or the usual disdain. Something else. The same heat. The same weight. The same eyes. They always found me. --- 'Tomorrow's my birthday' I reminded myself as I stepped through the doors. 'And everything is going to change.' At least, that's what I prayed for. But I had no idea the price I would pay for it.