

Rage and Regret

Blake

The one thing that I'm certain about is that I have to stay away from her at all costs. Here's the plan, I'll keep my head down, keep my distance and avoid her like the plague. Everything will work out, right?

Ever since my father told me that he had arranged for Kelsey and Logan to return to pack grounds for their five year check-in, my life has been nothing short of a blur. When I stood up to stretch from being cooped up in my office all morning like a tiger in a cage, I noticed her parents' black sedan passing through the black iron gates and driving into Blackclaw from my window. My wolf knew she was here too, he could feel her near and he wouldn't stop pestering me. He missed her, I missed her too, but I shouldn't.

They say the best way to get over someone is to get under someone else. I can confirm that's bullshit. None of the countless one night stands I've had over the years have come close to healing the wounds that have now become tattered scars in my heart. As I'm thrusting into a girl, I imagine that it's Kelsey underneath me. Just when I'm about to release my load into a girl, I imagine it's Kelsey I'm releasing it. She's become my obsession. An obsession that I haven't been able to break free from.

I've spent the past four and a half years torturing myself for letting go of the best thing that's ever happened to me and I was positive that this week wouldn't be any different. She's what I wake up thinking about and what I fall asleep dreaming of. If that isn't enough, I physically get to feel the sting of rejecting the mate bond nearly every damn day. The only thing that I found to slightly numb the pain was keeping myself distracted with booze, women or work.

I know I hurt her, I know I broke her heart. A cruel reality that I now have to live with. The truth is I broke my own too but she doesn't even know it. She sees me as an asshole and I don't blame her for it.

I would have claimed her right there on the dock that night as my mate if I could have. I knew she was my mate, as lame as it sounds I could feel it. There was something different about Kelsey, something electric that made me feel alive whenever I stared into those big emerald green eyes.

I'm an Alpha by birthright though and like they say with power, comes responsibility. My parents had approached me that morning of her eighteenth birthday at breakfast and explained that while they adored Kelsey, it was better to break things off with her instead of stringing her along. You see, my fate had been sealed when I was only five years old to take Everly from Silver Shadow Pack, the first born daughter of Alpha Jakob as my Luna.

That's right, Crimson Pack's biggest rival. The rivalry had gone on for centuries, every decade or so, there would be another unnecessary war. The union between Everly and I would be the official stitch to finally mend the packs together, the years of bloodshed soon to be nothing but brutal history never to be repeated.

Everly was prim and polished, molded into the perfect picture of what a Luna should be. However, she was a tad too cocky for my liking. Coming from me, I know that says a lot. Being the Alpha's daughter and having lived in the spotlight her entire life, I also didn't hold it against her. Us Alpha kids just had it different than the rest of the pack.

Just as I was about to sit down at my desk and continue working on the details for the pack run next Friday, my Beta Asher mind links me. "Alpha, the endurance training we had scheduled is done for the day. Do you want to come down and continue with defensive drills or should I let them off early today?"

My Beta Asher had been one of my best friends since we were pups. When my father's Beta had stepped down to spend more time with his grandchildren and shortly after I became Alpha, there was no question in who I believed should take his place as Beta. Asher was quick witted, level headed and strong. His wolf was the second biggest in the pack. I had even come across Alphas who were weary to mess with Asher. My father's Beta trained Asher and had no doubts that Asher would be a valuable asset to Crimson Pack.

Only one issue: he was also close friends with Kelsey, my mate, and it was clear as day that he adored her. I could always tell when she was calling him because Asher was horrible at hiding it. Whenever he talked with his vibrating cellphone and saw her name, he never failed to immediately tense up. It was like clockwork. Asher knew about my predicament and I knew he disagreed with my decision but I was grateful that he refrained from mentioning anything Kelsey related.

I heave a sigh and massage my temples in aggravation, "ya. It's fine, I'll be there in five minutes" and flick my laptop screen down. Any other day and I would have let the group finish early, we had been training vigorously since the last training session a month ago with the allied packs. The last time the packs got together to train, I had two injured shifters by the end of it and I was determined not to let history repeat itself. I'm pretty sure Alpha Tate isn't going to let me live that one down anytime soon considering it had been shifters from his pack that inflicted the injuries.

Alpha Tate, Alpha Jaxon, Alpha Liam and I renewed the allegiance amongst our packs once I became Alpha of Crimson Pack. A brotherhood of sorts. We were all similar in age, essentially grew up together and have the same goal of transitioning our packs into the modern world. Maybe even the entire werewolf race. As the human world advances, the shifter world cannot stay stuck in place, a testament that our fathers weren't exactly fond of.

But, as always, change might be uncomfortable but it's necessary.

Three out of four packs already had ties to each other from when our fathers were Alphas, with the exception of Alpha Tate's pack. However, their allegations consisted of having each other's backs in case they required assistance for whatever reason. Our pact inherits their beliefs but adds a little bit more with our warriors actually being familiar with each other. Alpha Tate was from the North, I was from the South, Alpha Liam was from the West and Alpha Jaxon was from East. Even though there are seven werewolf packs, four packs working hand in hand with each other gave us a majority when it came to most Alpha meetings.

They were scheduled to arrive with their warrior packs tomorrow night except for Alpha Tate who had already arrived and was already up my ass to go out for drinks. Crimson Pack was hosting the training session this time around. Having an allegiance with each other, we gathered our warrior packs once a month to train together, master skill sets and more importantly learn to fight together as a team. If a war was ever to take place, it was vital that the warriors all saw each other as one force moving in unison instead of four separate identities.

I had made my way into the field and towards the bright eyed warriors. After last month's circus, I could see their determination to showcase their strength to the other packs. Shifters are obnoxiously competitive by nature, particularly against other packs.

I quickly demonstrated a few defensive moves which they all seemed to grasp with ease when they paired off to practice. Two hours of defensive training later and I realized I had completely lost track of time. "Pack up Crimson. Good work today, training is at 3pm tomorrow. One last session before our guests arrive tomorrow night. Do not be late!", I yelled out to the group.

Beta Asher comes and places a hand on my shoulder, "they look good out there, Alpha Tate is going to shit his pants when he sees them this time", he says with a smirk. Beta Asher was beaming from the improvement of the group and I can admit his work has been impressive.

I coil out a laugh and reply, "yeah, I'm stoked to see his face too. That guy may not come back next month when he sees Crimson now". I pull off my black v-neck tee that was drenched of sweat from the beaming hot summer sun.

I notice Beta Asher's eyes bolt to the other side of the field where a small crowd was now gathering, it was like he wasn't even paying attention with his gaze so intently fixed on the horde. The look on his face made me wonder if he was looking for something... or rather someone. "...I'll catch ya later Alpha", he said and jogged over to the crowd.

My cellphone vibrates against my leg and I pull it out my pocket. I groan seeing that it's a text from my father asking where I had left the pack rotation schedule. Unbelievable. I know he wanted to help with the shift of power of Alpha but sometimes it felt like he wasn't ready to let it go.

I stuff the cellphone back in my pocket, I was on my way back to my office anyhow. A high pitched shriek catches my attention from across the field and I glare over to the crowd that Asher had just raced towards. Before I even have time to react or process what was going on, I see my Beta Asher picking up and spinning a blonde in his arms. The already short canary yellow dress exposed her long tanned legs that were wrapped tightly around his waist while his arms held her up right under perky her ass.

I feel my mouth run dry at the sight and a growl escape my chest. "Mine!", my wolf howls. I couldn't fight the urge and rip my gaze off of her, she looks breathtaking. A total fucking Goddess.

I can feel my gym shorts tighten when thoughts flood my mind of how badly I'm craving to have her underneath me. Her petite body trembling under mine while I thrust into that taut little pussy like no time had passed.

I watch her until our gazes lock, her emerald green eyes shining brightly in the reflection of the sun and narrowing directly at me. Fuck, I need to get out of here. This wasn't the plan. The plan was to avoid her at all costs. I'm not sure how much self-control I'll have around her.

I stalk my way into the forest, feeling my wolf whimper and scold me that we're going the wrong way. I lure my gym shorts off and shift, taking off towards the pack borders.



Warm Welcome

Kelsey

A pair of crystal blue eyes staring directly at me from across the field caught my attention. I'd recognize those eyes anywhere. They were burned into my memory like they belonged there, haunting me in my dreams for the past four and a half years.

I watched him until he finally disappeared into the forest. I could feel Asher whip his head in the direction that I was so consumed in, silently acknowledging what had just happened.

What a fucking asshole.

Why was I expecting anything different from a douchebag Alpha who rejected his mate on her birthday? I know he saw me, I caught him staring directly at me. I was sure that he had felt it too, the invisible magnet tugging to pull us together. He could have at least come over as pack Alpha and acknowledged me after four and a half years.

I shook my head, trying to replace my irrational thoughts with the fact that I now had Eric in my life, a true gentleman through and through. I didn't care about Alpha Blake. Right? If he wanted to avoid me, then I would happily let him.

"So whatcha say Kels? The Wolf's Den tonight like old times?", Asher repeats. I'm sure he noticed that I've been distracted since I saw Blake across the field a few moments ago.

"Ahh yeah... just a couple of drinks though. My check-in with Alpha Max is in the morning and I'd rather not sabotage my chances of a smooth meeting by showing up reeking like I had just gone on a bender", I admit.

Asher's eyes crinkled at the corners as he let out a full-fledged belly laugh, "Who you? Never! I think Alpha Max already knows your trouble. Kels, he did watch you grow up".

I couldn't help the playful growl that belled out of my chest, you immediately knowing what he was referring too, "I do believe fine sir, that it was just yesterday we've met and I to steal those tractors".

A smirk quickly formed on Asher's face, "I never told you two psychos to drive them into the lake! That was all your own doing".

Mia was like a sister to me. Her family had transferred to Crimson Pack when she was in high school. All of my favorite stories in Blackclaw had her involved in one way or another. Since graduating from business and administration at the nearby college, she took over her parents' cafe in town. Even though we spoke daily on the phone, I hadn't seen her for almost five years. When I finally got unpacked into my old bedroom, I couldn't resist the mouth-watering smell of the pecan pie sifting in the kitchen. My father told me that it was Mia's mother who had actually brought it over as a welcome home gesture. I had come out to the training field to come find her and thank her for the pie and there was still no trace of her anywhere.

"Yeah, yeah. As if you don't remember when you almost set the pack house on fire. Clearly, Alpha Max forgave you for that one", I shot back holding up my finger like I was scolding a child.

Suddenly, I felt slim arms wrap me from behind. "So this is what the entire pack is buzzing about". I turned towards the brunette and threw my arms around her, "Mia! I've been looking everywhere for you! AH! I missed you so much".

Asher piped up, "if you move back home, you won't have to miss anyone anymore" and winked at me before he took his exit towards the pack house.

"Augh, that man doesn't know how gorgeous he is swear. I don't know how you two haven't ever hooked up. I would've been all over that like honeybees to honey", Mia whispered into my ear.

I rolled my eyes, "Ugh Asher?! He's like a brother to me! Just ask him out already, he won't bite, I promise".

Asher was definitely attractive, his entire body was shredded and he had gorgeous amber eyes that I was sure glowed when he was excited about something. He had dark blonde hair in a crew cut and had enough tattoos for the entire pack. I don't know how I would have survived Alpha Blake's rejection without him basically holding my hand every step of the way. He had called my very day for a year until he took the Beta position. I knew that Mia had always had the hots for Asher, I guess not much has changed since I've been gone.

Mia insisted that I had to come check out the renovations she had done to the café, The Aroma Mocha. She was adamant that I had to try her supposed legendary caramel latte that they were known for, which was undoubtedly the closest thing I have ever tasted to liquid gold. She was one of those friends that no matter how much time had passed, you instantly pick up where you left off like it was just yesterday when they saw each other. I didn't have to ask twice if she wanted to come to the Wolf's Den. She got all giddy like a school girl, apparently the guy she had been dating for the past three months is in a band that was performing tonight at the bar. I could tell she was really into this guy already.

Just as we were getting up from the table to leave, Mark entered with a few of his enforcer buddies who all gawked at Mia and I like we were their next dinner. Mark squealed my cheek, causing it to turn red just like he did when we were kids, which resulted in me to dramatically roll my eyes. "If it isn't the ghost of Blackclaw herself, sorry I couldn't come pick you up with mom and dad, baby sis", he said.

I wanted to lash out with some smart ass comment since my cheek was still pulsing, but I didn't have the heart. It just felt so nice to be here, to finally be home and with the people I loved. Instead, I raised my hands up in surrender, "I heard you had pack training Mr. Big-Shot-Enforcer".

He stifled a laugh and shook his head, "Don't you know it Kels. Some of us around here have to protect this pack. Speaking of which, Alpha Max wanted me to let you know that while you're in Blackclaw, you're expected to train with the warriors".

If looks could kill, I was certain that Mark would have been dead by now. "Really?", I whined. "I just got here after five years and he throws me into pack training already? How is that fair?"

He flashed me a sympathetic smile, "don't shoot the messenger: 3pm tomorrow" and returned to his buddies whose eyes could have very well rolled out of their heads if they stared any longer.

Mia and I quickly retreated to my parents' house to get ready for what was supposed to be a laidback night out. I decided to wear my new black long sleeve bodysuit which conveniently plunged down so low that I opted to go braless, with a short black leather skirt. Mia had curled my hair into these beautiful soft beachy waves that I could never seem to get right when I tried to do it myself. I finished it all off with a sharp cat eye to showcase my eyes and my favorite shade of nude lipstick. I stopped in front of the body-length mirror in my bedroom to check out the final results. Perfect, I muttered to myself.

Mia narrowed her eyes at me as she did her make-up in the mirror and bit her lip, "if I didn't know any better I'd think you were trying to be seen by someone tonight".

I could feel the heat penetrating on my face. Fuck, was it that obvious? I didn't care about Blake anymore, but was it bad that I just wanted a taste of sweet revenge? The fact that he didn't even bother to come over and say hello today on the field still infuriated me. "It's my first night back in five years. Is it too much to ask to look presentable?"

"Presentable? Girl, you look like an entire happy meal. Guys are going to be drooling all damn night", she said and tossed her head back in a laugh.

Mia puckered her lips together and stood up in the mirror to take a final look, "not too bad", she said under her breath. I'd given Mia a dress to borrow which seemed to look better on her than it ever did on me. She wore a short white bandage dress that emphasized every single curve on her body. The white dress contrasted against her long natural bouncy dark brown curls that I had always been envious of and her glimmering light green eyes. She reminded me of one of those exotic supermodels you would see on TV.

I was thrilled that the walk was short and sweet, but I felt my wolf getting restless for no apparent reason. We approached a glowing sign at the corner of the block that read "The Wolf's Den". The line to get into the bar had wrapped around the building. I shot Mia a concerned look and began to complain, "you do realize by the time we get inside, it'll already be last call", it had been clear that this place had become extremely popular, but I didn't spend the last couple of hours dolling myself up to stand in a line all night.

A huge hand grasped mine and pulled me towards the door abruptly, "Not when you're with the band", a low husky voice taunted. Whoever this dude was, held both Mia and I's hands, one on each side. We approached the front of the line and a bulky bouncer nodded at him, "Band is here!", he belted out to the man in the all-black suit behind him. "Have a great nice ladies", he said as he unclipped the velvet rope, side stepping and granting us access into the bar.

The Wolf's Den hadn't changed a bit since the last time I was here, the entire place had a rustic vibe to it. Once we got inside, Mia grabbed the back of this guy's neck and impatiently kissed him. Serious PDA alert, I thought to myself. After a few moments of watching them exchange spit, Mia pulled back and turned to me. "Kelsey, this is my boyfriend, Jake. Jake, this is THE Kelsey I've been telling you about!" He pulled me into a tight hug, "welcome home", he whispered in my ear.

Mia and I gutted straight towards the bar while Jake took off to get ready for his set, "two tequilas", she shouted to the buff bartender. He slid over the tequila shots with a lemon rimmed on each glass and smiled at Mia, "I got it, it's on me".

I gave Mia a knowing smirk but didn't dare to say anything as she passed me my shot. She lifted up the tequila shot and cheered, "just like old times" and clinked her glass with mine. I enjoyed the burning sensation of the tequila running down my throat for a moment before I stuffed the lemon into my mouth.

A group of people we went to high school with starting gathering around us, each one insinuating on buying another round. Ugh, there's no way I'm going to make my meeting with Alpha Max tomorrow morning sober. While it was nice to see so many familiar faces, Mia could tell that I was being overcrowded. I lippped "thank you" to her when she asked me to come with her to the washroom.

We strolled into the ladies' room quickly and touched up our makeup, neither of us actually needing to use the washroom. "I swear that bartender definitely has the hots for you", I teased as we walked out of the washroom, both of us breaking out into a laughing fit.

"ARIZONA!" came shooting from my right side and I turned to see Asher enthusiastically standing up from his chair at the table that was too close for comfort. I forgot to breathe when my eyes shot past him and locked with Blake's. Oh shit, this is how this is going down. This is not how I expected this play out. Blake looked like a deer in headlights and I was pretty sure I had an identical look pasted to my face.

My wolf was howling inside, desperate to rise to the surface and claim her mate. In that brief moment, I noticed the silver swirls in Blake's mesmerizing blue eyes. His wolf was pushing forward too. What was going on? He rejected me almost five years ago, I shouldn't still feel this way about him.

Asher looped his large arms around my waist and pulled me close to his body so I could hear him over the loud music, "Give me five minutes to get away from work, I gotta buy you a drink".

Just then the other man that was sitting with them, pushed his beer up to his lips and said "come on Asher, you're going to keep these beauties to yourself?" His eyes bolted up and down my body. I had felt violated like he had just eye fucked me right there.

My wolf immediately picked on his strong Alpha aura, he demanded dominance on a level that almost made me shudder. Admittedly, he was strikingly handsome. He was tanned and jacked, he had dark purple eyes that made him look dangerous and a faded buzz cut. I could feel Asher's hesitation rolling off of him when he struggled to introduce us, "Well, this is my best friend Kelsey from Arizona and her friend Mia from Crimson Pack. Kelsey, Mia: this is Alpha Theo of the Black Moon Pack and his beta, Luke. You already know Alpha Blake obviously, so I'll skip the introduction there".

My heart was pounding outside of my chest being so close to Blake, all those memories that I'd fought so hard to forget came pouring down. I had to ignore the urge I had to jump over the high top table that they were sitting at and throw my body against his. That same chiselled and rock-hard body that lit something explosive deep inside of me.



Night On The Town

Mia and I quickly retreated to my parents' house to get ready for what was supposed to be a laidback night out. Mom had dragged Dad to some opera in the city she had been talking about for months which left us home alone to get ready. I decided to wear my new black long sleeve bodysuit which conveniently plunged down so low that I opted to go braless, with a short black leather skirt. Mia had curled my hair into these beautiful soft beachy waves that I could never seem to get right when I tried to do it myself. I finished it all off with a sharp cat eye to showcase my eyes and my favorite shade of nude lipstick. I stopped in front of the body-length mirror in my bedroom to check out the final results. Perfect, I muttered to myself.

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He quickly diverted his uncomfortable gaze onto the beer bottle label he had been playing with, avoiding making further eye contact with me at all costs as if he couldn't care less that I was standing right there.

My wolf was howling ecstatically inside, immediately recognizing Alpha Blake's seductive scent of sweet butterscotch interlaced with a musky sandalwood, which she missed so much. It had been pretty much the reason why I avoided going to bakeries in Arizona, one whiff of butterscotch in the air and it felt like my heart was breaking all over again at reminder that my destined mate, the man I was fully in love with, had rejected me all those years ago.

In that brief moment, I could see silver swirls dancing in Alpha Blake's mesmerizing blue eyes. His wolf was pushing forward too. What was going on? Why was the bond still so strong between us?

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Blake fled his beer to his lips as if he was looking for some liquid courage and before he set it back down on the high top table, he calmly nodded at me and said, "Kelsey. It's been a long time". I couldn't control the anger that was suddenly building up inside of me as his casual acknowledgement and nodded back, "not long enough" and turned my attention to Alpha Tate.

