

Mistake - 35

Ryder

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"What time is it?" I demanded.

"You know full well what time it is," Andy said flatly. "You're supposed to be making me feel better, not the other way around. If you haven't noticed, I'm kind of paralyzed!" He smacked the wheels of the wheelchair as if I might miss the fact he was sitting in it.

I gave him an apologetic grimace. "Sorry man, it's just Brook," I said, running my hands through my hair.

"We get it, but asking us every five minutes what time it is or how long it's been isn't going to help anything," Kara told me. "Now how about we figure out what we want to do when she gets back."

"Not a lot I can do," Andy complained, crossing his arms over his chest. "I'm a freaking disabled! Who's ever heard of a disabled werewolf?"

"Oh, not this again," Kara groaned. "You act as if it'll be forever. It's only like this until you heal."

"Right, it'll heal, but I'll be Disabled Andy, forever."

"Oh, grow a pair. There are many people who are disabled and don't whine like a baby as you're doing. Here's the kicker, they won't even heal from it."

"Right, says the one who can walk," Andy replied.

With a chuckle, I listened to them argue. "I like Disabled Andy, or maybe

I'll just call you Disandy for short?" Hopefully that would relieve some of the tension or put it on me. I'd hate for Andy to say something to her and later regret it.

"You call me Disandy and I will kill you," Andy threatened, but the edges of his mouth turned upward. "If you want to see a baby, look at Dean. Misses W is forcing him to act as if you're out of it and now he's the future alpha."

I grinned at the thought. I'm sure Dean was on the verge of cracking by now. "Thanks, man, and thanks for trying to keep her safe."

He shrugged. "She's our friend. What else was I going to do? It's not like you wouldn't have done the same for Kara."

Andy was right. I still wanted to thank him and started to when we heard a lot of shouting from outside the room. "What's going on?"

"Let me check it out. You," Kara said, pointing to me. "Have gone crazy, remember." I scowled but stayed put. Kara opened the door, peeking out and letting the chaotic sounds come in.

"Hurry, get her on the bed! Tyler I.V. now," Mom said, her voice tight with urgency.

I stiffened. Mom should've been waiting for Diego to return with Brook. Why was she here?

"It looks like someone is hurt," Kara said, still sticking her head out.

Andy and I raced towards the door, but just as I got close, a sharp pain shot through my foot. "Ow, what the hell, man?" I complained, glaring at Andy. He'd run over me with his wheelchair.

"Disableds get right of way, punk," he said, pushing in front of me and

crashing into Kara.

"Ow," she yelled. "Get off of me or, at least, let me get out of the way before you run me over!"

I mumbled an apology and backed up when I saw Dad. What was he doing here? As much as I was happy he's okay, he should've been a hostage by now. My heart stuttered to a stop when I saw there was blood all over him. "I didn't know what else to do, Emily! It was the only thing I could think of." Grief chiseled hard lines into his face. He ran his hands through his hair, unaware they too had blood all over them.

Mom stopped what she was doing and took my dad's face in her hands. "I understand, Brent, but if you don't let me work, it won't matter. The bite alone won't be enough to keep her alive."

Her? Oh God, it couldn't be. I looked at the stretcher surrounded by nurses and doctors. No! This was not happening. I pushed the others out of the way, or they moved. I wasn't sure which.

"Ryder, wait," Mom yelled, her hands up to stop me, but someone grabbed me before I reached her.

"Let me go," I growled, trying to push ahead.

"Stay back," Diego said against my ear.

My strength faltered as I saw Brook. The world stopped. I couldn't move, blink, hell, or even breathe as I stared at the cut, bruised, and swollen body. If I didn't already know it was Brook, I wouldn't have recognized her. What did they do to her?

"Come, get her into the O.R. now," Mom barked at the nurses and doctors, who all stared at me with sympathy and pity.

I struggled against Diego as they pushed the stretcher down the hall and away from me. "Stop Ryder! You can't help her. Emily and the medical staff are her only chance. Let them work," he told me.

I slumped to the ground, despair making my head spin. This wasn't happening. How did this happen? Rage filled me, and I stood quickly. "What happened? I thought Uncle Ryan wasn't going to kill her." I glared at Dad. "You said he would keep her alive. You said it!"

Dad's expression of grief intensified. "It wasn't Ryan, or at least he didn't cause the fall."

"Mike?" If I got my hands on that son of a...

"No, it was Brook."

My eyes widened. "What?"

"She knew of your uncle's plan and took it upon herself to stop him. When I realized what she was going to do... I tried to tell her, but it all happened so fast. One minute she was talking to me and the next she was shoving Ryan off the cliff until they both fell," he finished, his voice cracking.

"Oh wow," Kara breathed, her eyes watering over as she stared at my dad.

"Wait," Andy said, coming to a stop next to me. "How is she alive? She would have died on impact."

Dad glanced over at me, then looked back at Andy. "The way they fell, Ryan had softened the blow. But she was still dying, bleeding from everywhere, it seemed. I did the only thing I could think of. I bit her. Healing is the first to benefit from the lycanthrope genes. I figured if I bit her..."



"Well, it looked like it worked. She survived long enough to get here," Kara said, looking impressed.

I just stood there, not sure what to think. So many emotions and thoughts streamed through my head that I didn't have time to process one when another took its place.

"You good?" Diego asked me.

I gave him a nod, although I wasn't sure that was true. Brook sacrificed herself to save my dad, the pack, me? I wasn't sure if I should be proud or angry. Why didn't she wait for us to get her out? Guilt tainted my anger, and I sat down, holding my head in my hands.

"Alpha," Diego said to Dad. "Shall I treat with Black Mountain's new alpha. Hopefully, he's not as bad as his father, yes? You need to be here with your family now."

Dad gave the Hispanic wolf a brief smile and a nod. "Thank you, Diego. Yes, go speak with Helena and Michael and see if we can't end this stupid war."

The beta left, and we fell in silence, waiting for news. After a moment, Kara jumped to her feet. "Her mom," she said. "We need to tell Brook's mom." She didn't wait for any of us to volunteer before racing out of the waiting room.

It wasn't long before Harry and Brook's mom joined us, Harry nearly carrying her. I stayed silent. What could I say? What words could express just how horrible this situation is. No way would I be able to say everything would be okay. Everything wasn't okay and wouldn't ever be if Brook didn't recover from this.

Two hours passed when Diego returned, looking grim. "Any news?"

Dad shook his head. "What about you?"

"There is good news and bad news. The good news is that the war is over."

"And the bad news?" Dad asked, looking up at him.

"Helena... she - she took her life when she learned of Ryan's death."

Grief and anger mixed, fighting for dominance in Dad's expression. Though he never said it, I knew he always felt betrayed by Aunt Helena when she refused to leave my uncle, even when he hurt her children and made her miscarry three times. Nothing would make her leave him.

"It was to be expected." Dad's tone was crisp. "Anything else?"

"Ryan's beta, Zackery Algiers, has taken the alphaship and taken Michael as a prisoner. No one wanted him as alpha. They were going to execute him but..." the beta looked hesitant, then sighed. "I convinced him to give Mike to us as compensation... I'm sorry, Alpha. I know I should've discussed this with you, but he's not even eighteen..."

"No. You did the right thing," Dad said.

Was he serious? "What? He's as bad as Uncle Ryan. Mike abused Brook-"

"He's done what his father made him do," Dad said in a sharp tone. "Take him to the rogue cells. Keep him there until we're more prepared to discuss his future."

Really? Mike had abused Brook for years, and they were just going to act like that meant nothing. I started to object to the idea when I noticed Mom out of the corner of my eye. I shot up from my seat. "Mom! Brook is she... please, tell me she's okay."



Silence fell as all eyes turned on her. She looked exhausted. Her skin was pale with dark bags under her eyes, and most of her hair fell out of the bun it had been in earlier. "For now, she appears to be okay,"

I let out a breath, relieved, then paused. "Wait, why for now?"

"Your father's bite has turned Brook, and she's healing, but slowly. The full moon is in two weeks, and the first shift is always very touchy for the bitten. I don't know if Brook can heal enough from her injuries in two weeks to give her a chance at surviving her first shift."

I covered my face with my hands. She survived the fall to only die during her first shift. Just when I thought the nightmare couldn't get worse. Someone touched my shoulder with a light touch. I looked up to see Mom kneeling in front of me.

"My team is working on a solution, Ryder. There may be ways to soften the shift or speed up her healing. We've already got several theories working. Don't lose hope."