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Imagine being hit by a semi-truck then having said truck back over your broken body, only to run over it again. That's me right now. My whole body ached and my mouth dry. I thought when you died, all that stuff didn't happen anymore. Unless I wasn't dead, but that was impossible. I fell off a freaking cliff. I opened my eyes slowly, looking at the surrounding room.

No angels or heavenly trumpets and it was too cold and stank too much of disinfectant to be hell. So alive - right now, I might have preferred dying. It hurt less. The door opened, and Emily walked in, smiling as if she'd just won a million dollars. "Hello, Brook. It's good to see you awake. How are you feeling?"

"Confused. I am pretty sure I should be dead right now."

Emily laughed, pulling one of those stools on wheels all doctors have. "It was touch and go there for a while." 

A while? How long was I out? I started to ask her when she spoke again.

"What do you remember after the fall?"

"I remember dying. There was a burning sensation, and I blacked out, I guess," I replied.

"Burning?"

Now, even more confused, I said "Yeah, like fire ants under my skin, but it didn't last long." 

"Interesting," she said, but before she could say more, Ryder walked into the room. He stopped halfway, staring at me. It was kind of creepy.

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"Hey," I said, self-conscious as he kept staring at me. I glanced down at my lap, noticing my arm no longer had the cast. It looked good as new.

Suddenly, Ryder was next to me, my hand in his. "You're awake! How are you? Did you know yet? Mom, did you tell her?"

I blinked at him, confused. His mom laughed, giving me an apologetic grimace. "No, I didn't tell her. I've been busy with my checkup."

I swallowed as I looked between the two. "Tell me what?"

"It doesn't matter right now. For now, I want to examine you. Besides the confusion, how are you?"

I didn't like the vibe I was getting from her, but I answered her question. "Like I've been hit, been run over a few dozen times. My body aches everywhere, and I'm really thirsty."

Ryder leaped off the bed, running, and shouted he'll get me some water. I blinked again. He was acting odd. "Was I that bad or is he just being weirder than usual?"

His mom grinned at me with a laugh as she checked me over. "You were that bad. I wasn't too sure if I could keep you with us, despite all the measures we took. What aches are these? Is it like general soreness or to a specific area? Also, how is the ache burning, stabbing, stinging, throbbing?"

"It's a general ache, and more throbbing than anything."

Ryder's mom continued to question me for a while and helped me sit up when Ryder returned with my water. It was room temperature, but to me, it was pure heaven. "So what happened to me?" I asked when I finished.

"You were right, Brook. When you fell, you were dying and would've been dead in a matter of minutes. Brent did the only thing he could to save your life. He bit you," she explained.

"He bit me," I repeated, and she nodded. Did that mean what I think it meant?

"Yes, starting the change in you from human to werewolf."

My mouth dropped open with a gasp, and my eyes shot wide. Ryder took my hand, lacing his fingers with mine, and gave it a soft squeeze. As much as I wanted to return some gesture, I couldn't. I was too in shock. His mom gave me a small smile and explained things about the ability to heal. Also, some other things I didn't understand. "So let me get this straight," I said, rubbing my forehead. "I've been in a coma for half a month, and when the moon is full I'm going to turn into a wolf?"

"Actually, you've already shifted once," Ryder said, grinning.

"What? That's impossible. I would remember if I turned into a wolf," I said, coming close to hysterics.

"The full moon passed two nights ago Brook and while in a coma you went through your first shift. Complete wolf form," his mom said, her tone cautious now.

Whoa, this was... I didn't even know what to think.

"You must be overwhelmed right now. I get it," Ryder's mom said. Overwhelmed didn't even cover it. "But you need to rest. You're still healing from the fall and the shift. Take it easy, no more heroics. Got it."

I grinned despite everything. "I don't plan to," I said. Next time Ryder's pack can go save itself. 1

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"Good girl. Now I'm going to make my rounds. The others will want to see her too. I'll also get someone to bring you something to eat."

When she left, Ryder hugged me. "I'm so glad you're okay, Brook. I thought I lost you. Why did you even do that?" His voice took on so many emotions it was a little difficult for me to keep up.

That's when it, whatever it was, hit me. This scent coming off of Ryder. It wasn't bad, just the opposite. Everywhere he touched made my skin tingle, and it rippled through me like some electric wave. "Mike told me how his dad was going to use me to break you, then break the rest of your family and my family. I couldn't let him do it, and it was the only option open," I replied, breathless.

"And you didn't stop to think we had a plan for it?"

"How was I supposed to know?" I said, a little angry. These feelings were weird. I was warm and tingly, like a blanket straight out of the dryer wrapped around me. "Ryder, can I ask you something and you promise not to laugh at me?"

"Sure."

"Why do you... smell so good, and why is it when you touch me? It feels weird?" I narrowed my eyes at him when he grinned. "No laughing, remember."

Still grinning, he held up a hand in mock surrender. "I'm not laughing and I won't. It's nice the bond isn't so one-sided now."

Could I get any more confused? One would assume I'd somehow understood them now, but nope, still clueless. "What is one-sided?" He grinned some more, and I let out a little growl, surprising the hell out of

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myself. I slapped my hand over my mouth, and now he laughed. "You're laughing," I said behind my hand.

"Yeah, at the question. That has to be the most adorable growl ever," Ryder said, pinching my cheek, granny style.

"Ryder," I whined. "I nearly died, and all you're going to do is make fun of me now?" I said, giving him my best sad face and man did it work like a charm.

A guilty expression spread over his face as he looked at me in horror. "I'm sorry I didn't mean—"

"Exactly! So start answering my questions," I demanded, tossing away my sad face and crossing my arms over my chest.

He grinned and hugged me to him, sending all those weird sensations into overdrive. "What you're feeling is the mate bond. It's how we can recognize each other. Though I've never heard it described as weird."

"You're a werewolf. Everything about you is weird."

"Yeah, well, you're weird too now," Ryder replied.

"Which is even weirder. I can't believe it, I'm not like a human anymore." It was as if I'd suddenly lost something precious.

Ryder cupped my face in his hands and forced me to look into his eyes. "Hey, you're still human. You're just a little more than human now."

I like the way he said it, it made everything seem less estranged. I wanted to tell him to thank you, but my mouth didn't want to work as I stared into his eyes. It was like they were pulling me in and I had no choice but to fall into them. As our lips touched, it was as if I'd grabbed onto a live

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wire, but not painfully. It was like a sort of energy ran through me, charging all my cells and bringing them fully alive.

My eyes slid closed as the sensation wrapped around me like a warm blanket on a cold day. We deepened the kiss, and I lost all the sensation that wasn't him, me, and our kiss. Never in my life had I experienced anything like it in my whole life. Good thing I didn't die or I would've missed.

"Oh God, no! My eyes, my poor virgin eyes," Dean practically screamed. 

Someone snorted. "Glad to hear you're finally admitting you're a virgin," they said, and it sounded a lot like—

I pulled away from Ryder, breaking our kiss, and Ryder groaned in a complaint. "Andy! You're alive! But how? I saw him kill you?"

Andy scoffed, waving at me. "Please, him? Kill me? I'd be offended if I didn't know you better." He gave Ryder an apologetic grimace. "Sorry for the cock block."

Ryder grumbled a sour reply and helped me sit up when he noticed me struggling. All my muscles had the shaky feeling one gets after a hard workout.

"So why are you in a wheelchair?" I asked, my curiosity ignoring any kind of filter.

"Well, when you get your neck broken isn't good on the spinal nerves," Dean said with a smirk. "He's our little cripple now," he added, then yelped as Andy ran over his foot with one of his wheels. "Hey, what was that for?"

"Really, Dean, really," I said, shaking my head at him. "So what is going

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on now?" I took Ryder's hand in mine. God help me, but I enjoyed touching him or him touching me... yeah, so not creepy at all.

"The war is over," Kara replied, pleased.

"Alpha Ryan didn't survive the fall like you did, little beastie," Dean said with a snicker.

I gave him an unamused glare, then asked, "So this means Mike is the alpha now, right?"

"He's our prisoner," Ryder said, putting his free arm around my shoulders. "One of my uncle's men took over and agreed to give Mike to us as a prisoner."

"Wow," I breathed, overwhelmed again.

"You take one little nap, and the world moves on without you," Dean said with a snort. He then climbed on the bed and hugged me, well, Ryder and me, since he was so close. "Welcome back, Brookie," he said in an imitation of a fangirl voice, which made my ears ring.

"Hey get off. She's mine," Ryder growled at him, pushing him off the bed, making Dean make a high pitch squeal and glare at Ryder from the floor with a ridiculous pout.

"Don't be a dick," Dean replied, standing and rubbing his backside.

"Watch it, or I'll ask Mom to teach you how to be alpha again," Ryder threatened.

Dean's eyes widened. "N-no, no, no, no. No thank you." He waved his hands above his head as in surrender.

