

Chapter 156 Knox

I had headed to the Beta office with the warriors. I had intended to let Jake deal with all this but I wanted to let him know what my Dad had said. It looked like Jake, Manny and Lola had already been there along with Gabe and Manny's Dads in preparation for the meeting. I am sure they just want to get down to Crimson Night Pack and get this show on the road, deal with this situation so Manny and Lola can be together with no worries hanging over them. Because I imagine it must be lingering over their minds right now how this Alpha was going to accept that they had marked and mated one another without his permission. Not only that, but they were also massively worried about Gabe and his well being, as they had seen how he was struggling with the situation he had found himself in.

"Right, let's get this started" I say as I stand at the front of the room, which is now feeling very full with a couple of warrior teams, as well as the others that were already in here, and me and my Dad, as well, who had come in with the warriors. I see everyone look to me and Jake who is now standing by my side. I will let him take over shortly, seeing as he will be leading this mission when they travel down to the Crimson Night Pack.

"As you know, we have spoken to Lola about the situation at Crimson Night. We are uncertain as to how they are actually officlly running the pack and their beliefs, rights, and feel it is time something was done. Well, as Manuel is mates with Lola from the pack, he's going to follow the usual protocol and go down to pack with her to meet her family, and her Alpha. Obviously, we are aware this won't be accepted by the Alpha as he does not accept outside mates. But he doesn't know that we know this." I began to explain.

I see everyone taking in my words and nodding in agreement. The warriors have been previously informed of the situation and how things are in the pack, so they can prepare, plan and know what to expect when they arrive.

"You need to be prepared for trouble as the Alpha, Alpha Jace Hernandez, I believe, is likely to be extremely unhappy at the fact Lola has gone against pack rules to allow Manuel to mark her without going to her Alpha for his permission first. So be prepared for battle. Hopefully, it won't happen, but if you are prepared for the worst, then it can only be better, right?" I smile, knowing I have the highest of faith in my warriors.

"Me and my Dad, former Alpha Jacob, have sat and discussed all this, and the way in which the pack has been run. Alpha Jacob believes he had heard of their pack in the past at warrior training sessions, but they were only there on one year and never there again. From what Lola has told us, they do their best to keep off the radar and I imagine that is why they did not return to training camps. It is so they can stay off the radar of the werewolf council as well. Well, we do not know if the werewolf council have had reports of them or not, but at present my Mum, the former Luna

Ava, is in the process of discussing everything we know and our concerns with a representative at the werewolf council and urgently requesting this be looked into.” I continue my explanation.

I saw everyone nodding. Lola looks a little concerned, though I guess I can understand this. This is her old pack, her friends and family are still there. She doesn't know what a werewolf council investigation may mean to them. They could potentially be shut down, and then the families be dispersed across the country. That would be a massive disruption for them all, and it would mean a lot of separation and hard times ahead for those in the pack.

“We should know later today what they plan to do. But you know how convincing Luna Ava can be, she was adamant she needed to be the one to speak to them at the council, and I agreed. She has contacts there, and is highly respected there, so I believe they will listen to what she has to say. But at the end of the day, the information on its own should stand up to give them enough reason to arrange an investigation. The women and the girls in the pack there deserve freedom, deserve the right to work, to have further education, deserve a life. We need to fight this for them.

For Lola, for Esme. For Gabe and Manuel too.” I say.

“Thank you” Lola says, “Things are not easy there, I won't lie, it scares me the thought of the werewolf council investigating and what that means for the people in the pack, but at the same time, I don't think that can be worse than what they have to endure right now”

I nodded at her. “Right Jake, you will be the one leading this mission. So I will hand it to you. My Dad has said he is available to come too, as a background advisor if needed” I tell him.

Jake smiles in my Dad's direction “Thanks Uncle J” he says to him. “Right, obviously we don't want to go in with an army, or it looks like we are heading in with the plans to attack.” Jake starts. He sounds like he has thought this through well.

“So what I think is best, is that Manuel and Lola go to the pack as if they are visiting. I go with them as the pack representative. We will say Alpha is at home due to his son being ill, or due to pack commitments. Perhaps Mateo and Javier can come with us, as well, because it wouldn't be out of the realms of normality that a Dad may travel down with his son, would it? Then, the warriors, we can have you in place ready to come to our defence if anything were to occur.” Jake speaks confidently.

Manuel is nodding. He would know what the warriors could do, as he was one of our lead warriors and one of our best, along with Gabe. Saying that, their Dads were the same, having only retired a few years ago, so if anything did happen they would no doubt still be capable fighters and capable of holding their own.

“Hopefully the warriors will not need to fight, but the fact they will be on call is the key to our safety and our success” Jake says.

“Definitely. Just have a trigger word and we will launch onto the pack.” Declan, one of the warriors speaks up. “They won't be expecting us” “Do you want me there Jake?” My Dad asks him.

“I am happy either way, Uncle J” Jake smiles at my Dad. “If you are desperate to be involved, then sure why not.” he winks at him.

He can obviously tell my Dad misses the action of being Alpha, so him suggesting being involved in this may be his way of being involved again.

“Thanks son” Dad winks right back at him.

“There is a chance the werewolf council could be there dealing with them by the time we reach them anyway,” I point out, “And if that’s the case, then no shit will go down anyway.”

“That is a valid point, son. They will be too busy trying to keep the pack together and keep himself as an Alpha to be worried about one she-wolf staying. But we still need to fight for Esme.

And for the whole pack, it bothers me, it really does” my Dad says to me.

And the thing is, I know exactly what he means.

“Well, tickets for flights are being booked by Lilah as we speak. I wanted you all getting there as soon as possible, so I didn’t think driving down there was going to be the best way possible as can take near a day driving. She will arrange hotels and car hire too, for the other end. Everything will be good.” I explain.

Manuel looks to me with a smile. Thanks bro he links you are going to a lot of effort for me.

Shut up. You deserve it, and so do they at their pack. It isn’t right. So don’t think nothing of it. I link back.

“Lola, anything you need and you let us know ok? And if you hear anything from within the pack or from Esme can you let me know as soon as possible?” I say.

She nods with a small smile. I think she may be nervous. Understandably so. Tomorrow, she has to face up to the dictator of an Alpha she says she is terrified of, and tell him she has broken his pack rules and allowed her fated mate to mark her and she plans to leave with him whether her Alpha likes it or not. And she knows that it is going to go down like a lead balloon.

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Manuel takes my hand as we walk from the meeting. Everything seems like it is planned out. I assume Beta Jake and Alpha Knox have done all the behind the scenes planning, plus with the additional help of Knox’s Dad.

It appears he had been aware of our pack from the past, which surprises me as our Alpha, the current one and the ones from the past always made sure our pack did not interact with other packs. Maybe that was an oversight on their part on that one occasion, as from the information they mentioned, it seemed they did not return to the inter-pack warrior training sessions in the following years.

And that would make sense as there is too much risk involved and too many possibilities of awareness of issues within the pack being brought to light. Alpha would have seen that as too risky and put an end to that. Even if the additional warrior training could have benefited the

warriors and the pack, it would have been counterproductive if it brought awareness of how poorly the pack was run.

“You ok, Lola?” Manuel asks as we walk down the corridor of the packhouse.

“Hmmm, getting nervous thinking about it all” I admit. I see my mate watching me, he is smiling gently at me. He is so handsome, and I am one lucky she-wolf to call him mine. Assuming my pack allow me to stay with him, as nobody seems to be considering that possibility yet, that they may force me to stay at my old pack. Though I am too scared to mention that to them.

“We know it is unlikely to be easy, Carino, but it is something that we need to do for us to be together, then we will do it. I would do anything to be with you. You are the one Selene picked from all the others to be mine. I am not going to give you up without a fight” he says confidently.

See, he says the sweetest things, and seems to know the right things to say, yet he just doesn't know what my pack is like. Doesn't know what our Alpha is like. What if they try to hurt him?

I feel tears prickling my eyes at that thought. I would not put that past my Alpha, hurting my fated mate, to hurt me. Especially knowing I had marked him without his permission.

“Promise me you will be careful when you are there, Manuel. My Alpha could try to hurt you to get to me, as a punishment for going against the rules” I tell him.

Manuel looks a little taken back by my words, but he nods “I am going to be fine Carino. I am a decent warrior. Plus, I will have Jake with me, and my Dad, my Uncle, not to mention two warrior teams. We may get there and the job may already be half done for us if we are lucky if the werewolf council is already, mid investigation.”

I know what he means, but realistically, it is unlikely if they were reporting them today, they were not going to have something in place by tomorrow.

“Shall we call your Mami and Papi when we get back, let them know we will be arriving tomorrow?” Manuel looks to me.

“I will call them now” I say as we are walking through the paths of the pack lands.

I reach for my phone and dial my Mami's number once more.

“Hello Lola” she answered almost immediately.

“Hi Mami. I Just wanted to call to let you know we are travelling to pack tomorrow” I say.

“Wow, that soon?” she asks.

“Is everything in place?” I hear my Dad ask, so I can only assume I am on loud speaker.

“Hey Papi. Yeah, everything is in place. Alpha Knox has arranged flights for us so we don't have to spend so long driving down.” I explain.

“Good good sweetheart. Get here, get done what needs doing, and then leave again, get back to your new home and get settled in with your mate.

Where you will be safe and can be happy. Away from the mess here.” My Dad says.

I am sure I can sense nerves in his voice, so I have a feeling he is expecting trouble from the Alpha tomorrow.

“Have you spoken to Alpha first, Papi?” I ask, curious if they may have pre-warned him.

“No, of course not. He may be better if he has no chance to prepare. You guys can be prepared, that is better” My Dad says, and I can see Manuel nodding, so he clearly agrees with what my Dad is saying.

I just wish I could go to sleep for a week and wake up when this was all dealt with. I am truly dreading it.

“Is Esme coming home with you Lola?” My Mum asks. Why would she think that?

“Not that I know of Mami, she is staying at university, nothing is changing for her” I tell them.

“So she is definitely not wanting to be with her mate then?” Mami asks.

Ah so they have likely spoken to my Aunt and Uncle then, as they appear to be implying they know Esme too had met her mate.

“No, she walked out on him. Said she had to stay true to the agreement she had made with Alpha and the pack surrounding her university degree, which means she will complete the degree and come back to pack to be a Dr. so she cannot be with her mate.” I explain.

I hear quite an audible growl from my Dad. “That is not fair. Have you tried to convince her to rethink Lolly?” he asks.

“Of course I did, Papi, but she says she won’t put her degree, nor her family at risk. You know they can’t afford to pay the degree cost, plus you know what Alpha is like if she chose to be with her fated mate, and he couldn’t punish Esme, he would punish her family instead. He likely has mates lined up for her and for me. So I am likely going to be in trouble when he finds out about me” I say with a sigh.

I see Manuel look at me, a frown on his face. I can see the hand that isn’t holding mine has the fist clenched, which tells me he is annoyed at what he has just heard. He really is not going to like the way things are in pack...

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Hearing Lola say her Alpha likely had a mate lined up for her makes my blood boil. I do my best to hold in my temper. Most people would say I am chilled out and sweet, and yeah I guess I am, though, obviously, as a warrior I have a switch I can flick to turn myself into a fighting machine if needed. That is how we have been trained. Gabe is the same.

But the thought of my mate being with another man makes me angry, like nothing else I have ever felt before. And the thought that an Alpha believes he has the right to have arranged this infuriates me. It is not normal, and it is not right. This prick needs punishing, and the sooner the better in my mind.

Plus, the sooner the better I get my mate away from that place, in my opinion. I think we need to find a way to get Esme away from there too, because I hate the thought of my cousin’s fated mate being subjected to that if the werewolf council are not able to close the pack down.

“Stubborn as always then” I hear Lola’s Dad say.

I don't know if you could call trying to protect her family stubborn. As much as I dislike how she has treated Gabe, when you sit and consider why Esme is doing what she is doing, you can't help but realise she does have reasons for her decision. And in her mind they probably seem viable reasons too. Reasonable ones, meaning to her she feels she has no choice in her decision but to sacrifice her (and Gabe's) happiness.

"Papi don't, she is scared. She doesn't want to lose out on all the hard work she has put into her degree for it to be taken away. And she doesn't want Auntie Sofia and Uncle Antonio being made to suffer because of her. Alpha has already made their life hell because they battled him to let her go to university, which you know is stupid when it will help the pack" Lola argues with her Dad.

I dread to think about what has gone on there. We walk into our home, and I head upstairs to begin packing for our trip, leaving Lola chatting on the phone to her parents.

I just want to get this over and done with so I can start building the life with my mate I have dreamed of.

The life I have seen Knox and Lilah and Indie and Dan have recently, or my cousins having with their mates, or my parents. Fated mates being happy, having children, building a happy future, that is all I want. Yet a small part of me is terrified that this fucking Alpha at Crimson Night Pack could still snatch it all away and leave me with nothing. Leave me on my own with a broken heart. While my fated mate the moon goddess had chosen for me was made to stay at her pack, and be forced to be mates with some random man she didn't even want.

A deep growl pushed itself from deep inside my chest. Rey was not happy with my chain of thoughts. I had a feeling he would kill everyone in the pack before he left without his mate, before he let any man take his mate. This was not going to happen.

We are well prepared. Jake is amazing at planning and preparation. I know this. Knox is too. They have worked together. Plus, they have had the input of Alpha Jacob, so they are unlikely to fail.

Plus, our warrior teams are some of the best in the country. I know they will be well prepared.

If I was just one of the warriors going to fight, I would be fine. I would be confident, not a worry,

I am a confident warrior, always well prepared, trained and practiced, ready to go into battle when needed without a second thought and with no fear or doubt. That is how we are trained. We are skilled, adept and capable fighters and always have been. Our warriors are known across the country and often get requested to train other warrior teams because of our skills and abilities.

So I can only assume the feelings I am experiencing right now, is just because I am scared, because this involves my mate. Because it isn't me going in simply as a warrior. Because that is a position and a role I am more than comfortable and capable in, but no, this is me going in with my mate. And my position with my mate is potentially at risk.

As much as everyone says they have my back, there is a possibility she may not come back with

me. I am scared she will decide to back down to her former Alpha to protect her family, like Esme has done for hers. She has already admitted she is terrified of her former Alpha. So I know there is always the chance of her surrendering to him and doing as he tells her if he threatens her family or their safety.

And if she chooses not to come back with me, then that is the one situation I would have no control over. I cannot force her to come home with me if she does not want to.

I felt tears in my eyes at the thought. I could be close to losing my mate..... like my cousin had lost his..... fate was so fucked. up..... I punch the bed in a combination of anger and upset.....

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Chapter 159 Gabriel

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I had been out for yet another run with Aspen in the early hours. I don't know if they were helping or not. I felt like I was hollow inside. My brain didn't seem to want to function the way it was meant to.....

Warrior training earlier today was pointless. I had gone like I was expected, though Knox did tell me I didn't have to. But I am not going to have people feeling sorry for me, and being all sympathetic. Life needs to carry on. Esme has made her decision, I can't change that.

Training, however, the guys were being overly kind, which bugs the hell out of me. Though the fact my mind will just not focus when I need it to does not help. I go from one extreme to the other. I got paired up with Dom, one of our other Warriors. I normally train with Manuel, but I am guessing he is taking a break, to spend time with Lola. Well, usually I am pretty tough to beat, and don't think Dom has ever beaten me, yet on a couple of training exercises we were practicing he beat me easily, because my mind is just not on task.

Then when I am trying real hard to focus and fight hard, I end up fighting too hard and snapping his wrist by using too much force in a hold. So then I felt fucking terrible.

Dom, being the good guy he is, and a good friend of mine, doesn't seem to be holding a grudge, despite needing to go to the pack hospital. But I feel like a total dick. As warriors, it isn't unusual we get the occasional knock or worse injury when training, but I feel bad that my anger caused his injury.

I needed to go and cool down, so I went out for a drive. My mind wandering to one place and one place only..... Esme. And while driving, I ended up parked outside her university. I hadn't had a chance to speak to Lola yet, to ask for Esme's number nor her address to arrange coming to see her. So I have no clue where she may be.

But somehow I ended up here when I was aimlessly driving. I knew where the university was as it is a few blocks from our offices. I could call Manny and ask him to get Esme's number from Lola, or her address I guess.

Or I could just go to the reception here and ask for the medical training unit and sit outside there

until she comes out. Some fresh air may do me good. And that way nobody needs to know I am here. And they couldn't try to convince me I was doing the wrong thing either....

Yeah, I will do that. I find myself thinking.

I find somewhere to leave my pick-up truck and walk to the University Campus reception. The sun is glaring down, so I should be fine if I do have to sit outside for the afternoon.

Wow, it is posh in here. I am surprised Esme chose to come to a university within the human world, and not within a werewolf pack, as there are many packs that have their own universities, which I am sure would have been an option. Unless she wanted to pick one as physically far away from her pack as possible. Going off what we know about her pack, who could blame her for that.

Can't say I know much about this Uni, not like I was ever a candidate for higher education. I am as thick as two short planks, most of my friends would say haha. My skills were definitely only on the battle field, hence being a warrior. Plus, obviously, the business we were trying to set up, though I was lucky Manny was pretty clever in the business side of it, plus we had Knox's backing too and he was a smart guy, and Lilah too bless her, so I could just do the physical side of developing the properties and helping out where needed.

"Excuse me sir, can I help you?" a middle-aged woman asked me from behind the desk I was approaching. She doesn't look massively impressed I have dared to enter her university complex.

I am not in the mood for an interrogation if she is going to be difficult.

"Hi, I was just wanting to find out where the medical training building is please?" I say, trying my hardest to sound polite.

"For medical doctorates and PHDs you mean?" she asks.

Eh? Not a clue.....sounds plausible though.....

"Yes, my sister is training to be a Dr and I am meant to be meeting her, but forgot to find out her building" I lie with a smile. "And I don't want to disturb her lesson by calling her"

"Ah lovely. It is in the east block of the University Campus, near to the library. A lovely fountain and bench area outside for you to sit and wait for her." She smiles at me. Seemingly having bought my lie.

"That is great thanks. Where is that from here?" I ask because I have no clue where the East block is.

She chuckles at me "Of course, out of these main doors, turn left and follow the alleyway along to the courtyard and take the first right, which will bring you to the East block area of our campus.

There are signposts there for the Medical Units."

I smile at her and walk from the office and head in the direction she gave me. My mind begins to wander as I do. What if Esme isn't happy to see me? What if me being here gives her the opportunity to actually reject me? No, I can't think like that. I need to see her, I need to hear what happened from her. Not through the mouth of someone else.

I keep walking. Until I am outside the building, I think is the Medical Unit, where I assume she

must do her degree. What the woman at reception had said was right, there is a fountain and benches here, so I find a seat and sit and wait.

Letting my mind wander.....

I can't help but think of what Esme might be doing. I can only assume she is in her class. I

wonder if she is thinking of me? I wonder if she has even thought of me since she ran out? I

would like to think she has..... Though if she didn't care maybe she hadn't.... Or if she was

trying to forget me, maybe she was trying not to?

My phone buzzes. I reach for it from my pocket and see it is Manuel.

Hey Gabe,

How are you doing dude? We are going to Crimson Night tomorrow. Your Dad has asked to come.

Hoping to sort things out for you as well as me. We are worried about you bro. Will you please

keep in touch with us while we are there? Knox did try to call in to see you but you weren't in.

Manuel.

Wow, so they are going to their pack. I don't see how that is going to make any difference, and

why are they hoping to sort things for me? I don't see how they can help me. The only person

who can sort things for me is Esme, and right now she doesn't seem to want me. And that is

hurting me so badly. So bad it hurts like hell. I don't even know how to describe it. Who knew

finding my fated mate would be so painful.....

No, I can't sit feeling sorry for myself..... Get a grip

Gabe! I tell myself..... My brain seems to

keep falling back into feeling low and feeling bad, but I need to stop this..... I had best reply to

Manny or else he would be sending out a search party.

We don't need that.....

Hey Dude

I am ok. Or as ok as I can be. Hope it goes ok at Crimson Night. Be careful, you know their Alpha

is a psycho. Though I am sure Jake and Knox will make sure you are well prepared and protected.

Yeah, I will keep in touch while you are there. I will be doing the usual back in pack anyway.

Nothing is changing dude. Got to carry on, right?

Don't worry about trying to sort things for me, focus on making things good for you ok? Esme

has decided what is right for her, and she has done what she needs to do. I will be ok in time, so

don't be worrying. You need to focus on you and Lola and being safe while at their pack.

G

Hopefully, that would be enough to get him off my back, and let him focus on the issue in hand,

which is his upcoming trip, because he really needs to have his full attention on that. That and his

new mate. He does not need to be worrying about me. I know he is my cousin and I know he is a

big softy and cares for us all, but he really does need to put himself first this time. Him and his

mate. Make sure he does all he can to make it work for them.

I think we all need to accept that it highly unlikely no amount of trying from me, them, or Knox is

going to fix things with Esme. She has made her choice and I really do not think that is going to change.

Esme..... As if thinking about her had magically made her appear, she was walking out of the large, modern building in front of me, talking to the older male and female, who looked like they could be tutors. Esme was smiling as she spoke. She was beautiful.....

As they walked further from the building out into the courtyard of the building, into the sunshine, her eyes met mine and it felt like my heart had stopped.....

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Chapter 160 Esme

Chapter 160 Esme

I had been busy in University all day, completing multiple classes and doing some coursework that needed completing too. I was heading out of the classroom block to walk to my apartment on campus to carry on with some more coursework to make sure it was done for the deadline later in the week. Two of my tutors, Mr Braxon and Mrs Dawson, were walking the same way and began chatting to me as I walked, so as much as I wasn't really paying attention I made polite conversation and smiled nicely at them.

The sun was shining gloriously outside, which was definitely not a bad thing. It meant I could maybe sit outside on the small balcony with my laptop to do my coursework for a little while to enjoy the sun. Or even go for a drive and let Kya out for a run, assuming she wanted to, she was still in a mood with me..... I don't know how long the silent treatment was going to last after me walking out on Gabe. She clearly saw me as being to blame for that, despite the fact I was doing my best to try and protect everyone. I was always going to be the bad one.....

As I walked out into the sun, I looked up and my eyes made contact with someone I did not expect to see again, especially not here.... Gabe was sat on one of the benches near to the fountain in the courtyard within the block of buildings of the East block of the university Campus. He was looking at me, our eyes hadn't left one another. My heart was racing just at the sight of him. I still wanted him. Kya was suddenly awake, whimpering in my mind. "Mate! Mate!" she was whining.

I felt like crying. I wanted him so badly. I saw him smile slightly, as he stood up.

I bid my tutors goodbye and walked toward Gabe. He looked so handsome, yet he looked broken, and I knew that was my fault. I hated myself.....

We stopped in front of one another. Not saying a word. I was looking up at him, him looking down to me. I am sure there were traces of tears in his beautiful brown eyes.

"What you doing here?" I had to ask.

"I honestly don't know, Carino. I came for a drive to clear my head after snapping someone's wrist in training because I was not focusing right. I was driving. Just driving. And ended up here. Sorry....." he says with a sigh.

Shit, he had broken someone's wrist? I know it isn't unusual for warriors to get injured when training, but to admit it was because he wasn't focused means it was likely because he was at fault. That is not good, and is probably because of me. "Fair enough. I was going to ask Lola to give you my number in case you wanted to talk" I admit.

I see a puzzled expression cross his face.

"Yeah? Why?" he asks, raising his eyebrows slightly in question.

"Because you probably need an explanation. You deserve one, I know that." I sigh.

He shrugs "You decided you didn't want me, right?" he smiles sadly.

I reach for his hand. "Guapo, no, never. I want you, I do. I asked Lola to tell you that too. But circumstances mean I have to sacrifice my happiness. We can't happen, Gabe. I am risking too much if I did."

I hope to the goddess he understands what I mean.

"I know Carino, they explained. I would not expect you to pick me over your degree. Do not worry. You fought hard for this, you deserve it and should not give it up." He says, squeezing my hand before dropping it and pushing his hand into his jeans pocket. It is like he doesn't want me to be able to hold it.

"You want to go get a coffee Gabe?" I suggest.

"Erm..." he seems unsure by my suggestion.

"You came to see me, didn't you, Guapo? I have missed you, you know?" I tell him.

He looks to me, a sad expression on his face. "I don't know Mi Amor, I didn't plan to come to see you. I think my heart led me here. Or perhaps my wolf. I have missed you too. But are we not making it harder on ourselves by spending time with each other?" he asks.

I think about what he has said. Perhaps he is right. But I don't think I want to just let him go now he is here.

"The coffee shop is round the corner, Gabe, we can get something. If it doesn't feel right, we can leave, yeah?" I suggest.

He seems to think about what I have said and then nods. I begin to walk to the campus coffee shop. Turning back to make sure he is following me, as a small part of me half expects him to flee when I have my back to him. Though I guess he has sat outside waiting for me for goodness knows how long so surely that would be pointless.....

"I hear Lola and Manuel marked each other" I say to him.

He smiles slightly and nods "Yeah. They are going to Crimson Night tomorrow, from what I understand."

He falls in to be walking alongside me as we approach the coffee shop. "Yeah. That is unlikely to go well, I fear" I tell him.

"I am sure they will be prepared. Don't worry. Knox and Jake are excellent at preparation and planning. I think Manny's Dad and mine are going too. Plus Knox's Dad, the former Alpha, as he had concerns in the past when he came into contact with the pack at a training event, yet they were never there again in the years after. Or something like that. Knox was telling me this morning via link, I was half asleep, I hadn't had my coffee so I didn't really pay attention." he

tells me.

I smile at him “Yeah I have to say, paying attention or being focused is not the easiest at the moment.”

“Oh glad to know I am not the only one suffering then” he says bluntly as he opens the door of the coffee shop and holds it open for me. “Though not ideal for you when doing a degree I would imagine.” he smiles.

He is a gentleman too it seems. Even though I have hurt him, even though he is likely pissed off with me, he still holds the door for me to walk in..... I nod as I walk through the door at what he'd said.

“Right Carino, what do you want?” he asks me.

I feel my heart flutter at how he is being. He is being such a gentleman.....

“Just a Cappuccino please, Guapo. You should try the churros here, almost as good as home” I smile at him.

“Home as in pack, or home as in Mexico?” he grins.

“Mexico silly. I have family there.” I tell him.

“Snap. Though my Abuela makes some amazing Churros, you should try them....” His voice trailed off realising what he had said.

The thing is, I wish I could try them, wish I could meet his family, be part of his family, I truly do.

Being with him again feels right. I hate that this cannot be my life.....

I watch as Gabe approaches the counter and speaks to the girls behind “Two cappuccinos, and some churros please” he smiles, trying to act like nothing had happened.

I watched as he paid and then he turned to me. “They said they would bring them over. So let's go find a seat, see how awkward this is going to be, hey, Carino?”

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