

Two Years Gone Novel

Chapter 41

ELLA

When the meeting was over, Daniel slapped the arm of his chair.

“So, Luna, what does a guy have to do to convince you to go do some training?”

I perked up; it had been a few days since we had trained together. I turned to Zane, hoping my best begging face would work on him. And it did, like a charm.

“I’ll go change and meet you at the field in fifteen minutes.”

“Perfect!” Daniel replied, and I hopped out of the office.

I stood in an offensive stance, sweat beading on my forehead. It had been a good session so far, and I could tell that I had become even stronger since the ceremony.

“Now, shift!” Daniel yelled as his body quickly tore into his wolf and bounded over to me.

I shifted quickly and dodged his attack. We fought hard, neither of us holding back. Even though I was a luna, he was an alpha and so bigger and stronger than I was.

But I kept up, dodging his attacks and landing several strikes of my own. Daniel shifted back, picking up a pair of shorts he had sitting off to the side and putting them on.

I shifted as well and put on my spare clothes before jogging over to Daniel. He turned to me, the smile on his face bright and proud.

“Ella, you have progressed well. I am surprised you were able to keep up so well. You are a natural fighter.”

I beamed.

“You think?”

“I do! When are we going to show Zane how strong you are?”

I shrugged.

“I don’t know. I feel like I need to learn more.”

Daniel squeezed my shoulders as we made our way back to the packhouse.

"Ella, any more learning and you'll be able to take down Zane!"

I laughed before pushing off him and walking inside.

"Good workout?" Zane smiled as he walked out of the pack offices. His eyes searched me, noticing the light bruises forming on my arms and torso. He scowled and looked up to his dad.

I knew what he had seen and gave him a comforting touch.

"Zane, the bruises will be gone by dinner, you know that. You're telling me you don't get any bruises when you train?"

"That's different," he growled.

I shrugged.

"Is it, though?" I nudged him and wrapped my arms around him before a smirk spread on my face. I poked his rock-hard abs and grimaced.

"You should probably go get a workout in, being mated has made you soft."

Alpha Daniel burst into laughter, and I let out a chuckle before Zane's expression softened and he shook his head at me.

"Is that a fat joke?" he asked with a smirk.

I looked up at him innocently.

"I'm just saying a day on the field might do you some good." And with that, I walked up the stairs to my room.

I let out a quiet giggle when I heard Daniel boom from where they were standing below me.

"She got you good!"

I returned downstairs after showering and changing and made my way to Zane's office. I walked in and began organizing. I opened the closet and gasped to find files and papers strewn everywhere.

I shook my head in disbelief before sitting myself on the floor and grabbing a stack of files.

I went through each file, placing them in piles based on what type of file it was and then in alphabetical order or by date depending on what it was.

I was about halfway done when Zane walked into the office and sat down with a sigh.

"You okay?" I asked as I set down a file and picked up another.

Zane jumped.

"Crap, Ella! I didn't even see you there."

I smiled and stood up, stretching my sore body before looking at the time. I had been sitting there for almost three hours. I walked over to Zane and sat down on his lap.

"So, what's going on?"

"It's just been a day," he replied.

"Anything I can help with?" I asked.

Zane shook his head.

"Not really."

"Well, do you want to talk about it? I make a great sounding board." I smiled and brushed a bit of hair out of his face.

Zane let out a deep breath and pulled me close to him.

"We can't seem to find Mariah. She wasn't spotted by border patrol, which means she's probably still on our land. But she's hiding somewhere, and we can't find her."

"Then there's this thing with the new pack member houses. It's just been a long day."

I looked down at my mate, wanting to help but not really knowing what to do. I grabbed his chin with my hand and lifted his face to mine before planting a light kiss on his lips.

"I know you'll figure it out. Take a moment to clear your mind and then come back to it fresh."

Zane smiled at me before leaning in for another kiss.

"You know the best way to clear my mind, right?"

He wrapped his arms tightly around me and stood up, making me squeal in delight as he carried me to the couch and sat down on it, leaving me straddling his lap.

I kissed him feverishly, hooking my arms around his neck and tangling my hand in his hair. Zane grabbed my hips, his hands moving slowly up under the hem of my shirt.

I moaned when his hands met the bare skin on my ribcage. Zane's kiss deepened, spearing his tongue into my mouth.

We spent a few moments in heated passion before we were once again interrupted by a tap on the door.

"Alpha?"

Zane ran a hand through his hair, and I giggled at his frustration. The poor guy just wanted his mate. I made a mental note to make it up to him later tonight.

I hopped off and straightened myself out before opening the door with a smile.

"Elinor, please come in!" I offered, and Zane stood, offering her a seat.

"What can I do for you?" Zane asked as he sat in his chair behind the desk.

"It's about Mariah."

Zane's eyes darkened, and I took her hand as she let out a fearful gasp.

"Go on," I gave her a warm smile to hide my own fear of what this could be about.

"You see... I saw her."

"Where?" Zane boomed.

I gave him a good, solid glare before rubbing the girl's back. I knew they wouldn't get anything if she was afraid. Zane pinched his nose and looked up at her.

"I'm sorry, Elinor. Where did you see her?"

"In one of the pack cabins, the ones we use for guests and visiting families."

I looked up at Zane's confused face.

"She wouldn't be stupid enough to hide down the street. The trackers would have sniffed her out by now," he said with a raised brow.

The girl shrugged.

"It sure looked like her. I was assigned to go through them and do some cleaning and upkeep, and when I went inside, she tried to hide, but I saw her. I acted like I didn't and came straight here."

"Thank goodness you weren't hurt!" I gave her a worried look, knowing exactly what Mariah was capable of.

"Thank you, Elinor. We will investigate. You were brave to come to us." Zane gave her a warm smile before letting her out of the office.

"Why is she still here?" I asked Zane as he made his way back to his desk.

Zane leaned back in his chair.

"I have no idea. But it can't be good. I'll send some trackers to the house to see if they can pick up on her. She's probably long gone by now."

I sat back in my seat, worried about what all this could mean.

Chapter 42

ZANE

I didn't like the feeling I had of not knowing what was coming. It had been two weeks since that girl had sighted Mariah, and there was still no sign of her.

I stretched in bed and rolled over to find Ella gone. I scowled, grumpy that I couldn't hold my mate. Then I heard the shower running.

I hopped out of bed and made my way to the bathroom, stripping my clothes off on the way. The hot steam of the shower perked me up.

I saw the naked image of my mate and stood behind her, wrapping my arms tightly around her waist. Ella leaned into me and gripped my arms with her hands.

"Good morning, love," I whispered.

"Hmm," she sighed contentedly.

I smiled and kissed her neck.

"Spend the day with me?"

Ella laughed, "I spend every day with you, we work together."

"Come to the lake with me, or we can take a trip to the cliffs again."

Ella turned in my arms to face me.

“You can’t keep ditching work, Mr. Alpha.”

“Fine, then let’s wander off at lunchtime and have a picnic,” I asked before kissing her cheek lightly.

Ella smiled.

“Deal.”

We finished washing up and made our way down to breakfast.

“Good morning, Alpha! Good morning, Luna!” the pack members in the dining room sang as we entered.

“Morning!” we echoed back as we made our way to the counter and grabbed some plates.

“Good morning, you two,” Sophie smiled warmly.

“Hey Mom, do you mind if we pack up lunch this afternoon? We’re going to take a small picnic.”

“Sure! I’ll pack something up for you after breakfast. Do you want me to drop it at your office?”

“Nah,” I replied.

“We’ll come to get it when we are ready to leave.”

After breakfast, Ella and I went to the office and took care of some work. Even though my father was still technically alpha, Daniel had been slowly handing responsibilities off to me.

This morning, I had a few pack member transfers for wolves who had found their mates. Even though I had given Ella her own office next door, she would still sit in mine sometimes to do her work.

I looked up from my files and watched my luna, the sight of her making me smile.

I loved how she would bite her lip when she was thinking. I loved how her long wavy hair would sometimes fall in her face, and she would whisk it out of the way.

She was beautiful, and I had no idea why I had fought against her in the past.

“You ready for lunch?” Ella asked, snapping me from my reverie.

I looked up and smiled.

“Almost, let me sign a few more of these and I’ll meet you outside.”

Ella stood up and walked out of the office, leaving me to concentrate on the last few papers I needed to finish.

When I finished, I hopped up and made my way outside, excited for a small break with Ella. I knew exactly where we would go.

“Ready?” I asked as I walked out the front door to meet Ella.

“Ready!” She smiled, holding up the picnic basket in one hand and a blanket in the other. I took the basket and carried it down the hill with Ella in tow.

“So where are we going to sit?” she asked as we walked.

“There’s an awesome spot past the training grounds I want to show you.”

I walked past the training field and through the trees to another clearing, this one full of wildflowers and sunlight.

Ella gasped.

“This is beautiful! I didn’t even know this was here!”

I grabbed Ella’s hand, the feeling still sending shockwaves up my arm even after months of being together.

We walked to a large tree in the middle of the field and laid the blanket on the ground in its shade. I watched Ella take a deep relaxing breath before leaning back on her elbows.

“This is nice,” she sighed.

“I’m glad we got a moment alone, we’ve been so busy lately,” I said, smiling and leaning back on the blanket as well.

Ella turned to me and laughed.

“We’re together most of the day!”

“Yeah, but that’s different! It’s work. It’s not as fun.” I gave her a wink and she nudged my arm with a laugh.

Ella looked out at the field, her eyes glowing from the reflected sunlight.

“How about making this a regular thing? Once a week we’ll come to this spot and have a picnic, just the two of us.”

“I like that.” I smiled, glad she wanted to spend special time with me.

“It’ll be our own little spot.”

Ella sat up and ran her hand through her hair, the hem of her shirt rising slightly. My breath hitched, and all I could think about was what fun things we could do on this blanket.

“What’s for lunch?” Ella turned to me with a smile, and I had to calm myself down.

“I-I... Well, let’s see,” I managed to stutter, amazed at how much she could fluster me. I turned to the basket and set it down in front of me, opening the lid to reveal its contents.

“Okay, we’ve got what looks like chicken salad sandwiches, some fruit, and some type of rabbit food.” I scrunched my nose at the container of salad, making Ella laugh.

Chapter 43

ELLA

When I woke up that morning, I felt disgusting. My stomach had been bothering me since last night, and I had hoped it would have gone away when I woke up.

Assuming I just ate something weird, I went on with my day, excited for my little picnic with Zane.

I had caught him staring for most of the time we were in the office, and it excited me to know he wanted me so much.

That field, though. When we stepped into the clearing, I just about died. Wildflowers and long grasses dotted the whole field, and I knew this was heaven.

The sun was bright, making the grasses glow a golden hue. Sitting under the tree, spending time with Zane, it was all perfect.

I still felt gross and attempted to nibble a bit on my sandwich before finally just settling on eating some grapes. Our lunch was relaxing and exactly what I needed.

I was enjoying my new way of life and all of the time I had to do things like this. Before Zane, all I did was work. I looked over at him and smiled warmly. I loved that man.

We packed up the basket and began making our way across the field when we heard a growl from the tree line.

Zane perked up and pushed me behind him, taking up a fighting stance.

Suddenly, a wolf I knew all too well jumped out of the trees and circled us.

“Mariah...,” Zane growled. I saw his eyes glaze over for a second and I heard him over the mind-link speaking to his father.

Mariah shifted back to her human form, completely unashamed of the fact she was nude.

“You look good, baby,” she said coyly, as though I wasn’t standing right there.

DID SHE JUST HIT ON OUR MATE? my wolf yelled in my head.

I let out a low, involuntary growl, and Zane squeezed my hand.

“I’ve been looking for you, Mariah,” Zane replied, his voice cold.

“I know, baby. We’ll be together soon. I just have some business with this little omega.” Mariah turned her gaze on me and growled.

I was angry now. I wasn’t an omega, I was the damn luna!

I stepped out from behind Zane, standing tall and proud.

“It’s Luna to you. What can I help you with?”

“You can help me by getting your slimy paws off what’s mine!” Mariah yelled.

Zane grabbed my hand, but I pushed it away. I heard Daniel arrive and stand at the tree line.

I turned to Daniel with a wink, and he returned a nod, informing me that he knew I was ready. I stepped forward closer to Mariah.

“Ella! What are you doing?” Zane yelled, panic clear in his voice.

“Step back, son,” Daniel said, placing his hand on Zane’s shoulder.

Zane shook his head.

“No. That’s my mate! It’s my job to protect her, she can’t... I can’t lose her.”

“Step back,” Daniel warned.

I turned back to Mariah with a smirk.

“You missed so much while you were away, Mariah. Did you see anything new?”

I pulled back the neck of my T-shirt to show my mark.

“Do you think Zane has one to match?”

I could hear Daniel chuckle as Mariah screamed, and I smiled. I knew I was getting to her.

Mariah started pacing again.

“That just means that to break your bond, I’ll have to kill you. Slut!”

I smirked.

“Just a minute, I really like this shirt.”

I took off my shirt and smiled when I heard Daniel let out another chuckle, clearly amused. I was doing exactly what he had taught me.

Daniel’s words echoed in my head. Get them angry. Attacks fueled by anger might have strength, but they don’t have clarity. Keep your head clear and get inside theirs.

Mariah let out a loud growl before shifting and lunging toward me. I shifted quickly, my stance aggressive and ready for a fight.

I stepped out of the way and took advantage of Mariah overshooting my position. I clenched my jaws down on Mariah’s stomach, eliciting a loud yelp from her.

Mariah turned and tried to bite at my neck, but I moved away so that she was barely able to leave a scratch on my skin.

I could feel a small sting, but I knew it would be healed before the fight was even over. We separated, stalking each other in a circle until Mariah ran toward me again, and I lunged to meet her.

We collided and fought, wrestling each other, biting at anything that we could sink our teeth into. Mariah had managed to roll on top of me, and I heard Zane’s worried gasp.

I wasn’t worried, though. I dug my claws deep into Mariah’s stomach, which made her jump back and howl in pain.

I circled her, knowing this time I wouldn't be the one left for dead. I could feel every bit of pain, anger, sadness, self-doubt, and misery Mariah had inflicted on me.

But I wasn't cruel. As much as I hated Mariah, I wouldn't kill her. There was a fair way to do this.

I shifted back and stood before Mariah. I could see the blood dripping from Mariah's wounds and knew she was barely keeping herself upright.

"Mariah, I'm finished. Submit and we can end this. Let them take you to medical for care and receive a fair council."

Mariah growled, hate and anger in her eyes, before lowering her head. She had given in. I nodded and turned to walk away.

"ELLA! Look out!" Zane yelled.

I shifted back to my wolf and turned in time to see Mariah lunge. I flipped around and clamped my jaws on Mariah's neck, biting down hard until it snapped.

My heart pounding, I dropped Mariah's body to the ground.