

Mated to the Alpha Twins by Jane Doe Chapter 101

“How are we supposed to come up with an escape plan an hour before our final meeting?” I hissed once we were all within the confines of our suite.

“Sweetheart, my parents and I have been mulling over escape plan’s for at least a week now.” Kade chuckled, crossing his muscular arms over his chest. “Ever since we found out the High Table wanted to meet you; we began planning. Garrett and Julian have been helping as well. I’m sure they’ve come up with something by now.”

Alec was draped across the sectional; the sporadic flutter of his eyelashes was the only sign that the sedative was beginning to wear off. All eyes snapped over to Alec when a husky mumble came from his lips. Tori was at his side in seconds, checking him over in a way she had done three times now.

When I had ran away, Tori began an apprenticeship under her dad. The time she didn’t spend looking for me was dedicated to nightly shifts at the hospital.

“It’s wearing off faster, he should be lucid within the hour.” Tori said, her words reassuring me.

The first thing I planned on doing was getting some food in his system, then I’d contemplate hunting down Marcus Novak and removing him from his position at the High Table.

‘If only your little fantasy were achievable.’ Kade’s thoughts melted into my own, and I flushed at the laughter in his voice. “Though, I did enjoy the part where you mercilessly blew the head off of Marcus Novak.’

“If you don’t like my fantasy–” I began, but was interrupted as the door to our suite swung wide open.

The twin’s parents were first to storm inside, faces hewn and eyes worried. The door had been locked, but they had a key of their own to get inside. It made it safer to just have constant access to one another, especially with what happened at the last hotel.

Their mom’s blonde hair was pulled up into a neat wrap, and though her sleek skirt and blazer were professional, I could see how shaken up she was. Their father was much better at hiding his emotions, just like his sons. His onyx hair was swept to the side, and his navy suit made his eyes seem even darker. Their eyes roamed the room for half a second before settling on Alec. There was no surprise there, only aching, mind numbing relief.

“I knew it—you’ve got him.” Their mom exhaled; her eyes wide as she looked at her unconscious son. The hand that was placed against her chest trembled, even though her eyes hardened considerably. It was her husband’s hand on her shoulder that kept her from running forward, to embrace the son she thought she had lost. Surprisingly, when she turned to speak, it was me she spoke to. “Do you know who took him?”

“Marcus Novak was responsible.” I answered without hesitation, trusting them well enough to know that my words would never leave this room.

“That man—uses his money and power to breathe down our necks, to keep us under his foot.” She huffed, fury brimming in both her emotions and eyes. After a deep breath, she continued. Her movements were a bit rushed, which led me to wonder if something else had happened. “Listen to me, I don’t know how you rescued him or when, but the entire hotel is on silent alert. There are guards everywhere right now, posing as

employee's and witnesses. I think—I think he knows you've rescued my son."

"No matter how this last meeting goes, I won't rest until Marcus is permanently removed from the High Table, and stripped of his position as Alpha." I promised her, in fusing all of the courage I could muster into my words.

The door opened again, letting in Garrett and Julian. While I wasn't surprised to see Julian flash me a grin and a wink, I was surprised to feel a very distinct lack of anger radiating from Garrett.

"What is that look for, Aurora?" Garrett drawled slowly once we locked eyes. His blue and brown eye mirrored my own, as did his chestnut hair and full eyebrows. The corners of his lips twitched just an increment as he continued, "You are well aware I have a mate as well, yes? I am very aware of the lengths one would go to for such a person."

I wasn't sure what to say at that, but felt a bit uncomfortable as a strange feeling ran through me. Garrett would never be named father of the year, but he had left his mate and daughter to come and help me. Even if it were for selfish reasons, he's stuck with me thus far.

"Marcus Novak says there's been a breach in the hotel security, and that one or more intruders may be in the building. It's quite clearly a coverup, disguising the fact that his captive has now been rescued." Garrett told Kade and I, his eyes flitting over to where Alec lay. "While I'll never be fond of my daughter being in danger, I realize she was not given these abilities to live out an ordinary life. I expect you to protect her at all costs, but I am—relieved to see that your brother is alive."

I could feel how those words physically pained him, but once they were spoken, the smallest flicker of respect ignited in Kade's eyes.

“Aurora.”

It felt like months since I had heard his voice, and every muscle in my body reacted at the sound. I pivoted, turning so fast that I nearly stumbled into the coffee table. My knee’s hit the plush carpet, and my hands came up to hold the sides of his face. His stubble brushed my palms, and his eyes fluttered as he mumbled my name again, and again.

“He’s going to be awake soon.” I told everyone in the room, not bothering to turn my eyes away from Alec. His brows were furrowed, but relaxed as I trailed my fingers through his hair. “We can’t leave—not yet.”

“The final meeting’s been moved up, Aurora.” Julian said, frowning when I whipped my head around to stare at him. “We’ve got only twenty minutes to arrive before we’re counted as late.”

“He’s getting everyone together, possibly trying to flush us out.” Kade grimaced, giving his unconscious brother a long look. His voice was hard and flat, “It’s not safe to leave him here. Not when Marcus can send a squad of men to come and take him back.”

There was another knock at the door that captured everyone’s attention. Whoever was at the other end knocked once, then twice, then continued in a rapid succession of taps that sounded almost like a song.

“Expecting someone?” Garrett asked, narrowing his eyes at the source of annoyance on the other end of the door. He walked over to the peephole and glanced out before turning to Kade and I with a look of confusion on his face. “It’s a girl, her hair is—is purple?”

“It’s Ava! Let her in.” I snorted at Garrett’s comment turned question.

As soon as Garrett unlocked the door, Ava came storming in. Her tangled headphones skidded across the carpet as she practically ran inside. After brushing several purple strands of hair from her forehead, she cocked an eyebrow at all of us.

“Um, hello. Were you trying to get me caught?” Ava scoffed, placing her black painted nails against her chest. “Seriously, I’m the one doing you a favor. I’m not the one who wants to play baby sitter to a kidnapped Alpha with a narcotics addiction. Consider that next time you keep me waiting in the hall for eons.”

“There is so much to unpack with that.” Tori sighed, sitting down on the couch beside Alec’s slumbering form.

“You know this wolf?” Garrett asked a bit snidely, giving Ava a look that she returned in triple.

“Duh, she knows me. She wouldn’t have let me in if she didn’t.” Ava sighed, rolling her eyes before glancing down at Alec. “So—is he gonna be all comatose all day, or am I gonna have someone to talk to?”

“What—what are you talking about, Ava?” I asked, utterly clueless as to what she was talking about.

“What do you mean, what am I talking about?” She retorted, clearly in a bit of a mood today. “Zayne asked if I could baby sit your beefy mate while he’s drugged up, so that you could go figure out whether or not the witless five are going to let you live past sundown.”

“He never told us that.” I frowned, turning towards Kade. “Did he send us a note?”

“Not that I or any of the guards have received.” He replied, looking just as troubled as I.

“Take that up with him the next time you guys meet, but I’m here now. Let me do what I came here to do.” Ava insisted, already beginning to untangle her seemingly indestructible headphones. “Besides, it’s not like you couldn’t use the help.”

“Is there a reason you’re particularly snarky today?” Tori asked, just as bold as Ava. There was no malice in Tori’s eyes, just partially amused curiosity.

“All of the employees are busy with this stupid meeting.” She began with a huff. Her eyes widened a bit as she registered what she said. “Not that your life isn’t important or anything—but do they really have to vote on it? Either way, Zayne failed to mention there would be no one escorting me through the employee areas and up to your suite. So, I was stuck hiding under a food cart until they dropped me off at this floor. Do you know what’s in the bottom of a food cart? Food. Old, disgusting food.”

“There’s a shower and spare clothes if you wanted to wash up.” I offered, grateful for Zayne’s help even if I refused to trust the cowardly man.

“I’m sorry—but are you sure you trust her to watch Alec?” The twin’s mom asked, rightfully worried about her son.

Ava turned and looked at me, clearly waiting for my answer. I didn’t exactly trust Ava, and I think she knew that, but she would also gain nothing by harming Kade. Our kind were being enslaved, used as weapons for cruel Alpha’s with severe superiority complexes. They could sit behind their walls and watch atop their thrones as wars are fought and won with the blood of the many. Even though we didn’t trust one another; we knew without a doubt, that we were both on the same side.

“She’ll keep him safe.” I promised their mom, hoping she could see the confidence in my eyes.

Fifteen minutes later, all of us apart from Ava and Alec, left for our final meeting with the High Table.

I had left Alec a note, pinned to the coffee table by a bottle of water.

Alec,

I wish so badly that I could be there when you finally woke up. Things have been a mess without you, and when they finally calm down, the three of us are taking some time off. I need to get past the fear of losing you, just as I’m sure you also have a few things to work through.

It’s best that you stay in the room while we’re suffering through the final meeting. Ava is an ally, she’s safe to be around. Marcus already knows you’ve been sprung, but not by who. Today’s the big day they debate whether or not I’m too dangerous to live, like a rabid animal.

No matter the outcome of today’s meeting—we will come back for you right after the meeting.

Always yours,

Aurora

The only thing I had learned from my time within such close proximity to our species government was that we desperately needed a new one. I still had mixed feelings about Jaspar Fox, and Brayton Cliff was still a mystery as well. I knew without a doubt that Marcus Novak and Sebastian Sable both needed to go—along with their illegal operations.

From the looks of the court-like room we stood in, you could tell something was wrong. While the search hadn’t been publicly announced,

there were some of us able to figure out those kinds of things. The twin's parents had been the first to know about the lockdown, from a friend in the witness stands.

One by one, each member of the High Table walked to the raised platform and sat at their respective seats. The growing crowd of witnesses sat in rows around the circumference of the room, grouped in their own respective packs and families.

The number of witnesses had nearly doubled overnight, leaving the small sectioned off area's overflowing with people. I had been jostled and bumped into at least thirty separate times, though most covered away once they realized it was me.

Marcus Novak sat at the very center, as the head of the High Table. His suit was slate grey this time, just a few shades darker than his son's. Zayne sat in his own closed off area, with a minimum of four guards at his side. He looked a bit miserable if I were being honest, but that was the usual expression on his face.

“Welcome to the conclusion of this incredible debate that will affect our world for generations to come. We are constantly making history; with every decision and choice we make. We have debated much on this matter, both during these meetings and behind closed doors. The five of us are confident that today will bring all of us, and Ms. Aurora, the conclusion we need.” Marcus Novak stood, greeting the crowd with a wide sweep of his hand. His smile was charming and charismatic, every bit the bachelor instead of the blood-thirsty wolf. “We will pick up from yesterday by calling Aurora to the stand. Here she will review the terms of our offers and make any refusals or demands she sees fit. Together, we will assess her standing in our world and determine what course of action will propel us into a safe future where our kind continues to thrive.”

This time, I did roll my eyes as some of the witnesses went into heart-wrenching applause, with watery eyes to top things off. I couldn't understand how a room full of werewolves could fail to see the biggest threat in the room; Marcus Novak.

I approached the stand and waited in silence as a moderator went over the details of each agreement with the High Table members. Sebastian Sable offered me nothing apart from a slithery smirk that made my insides turn. Nico Deville claimed his father had still not returned, but actually said that he had contacted him and refused to form any ties with our packs. Jaspar Fox sent me a wink at that, one so quick I had nearly missed it.

Silence enveloped the room as it was my turn to speak—to save or condemn myself.

I could save myself by agreeing to Marcus's terms, to signing my freedom and will away to serve another. One who would take and take until I too was drained, devoid of a soul like the ones I had fed on.

I had planned what I wanted to say, and told no one. Kade was the only one who knew what I had chosen, and not because we could read one another's thoughts. We still offered one another privacy, but Kade, Alec, and I were equals. I wouldn't make a huge decision like this without the trust of one or both.

“I, and those I trust have reviewed your offers extensively. I am humbled by the opportunities you've presented my way.” I stated loudly, keeping my face and eyes neutral as they remained locked on Marcus. I squared my shoulders, and felt my voice take on a new tone. It sounded layered in a way it wasn't before, interwoven with authority and confidence that seemed much too mature for my young years. “It is within my own best interest that I refuse all three of your offers. I might not be familiar to our customs and ways, but I do know that all life holds value. No white wolf,

regardless of status should be forced to prove their right to live. Given to me at birth, I am Luna of not one, but three packs. No one, can withhold that title from me.”

The room was silent for a few seconds before erupting in chaos. Words were screamed on all sides, slurs and praises. There were some cheering me on, telling me to destroy and rebuild the High Table. Others called me a treasonous b***h, amongst other colorful things.

During all of the commotion—I noticed something.

A small woman, dainty and fragile in stature, approached Marcus Novak. Her onyx hair was long and straight, plastered to her head. She moved slowly, meekly towards him. He lowered himself as she whispered in his ear, and never once did his facial expression change as he listened to her words. What was worse—I swore I could feel just a flicker of carnal happiness inside his cold, stagnant heart.

The commotion continued, and Marcus did nothing to stop it. My eyes flickered to Jasper, who was watching Marcus with a guarded look on his face. Marcus motioned to one of the guards and said three words that sent things spiraling down.

I could not hear the words he spoke, but could assume what they meant when the four guards surrounding Zayne Novak surged forward and placed silver clasps around his wrists.

My mouth opened, but no sound came out. Zayne didn't thrash, nor fight against his father's men. His ice-coated eyes stared out just past me, to the red-head with flaming hair and eyes of moss colored agony.

Most of the witnesses were blind to what was happening, whipped up into a frenzy of my doing. Zayne was dragged from the room by the four

guards who had been protecting him, the silver clasps around his wrists the only indicator that they had new orders.

“Now—let us compose ourselves, yes?” Marcus Novak said to the crowd, his smile full and renewed. He was ignoring what had just happened, even though there were few in the room who had seen the truth. The golden-haired couple were two who had noticed what just happened, and stared at Marcus with identical accusatory glares. “We must respect Ms. Aurora’s decision, and excuse her lack of manners with our system. I do believe now might be the time to discuss things further, and vote on the outcome of our future.”

The five High Table members then retreated to a private room where they would continue discussing my right to live.

“What—I don’t understand—.” Tori stammered, taking a few steps towards the door Zayne had been dragged through.

“I understand you want to go after them, but you can’t.” I told her, grabbing her shoulders with firm hands. “They don’t know who you are—they can’t know, and Marcus can’t either. He will use you to get to Zayne, he’ll use you to control him.”

“What do you think is going to happen to him?” She asked quietly, a mess of emotions swirling within her. Even rejected and angry, she couldn’t not care about him.

“I don’t know, Tori.” I answered honestly, feeling my chest tighten as I made her a promise, I hoped I wouldn’t live to regret. “If there’s anything we can do to help him—we will try.”

Minutes melted into one another until nearly half an hour passed. All eyes were alert as the High Table members filtered back to their respective seats, with Marcus at the helm.

As Marcus stood, there was a glint in his eye that seemed just a tad smug. It sends a sour feeling rushing through me, letting me know something was wrong.

“New information has recently come to light, which we have included in the decision of our final vote.” Marcus began, his pale eyes flickering down to where I stood at the stand. There was nothing short of cold, cruel, triumph in his eyes. “It is unknown to many that a band of treasonous white wolves escaped my borders recently. These wolves are powerful and dangerous, murderers of the absolute worst variety. I have kept them alive as merely a tribute to their unique abilities, as it would be a shame to snuff out a life so incredible. As many of you know, I pride myself on the security of my pack and its borders. I now have evidence that these white wolves were not working alone. Aurora and those she surrounds herself with, staged a coup to rescue these prisoners, ‘This information was crucial in deciding our course of action for the foreseeable future.’”

The room did not erupt into chaos this time. There were no hurling insults or praises, screaming at the pack sitting closest to you that their opinions and beliefs were wrong. There was only silence, and that thick foreboding where you know everything is going to h**l.

Marcus didn't miss a beat. Sympathy flashed in his eyes, and his voice deepened until it was almost sorry. This was the last thing he wanted to do, his tone said.

“I have given this much thought. It is not often in a High Table member's life to make such an important, history-altering decision. With my full

confidence, I do believe it's best if Ms. Aurora were taken into the custody of the High Table. Her abilities are simply too dangerous to unleash on our fragile world. Should she develop into a soul-eater, it would be safest for those under our protection if Aurora remains beneath our wing. We absolutely cannot allow instability within our communities, it is the poison that will crumble our castles and ultimately, put an end to our species." Marcus said loudly to the room. His calculating eyes were still locked on mine when he said, "Guards, bring her to me."

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The entire room held its breath. Fear was a smog that thickened the air and rushed into my lungs like fumes of bleach. It stung and burned, nearly making me emit a nasty cough.

You could feel the tearing and shattering of alliances, opinions being formed and beliefs being questioned.

It wasn't every day the High Table took in a potential soul-eater. Some instinctual side of me told me to use my gift, to tear the life from Marcus before he could utter another order.

Marcus's eyes held mine, ice blue and full of acknowledgement. There was something strange in his perfectly cultivated emotions, a sort of interest that bordered on g*****g.

The pieces clicked together in my mind, when ever so slightly, he tipped his head at me.

"Your move", It said.

A question stood out in my mind, one that made my stomach sink. None of us had thought of it before, least of all myself.

That guard I had k****d at the decrepit house; we had left him there. Did Marcus know what a soul-eater's victim looked like?

Judging from the look on his face, I'd say he knew exactly what it looked like.

He was waiting to see what I would do—to see if I'd unleash my power, or if I'd surrender to remain hidden.

I didn't want to believe it, just as I didn't want to believe I had k****d so many people already. Such a far cry from the girl I had been only months ago, from the human whose views never strayed from black and white.

The guards that ringed the room stepped forward, forming a semi circle around the booth that held all of us. I tried to gleam some bit of emotion from them, but for them, this wasn't personal. They were following orders, no matter how callouses they might be.

Garrett's face was grim, set-in harsh lines that looked chiseled from stone. I could feel the defiance in his emotions, the hatred and resistance radiating towards Marcus. Something inside my stomach fluttered at the thought of him giving a c**p about me, no matter how selfish the reasons might be.

The fact that I had people I could trust not to turn me in—not to abandon me when things became too hard, it meant more to me than anything in the world.

Three of the guards stepped forward, all with dark hair and expressionless eyes. Strapped to their waist was a silver knife with a jeweled hilt, and a dark colored pistol that I was near-positive shot silver bullets. One held a pair of thick silver cuffs in his hands, and something

must have flashed behind my eyes, because they finally had the nerve to hesitate.

Just as they reached the booth, we all stood in, the main doors to the conference room slammed open.

Everyone's attention was diverted, even the guards who were tasked at retrieving me. It wasn't the noise that caused for such prolonged attention, but the man who came strolling through.

"Alec." I exhaled, my panicked eyes darting up to where Kade stood.

Alec waltzed into the room, down the carpeted path that separated the various packs that chose to attend. There were more now than ever, piling up as the staff continued to fill the room to max capacity.

I had to give it to him, he was laying it on good. The crowd couldn't feel the exhaustion in his bones, or the way his limbs felt sore and unused. Like a true Alpha, he showed no others his weakness.

He had changed into a dark button down with grey slacks, and had the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. His hair was freshly washed, still shimmering from the wetness. The stubble that had once coated his face was shaved, revealing smooth skin. The dimple in his cheek appeared as he smiled at the crowd, seemingly clueless to the mess he just walked into.

Even his cocky grin, which was aimed directly at Marcus Novak, seemed genuine and without fault.

Marcus was still where he stood, eyes locked on my mate as he came to a stop at the center of the room. There was no emotion in his eyes—no admittance of guilt or acknowledgement.

“What a shame. It seems like I’ve missed out on a lot, but at least I’ve returned for the fun.” Alec grinned jovially, giving Marcus a small bow. “I’d like to thank Marcus Novak for my—leave of absence, if you’d like to call it that.”

“Hurling false accusations will not make your mate exempt from the rules of the High Table. ” Marcus stood, demanding the attention of the room. He didn’t glower at Alec, nor did he snarl in outrage. His tone was neutral, like scolding a mouthy teenager who needed to be taught a lesson. “Since our kind was created, this has been our government, and we will not demolish centuries of success for the impulsive wants of a child.”

Fury coursed through me, hot and angry. I could feel the witnesses in the crowd that agreed with Marcus, that were outraged a child would stand against him.

“I might be a stranger to our customs and rules, but I will not live beneath your thumb.” My voice shredded through the silence. Suddenly, all eyes were on me. Both accusing and curious. “There are many of us who see you for what you are Marcus Novak. I don’t fault them for staying silent, for protecting their packs and families while you stole their children and grandchildren for power. I refuse to hide while you try to lay claim on my life. I will not be your trophy, or your weapon to exact on the world.”

As the tension in the room ratcheted, Isaiah and Mera stepped forward.

Their golden hair seemed to shimmer under the light. Both Mera and Isaiah met Marcus’s gaze unflinchingly. They stood tall, fearless even though this man was the most powerful in our world.

Mera turned her eyes to me and gave me a firm nod.

“We will stand with you, Luna Aurora. Each and every one of us are responsible for the decay of our government, for the corruption we willingly turned a blind eye to.” Mera’s light accent rang throughout the crowd, causing a myriad of gasps and exclamations. I guess Mera was well known within the werewolf community.

Her presence alone inspired two other couples to stand as well. A middle-aged Alpha and Luna had stood, both with dark hair and fine lines etched onto their faces. The woman smiled at me, and while I could feel her endless compassion, she was just a tad weary of me. The second couple looked to be a couple years older than the twins and I. Neither seemed afraid nor surprised as they stepped forward and turned their eyes to Marcus.

No one else dared to come forward after that, but it doesn’t matter. This was a start—proof that there were those who noticed things, who wanted the truth just as badly as I did.

I can hear the hushed whispers all around me. Some just simply want to leave, to retreat back into the safety of their lands. If only they knew how temporary that safety is. Others want the High Table to take me in already, to diffuse the situation before things turned violent. Little did they know, my mates would never allow for me to be taken by Marcus. There are just a few in the room who are questioning things, who are realizing things they had never noticed before, Small things here and there, a missing child or two—a family moving in the middle of the night.

On both sides, the guards are getting restless. Marcus’s men keep inching closer, only to be backed up when the twin’s men snarl and tense.

“You are a deluded child fed lies from enemies of the High Table, traitors to our kind. They poison your thoughts, and some day, will own you and your abilities. I fear that our very species might come to an end

should that day ever come.” Marcus frowned, ever so concerned about the people he was tasked to protect. There were murmurs throughout the crowd, a ripple of fear and anxiety as some actually believed what he had said. “I am not the enemy here, nor have I ever been. I urge you not to fight on your Alpha’s behalf, to stand down and yield to the High table so that my guards might bring her in. This is my only offer. The progression of this issue will have dastardly affects.”

A deafening bang rang out, thundering in my ears tearing away all sound apart from a high-pitched buzzing. Strong arms that smelled of Kade, had yanked me down, making my head swim as I struggled to catch up to speed.

I saw a flash of red hair, and Garrett’s concerned face before my eyes darted around the room, trying to make sense of the chaos.

Half the room of witnesses had ducked to the ground, startled from the shot that rang out. Those without the sense to duck immediately fled for the exit, shoving at the doors until they broke free.

Kade pulled me to my feet, wrapping his hand around the upper part of my arm to keep me close by. I stumbled a bit, but managed to find my ground as we tried to get as far away from the fight as possible.

I was too busy glancing down, at the guard who lay d**d at my feet. The one who had jumped in front of the bullet hurling my way.

As Alec caught up to us and took me in his arms before breaking out into a run, I realized something.

It wasn’t Desmond’s face or the face of his men that would haunt me, nor would that guard trouble my memories. This man, the one who had given his life to save my own, I would never be able to remove his face from

my head. It was a debt I'd never be able to pay, which made it even more important that I fight against Marcus.

Guards swarm Marcus, keeping him safe should the fight get too out of hand. He isn't even interested in the fight, but is watching with murderous intent when Kade slashes his claws through a nearby soldier, and aids Garrett with keeping them back.

"Get her out of here!" Garrett snarled, looking back once before slamming his elbow into the stomach of a guard. He glanced towards his brother, who had a busted lip, but was otherwise unharmed. Julian nodded once, already knowing what his brother was asking. Garrett locked eyes with Kade, "We'll hold them back. Stick to the plan, you know where to take her. We'll meet up with you as soon as we can."

"We've got to get her out of here, now!" The twin's dad urged his sons with the voice of a drill Sargeant, a far cry from the carefree father I had seen on numerous occasions.

Alec scooped me into his arms and held me close, breaking into a run as I squirmed against him. It's not that he wasn't comfortable, and that I wasn't completely basking in his touch right now, but there had to be more that I could do. No, I didn't want to go around soul-sucking everyone, but I could at least run by myself.

"Let me down, Alec." I demanded, giving him a stern look.

Even out of breath with sweat beading on his forehead, the sight of him brought tears to my eyes. That wall in my chest threatened to break and fall, but I sealed the leaking seams shut before a lone tear could escape my eye. I couldn't break down right now, not when our lives were on the line.

“I’ll explain when we’re somewhere safe. Alright, doll?”

The sound of his voice, and the nickname I had hated so much. I clamped my lips shut, unable to form words even if I wanted to.

We skipped the elevators, which were now crowded with werewolves still trying to escape. Alec barreled through the metal door that read ‘staircase’ so hard the glass rattled. He took the stairs two at a time, sometimes three. Each time we passed a camera planted on the wall, he’d knock it down and crush it beneath his foot.

We were four flights down when a rattle higher up startled us. As I glanced up through the metal railings, I watched as dark dressed guards swarmed into the stairs. Their feet thundering down, closer and closer, was like my own personal d***h march.

One of the guards launched himself over the railing, dropping at least a floor before he came barreling down towards us. The twin’s dad leapt into action, dodging the blade in his hand as it made a wide arc in the air. A few well -placed punches and the guard were currently tumbling over the railing.

Alec finally set me down, but kept my hand laced in the entire time. I think he needed the contact as much as I did, especially after so long of missing that piece of me.

Even further below us, another door clanged open. Even more guards stormed through—but these guards did not belong to Marcus.

The men stopped just where we stood, when one stepped forward.

“Luna Mera gives you her regards, and wishes to let you know she has made it out of the building safely. She will contact you once you make it

out. We are here to ensure that.” A man with dark chestnut skin and curly hair nodded at me.

We kept going, thundering down the stairs as I listened to the battle between Marcus and Isaiah’s men. I winced as another body tumbled over the edge of the railing, letting out a dull thud as it hit the concrete floor.

On the bottom floor, the doors swung open. The guards that poured through were different this time. They were more heavily dressed, in vests that looked to be at least two inches thick. They had helmets on, and an assortment of things strapped to their waists.

Something clicked against the metal railing as they tossed something further up the stairs.

The twin’s realized what it was before I did, and darted to the door that led to the second-floor hall. Just as we barreled through, a bang sounded, and smoke began to spew from beneath the door.

I ran alongside Alec, our fingers laced together. Everyone else kept up, keeping our eyes peeled for more guards that were sure to come. We had long ago given up creeping past corners and instead darted past them, trying to get as close to an exit as possible.

We turned one corner in particular and nearly barreled into a young girl. Her hair was curled in tight ringlets, and her eyes were dark and intelligent.

The tension from Alec and Kade vanished at the sight of her, as she clearly wasn’t harming anyone at the moment.

“Jaspar needs to talk to you.” She said in a child-like soprano, blinking once and then twice.

I opened my mouth to answer, but wasn't sure what to say. Now wasn't exactly the best time. Before I could think anything of it, she's reaching towards me with small hands. The moment her fingers connect with my skin, the floor is torn from underneath my feet, and I'm tumbling head first into a suite that looks suspiciously like the one we had just stayed in. Leaning against the counter with a glass of amber liquor in his hand, was Jasper Fox.

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“Well, that was an absolute f*****g mess.” Jasper snorted, cocking an onyx eyebrow at me as he took a long drink from his glass. He seemed completely unbothered, more inconvenienced, if anything.

It was then that I noticed we weren't alone.

The little girl who had touched me bounced over to his side, placing a protective arm around his leg. She stared at me with hazel eyes, through hair the same color as Jasper's.

I gaped at her for a few moments, still sprawled out on the carpet until the world around me stopped shifting.

“She did rather well for her first time, didn't she?” A feminine voice asked, cool and collected as she analyzed me.

I pulled myself from the floor, finally noticing the woman who sat in the armchair. She wore a tight black dress, but looked professional with her short heels and crisp shoulder length cut. Her eyes were a warm shade of brown, despite the guarded look on her face.

“Yes, she did.” Jasper nodded, agreeing with whoever this woman was. Before I had the chance to snap at him, he directed his attention back to

me. He tapped a nail against the rim of his glass, keeping a steady pace as he spoke. “I genuinely had no clue how little you knew until today. I might’ve been able to prevent this entire mess if you had known ahead of time.

“Known ahead of time?” I scoffed, “If it hasn’t escaped your notice, I’m trying to flee from this d**n hotel, with my mates. Marcus has officially declared me his prisoner. Things have already gone to s**t, and I don’t have time to stick around while you tell me the important truth that I should’ve known days ago!”

“We have a few minutes, which will have to be enough.” He replied, his tone tense enough that I held back my retort for a few seconds. “Delilah has made sure to notify your mate’s that you’ll be catching up with them, should they manage to make it out of the hotel.”

I glanced down at the little girl who met my eyes fearlessly and gave me a wave. She looked up at Jasper, a question burning in her eyes. He gave me a single glance before nodding, and placing a hand on her shoulder.

“I’m Delilah, and I’m a white wolf too.” She grinned up at me, missing just a few of her baby teeth. “I brought you here! I can go wherever I want, but Dad doesn’t like to let me most of the time.”

I cocked an eyebrow at Jasper, whose gaze hardened. He brought Delilah back to his side and took another long drink.

“Everyone always thought g*****g was Desmond’s thing, but he had no more skill than a child at an arcade. I’m among those you claimed to have sat by while Marcus crept around in the dark.” Jasper grimaced, but continued without interruption. “I’ve also been crawling around in the dark, getting my hands d***y. As you can see, we both have quite a bit to fight for. I’m no fool, to form an allegiance with you means risking quite a bit. I’m not one to trust easily, but you are the first I’ve come

across that has a chance against him. I knew it that night, when you drained Desmond Deville of his life.”

Part of me wanted to deny it. I wasn't a k****r, a m*****r—but at the same time, I had k****d those men. Even with all of my promises, I knew that I'd do it again if it meant saving the people I love.

“So, this is you wanting an alliance with me and my mates?” I asked, unable to help peering down at Delilah. She was clearly a white wolf, the child of Jaspas. It made me curious as to who the woman sitting in the chair was.

“Crystal is my beta, a white wolf as well.” Jaspas noted, catching how my eyes had strayed to the woman.

I'm sure my surprise was obvious as it flashed across my face. The twins had told me briefly that the position of Beta was nearly always given to a man. The rules forbidding women to take on high standing roles had been abolished nearly sixty years ago, but there were still none being chosen.

“Against my better judgment, he is trusting you.” Crystal frowned at me, drumming her manicured nails on the armrest of the chair. She leaned forwards, and I could feel the protectiveness radiating off of her. It was my gift for feeling emotions that kept me from being offended at this last bit. “The information he gives you could destroy thirty years of work. If you betray him, or let this slip through your fingers—your abilities might k**l me, but you will go down by my side.”

“She's quite abrasive, it's my favorite quality.” Jaspas shrugged, making Crystal let out a dry snort.

“What I need to know, is that we're on the same page about everything. You both clearly know what I want. At first, it was my freedom. I just wanted to be left alone, but it's become so much more than that.” I

grimaced, clenching my teeth together as the smug face of Marcus Novak drifted through my mind. “I don’t know the full extent of what Marcus is doing, but it needs to come to an end. I want every single white wolf to be free, and every ounce of corruption removed from the High Table.”

“So young for so many aspirations.” Crystal murmured, her chestnut eyes honed in on my face.

“Yeah, well. Human life wasn’t working out too well for me. Turns out, I fare better here.” I snapped back; my words sharp like steel.

“Then you’ll find, that we are on the same page, Aurora.” Jasper said firmly, bringing my attention back to the present. I could feel just a flash of fear behind his cold wall of indifference. Whatever he was going to tell me, it truly meant a lot to him and his pack. “You hold some form of alliance with Zayne Novak, so I assume you know some of what he does. Am I correct?”

It wasn’t exactly an alliance, I wanted to say. We more tolerated each other for the sake of getting things done on both of our ends. Truthfully, having Zayne Novak as an ally could change everything, but he was too far under the thumb of his father to break free.

“You are correct.” I nodded, choosing simplicity over anything else.

“He is responsible for getting the wolves to the borders of his lands, it’s the most he can accomplish without being caught. I transport those wolves onto my own territory, and give them everything they need to begin a new life. They are allowed to leave if they wish, but most stay and build something for themselves.” Jasper said slowly, like he wanted me to remember every detail. He glanced towards Crystal and gave her a friendly smirk, making me wonder if she were a white wolf as well.

“Doing this has given me powerful allies. Ones that have dreamed of

someone like you coming along, ones that are tired of hiding and ready to fight.”

“That’s where they’ve all been going.” I chuckled incredulously.

“I’m not the only one with white wolves at my disposal, though the ones in my pack work for me willingly.” Jaspas said darkly, his eyes turning to stone. “Marcus and Sebastian both have white wolves within their borders. That is how Marcus discovered your activities. I couldn’t figure out how he had done it. I watched the security footage nearly a hundred times, but then I found it. Rumor has it, Marcus is in possession of a white wolf that can see your memories through touch. She just so happened to be here today, a few inches from you on your way in the council room.”

Jaspas promised to be in touch with us at some point, though he hadn’t exactly given me a glimpse into his methods.

He had given the twin’s an address to go to, a safehouse where I’d be waiting for them. We needed to stay out of sight for a few days, to let Marcus’s troops scatter as they veered farther and farther away. Then, we would emerge from the safehouse and make our way back home.

Jaspas was right, alliances were a risky business. He was trusting me with the truth of his pack, and I was trusting he wasn’t sending me to a room full of Marcus’s soldiers.

“She can only transport herself to places she’s been before. She doesn’t need to roam the place, but a simple foot in the door will allow her free roam.” Jaspas explained, “Staying in the safehouse will give us a constant connection until you must venture back to your pack. From there, we’ll figure something else out.”

It was hard to doubt him when Delilah grabbed my hand in her own and smiled up at me, her child-like innocence not tainted from the horrible world we lived in. After seeing the fraction of softness in his eyes from his daughter, I knew that he had protected her well all of these years.

“Are you ready?” She whispered, grinning up at me.

“I think so.” I nodded, smiling down at her.

The hotel room around me twisted and warped before morphing into something else altogether. The Persian carpet became white and scruffy, and the antique sofa elongated into a modern looking sectional. The brick fireplace against the wall was replaced with a long bar that spanned the wall. Decanters and bottles of expensive liquor sat unopened on the shelves.

The scent of air freshener and stale cleaner was in the air, telling me someone had been here recently to clean the place.

I stood just by a panel on the wall that housed at least ten light switches. After a few tries, I managed to flick on the lights. Ten circular lights protruded from the ceiling, making me wince as it bathed the room.

I descended two stairs to where the sectional was and plopped down. It was surprisingly comfortable given its flat look, but it did nothing to ease the nerves building in my gut.

Waiting was the worst part of all of this. I'd rather be with Alec and Kade, fighting whoever might stop us from leaving. It'd be worth it to know that they were safe, that Tori and everyone else was as well.

I flicked on the television that was mounted on the wall, and turned to the next channel for some noise. Within the silence, I could hear every creak

and shift in this house. I contemplated grabbing the tablet, and gave in when my curiosity won over.

There wasn't a password as I swiped upwards. The screen brightened as the tablet unlocked, revealing nearly twenty different screens. Live video footage from various parts of the house appeared, even one of me sitting on the living room couch.

I clicked on one that showed the long driveway, all but shrouded by trees. The next tab held a map, with a small section circled in red. I chuckled dryly at the screen. I wasn't that much farther from the hotel, most likely only a couple hours away.

If they were in wolf form, they'd make it here pretty quickly. Assuming no one was injured. From there, my thoughts continued to turn dark. I focused my attention on the tablet, using it as a desperate distraction.

The last tab was on the Internet, and looked like some kind of news channel website. In bold letters at the top was some catchy title, followed by a long paragraph. I refreshed the page and nearly dropped the tablet.

It slipped through my loosened grip as an image of myself flashed on the screen.

It wasn't just one, but an entire gallery of them. Me pressed against Kade in council room, a look of fury on my face. Another one where I was at the stand, my mouth opened as I declined all three of their offers.

I felt oddly invaded, but couldn't stop myself from reading the paragraph beneath the gallery of photos. It said what I had thought. That I was dangerous, a powerful white wolf on the loose. Running from the High Table for acts of treason. Marcus Novak had all but declared war on us, all without issuing the formal declaration.

I swiped the news article away, trying to force the numbers to stop swimming behind my eyes. The remaining members of the High Table were offering a heavy reward for my capture—alive, not d**d. Jaspur was playing his part, staying within the shadows to keep his own operation safe.

I propped the tablet up on the table and stared at the screens as they showed me various rooms in the house. There was only one camera I was interested in, the one leading directly into the house. As the television droned on in the background, I watched the tablet and waited for my mates to find their way back to me.

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I was ripped from what might've been the deepest sleep I've ever experienced to the shrill sound of an alarm coming from the tablet. It vibrated against the Persian rug on the floor, making me scramble even faster. I rubbed the sleep from my eyes roughly, tossing the blankets from my body in a rush. The tablet had fallen over while I slept, and I practically threw myself from the couch to grab it in time.

I cringed at the harsh light from the tablet, but forced myself to look until the splotches cleared and I could finally see what the h**l was happening. My stomach sank and relief flooded me all at once.

“We know someone’s there—let us in!”^c Tori’s voice wasn’t full of panic and fear, but aggression and determination.

For a moment, it surprised me. She’s always been confident and strong, but this was the voice of a Luna.

I tapped furiously on the tablet, scrolling through the oddly in-depth security measures that encompassed the house. The boundary line within the forest that would set an alarm should something too heavy come

crossing through. The cameras that surrounded the house and even peered off into the trees. Every single window, vent, and doorway had a sensor. Either Jasper Fox was paranoid, or he truly had some serious enemies to worry about.

Finally finding the sensor for the main door, I turned it off and listened to the light whirr of locks sliding out of place. The front door was wrenched open, and I watched in stunned surprise as Tori, Ava, and an unconscious and half-d**d looking Zayne Novak tumbled inside.

Neither Tori or Ava, who was pale and wobbling on two legs, could carry Zayne's weight anymore. The three of them fell to the ground in a pile of limbs, and quiet groans. Ava was first to remove herself from the wreckage, sitting with her back against the wall. Her onyx hair was a wreck, knotted and matted in places. Her thick eyeliner was smeared down her face, though not from crying. Tori looked much the same, haggard and tired, but still with that fierce light in her eyes.

"The man could stand to skip a few f*****g meals." Ava hissed, clutching at her head. "First baby sitter for sleeping beauty, and now rescue party. Not only does he owe me a new phone, but he better make sure his insane father doesn't k**l my family for my involvement. The s**t I get myself into."

"Thank you, Ava. I might not know all that you risked, but I appreciate it." Tori said firmly, her eyes unwavering as they looked towards Ava.

That seemed to smooth out some of Ava's anger, even though she did nothing more than shrug and grumble. I made sure to set the locks for the front door and came over to help the two of them.

"I'm glad the two of you are alright, but I'm assuming you didn't just stumble across Zayne." I said, trying to lighten things, but it was hard

considering he was currently bleeding onto the floor. I offered out a hand to Tori, “Let’s get him on the couch, I think I saw a first aid kit in the kitchen. You can tell me all about this while you patch him up.”

“Hope Jaspar doesn’t mind some blood on his couch.” Tori murmured, grabbing a pair of scissors to cut the shirt from Zayne’s body.

Her emotions were surprisingly under wraps as she focused on peeling the soaked fabric from any wounds he had. She wasn’t doing this out of love or affection, but because we actually needed him. He was too great an ally to throw away, a child turned from his dictator of a father.

“I’m sure there’s at least ten other couches in this house.” I commented, earning the smallest of smiles from her.

The first aid kit was more like a first aid suitcase. I hauled it out of the walk-in pantry in the kitchen and brought it over to where Tori sat. Ava wobbled into the kitchen and grabbed a bowl of warm water and a rag before collapsing down on the couch with a bag of chips in hand.

“All of our abilities have drawbacks.” She explained with a shrug, crunching down on a chip. “I knock people out, so if I overuse mine, it can knock me out too. You’ll find out what your drawback is, we all do eventually.”

“I devour the souls from others, and experience the emotions of everyone around me. That feels like one big drawback sometimes.” I chuckled lightly, though I had grown just a small appreciation for my magic.

“I’m sure it’s saved your a*s a time or two though.”^c Ava pointed out with a nod in my direction.

“It has, but this world is a lot different from the one I grew up in. It’s hard to undo that kind of thinking, that everything is black and white.” I

explained, with a shrug. “I’m getting there, though. Every time I use them to save a life, I can’t bring myself to regret that.”

“Aurora, could you come hold this while I stitch him up?” Tori asked, gesturing to the blood coated towel in her hands.

I was as gentle as possible, but every quiet hiss from Zayne had me stilling. There were gashes along his torso, across his chest and up to the hollow of his throat. He had clearly been punched or kicked in the face, and was sporting two black eyes. On a positive note, the damage to his face would heal within a day or two. The slices along his body, they would take a bit longer.

“Siler f*****g knife.” Tori spat, threading the needle through one of the larger cuts on his body. “It’s going to take nearly two weeks for him to fully heal.”

“You mind explaining this mess without me?” Ava grunted from the other side of the couch. She was currently lying on her back, with a pillow over the top half of her face. “I think I’m going to check out for a few hours.”

“Yeah, I got it.” Tori murmured, not turning her eyes from the task at hand. Nearly ten whole seconds later, Ava’s light snoring filled the living room. Tori glanced at me before returning her eyes to Zayne. “I didn’t exactly mean to leave them, y’know. Thing’s kind of changed at last minute.”

“I know you wouldn’t have split if it weren’t important.” I told her with a small smile, though it was difficult to feel happy while I waited for the twins to arrive.

“The kid Jasper sent gave us the address. I’m lucky I managed to memorize it or we would have been s**t out of luck.” She laughed, but the sound was brittle. Zayne groaned under his breath, which made Tori flinch softly. She ignored the reaction and continued stitching him up. “We were running down the hall and I caught his scent. It was so strong; I knew he was close. I split off down another hall and could hear him as I walked further down. Turns out, I wasn’t the only one lurking. I found Ava snooping from just a few doors down.”

“What was she doing over there?” I asked, guilty that my tone was just a tad suspicious.

Tori didn’t seem to mind and replied without skipping a beat, “I don’t know all of what he does in his father’s pack, but some of these white wolves are actually loyal to him. Ava acts tough, but she was there to try and help him. She’s actually the one who knocked the guards out.”

“And what about his wounds?” I questioned with a frown, not willing to believe his own father’s guards were torturing him.

“The men were acting under his father’s orders.” Tori replied darkly, her emerald eyes turning to a deep shade of moss.

I’m not sure why this surprised and revolted me so much, but it did. I suppose I wanted to believe there was some kind of limit to how cruel another person could be.

Tori finished patching up Zayne and washed the remaining blood from his face and torso. His skin was angry and red, puckered around the slashes on his chest. The stitches would seal the wounds and help them heal just a bit faster and neater. I paid close attention to how Tori moved, with sure hands that lacked even the slightest tremble.

Something about watching Tori close up the wounds on Zayne made a question form in my mind. A theory that I wasn't sure I'd ever actually test. I wondered if since I could steal the life force from someone, could I give it as well? That train of thought was derailed when Tori flicked on the television and thrummed through the channels at random.

"Without some noise, I'm going to fall right asleep." She sighed, brushing some crimson curls away from her forehead.

"You don't have to stay up with me." I urged, more than understanding considering the three of them had quite literally fallen through the doorway.

"Nah, I'm not leaving you to stay up alone." She shook her head, her lips set in a way that I knew meant she wasn't changing her mind. "I know you won't sleep until they get here."

I settled into the couch beside her, snorting when Zayne began to snore softly. Some family television show was on, one where that cheesy background laughter sounded every time someone said something mildly funny. Halfway through an episode, Tori's quiet words caught my attention.

"You do understand why I went back for him right?" She asked, her eyes still locked on the tv screen. "Regardless of what Ava says, I didn't save him because of the d**n bond. I did it because it was stupid not to."

"Believe me, I understand." I replied, letting her tell me what she wanted.

Things between Zayne and Tori were beyond complicated. Tori knew what she wanted, and wasn't afraid to go for it. Zayne had to live in the shadows, splitting who he was and who he needed to be into two different people. There was a wall inside of him, one constructed by his

father's cruelty and hate. It barred his emotions, forcing them away from me and himself. The glimpse I had allowed me to understand how she felt, and I knew that pressing for information was the last thing she needed.

“We broke into the room that they had him in. Ava knocked the guards out and I went to unlock his cuffs.” Her voice grew softer, and her eyes darted over to where Zayne laid. “He wasn't completely lucid, but he was mumbling. He was saying a lot of things, and when he saw it was me, it got worse.”

I wanted to ask what he had said, my own curiosity brimming, but I suppressed the question even as it bubbled on my lips. I let her take her time, mulling over what she wanted to say and omit.

“He said it was too dangerous for him to have a mate, that he never was meant to have one.” Her voice was whisper-soft, to the point where I thought I might've imagined the entire thing. “He also said that—that he needed to protect me, even if it meant crushing my heart.”

The conversation shattered, and that cheesy laughter trickled in the background, as I found myself completely speechless. I had never been one to give advice of any kind. Even though I could feel her emotions like they were my own, I had absolutely no clue what she should do next. Clearly, Zayne had made up his mind, but he also firmly believed we would lose against his father.

Minutes faded into hours, making my eyes sore and dry from staring at the brightly lit tv screen. I had thought the family tv show might grow on me, but it actually had the opposite effect. I sighed in relief when Tori changed the channel to some alien movie.

“A little fantasy might do us good.” She muttered, snorting when a grotesque looking alien popped onto the screen.

“Speak for yourself, werewolves were fantasy up until a few months ago.” I chuckled quietly, needing just a moment or two of normalcy before reality seeped back in. “For all I know, those slimy things are real.”

“Believe me, if they were real, I would’ve told you by now.” She managed a small but genuine smile, while wrapping a fur blanket around her shoulders. “I would have told you while Alec and Kade were—pursuing you, for lack of a better word, if they hadn’t made me keep my trap shut. They wanted to be the ones to break the news to you, but Garrett got there first.”

“Good old Garrett.” I snorted, even though I truly did hope he and Julian made it out of the hotel in one piece. My nerves were still frayed from Alec’s capture, and the last thing I needed was another family member gone missing. “Honestly, I probably wouldn’t have listened to them either.”

“Stubbornness is not an attractive trait, Aurora.” Tori teased, sounding just a little closer to her usual self.

“It’s a good thing my best friend is twice as stubborn as me, then.” I shrugged, snickering when her eyebrows lifted.

The tablet began blaring, spewing its shrill sound into the air. Ava let out a raspy grunt and flung herself to her feet. Her hazel eyes were darting around the room frantically, her hands splayed out at her sides as she readied to use her powers.

“Don’t you dare, Ava! It’s just the stupid tablet!” Tori hissed, giving her shoulders a little shake.

“S**t, thanks for that. I nearly put you all to sleep.” Ava grumbled, rubbing at her eyes.

I scrambled for the tablet, sliding it open a little easier this time. I visibly jumped off the couch when the sound of a fist against metal thrummed through the house. I broke out in a full sweat when the exhausted faces of Alec and Kade filled the screen. I unlocked the front door as I had the first time and sprinted over.

They opened it before I could reach for the handle. At the sight of Alec’s haggard face, my muscles coiled, and I leaped forwards. Both men staggered as I barreled into them. Alec steadied himself on Kade, who braced a hand against the wall.

Both twins seemed to let out identical sighs as they registered my scent and touch. Alecs arms wound themselves around my body, tight to the point of near-pain. I couldn’t bring myself to care, and burrowed myself deeper into his chest. His scent was stronger from when he had been taken by Marcus’s men, but all that mattered was he was safe.

‘We are never, ever leaving your side again.’ Alec’s voice flooded my mind, full of his usual warmth and affection. Even with the obvious exhaustion in his voice, there wasn’t a single part of him that wasn’t grateful to be here with us.

‘Good, don’t. Ever.’ I laughed, but the sound was shaky and broken.

All of the stress and worry I had been shoving aside was coming back to me, weighing down on my chest until my breaths came out in fast pants. At the time, I couldn’t let myself think about how close I had come to

losing Alec. Now, it was all I could think about. Over my shoulder, I could feel the twin's share a look.

"Before you guys head upstairs, think you could put him in a room?" Tori asked, nodding to where Zayne lay unconscious on the couch.

"I'll explain later." I chimed in, my words only partially muffled from being wrapped around Alec and Kade.

"I've got it. Pick out a room and I'll meet you both there. You look like you're ready to fall over any minute." Kade grunted, giving Alec a once over.

He placed a hand on his brother's shoulder, giving him a look that no one other than the two of us would understand. We were both relieved beyond anything that he was back, but the guilt of not finding him sooner weighed on both of us. We were reminded of it in the way Alec's eyes were shadowed, and the way his skin had paled even further.

I sent Kade the warmth and intensity of everything I felt for him, of the bond that surpassed love and spanned worlds. I could feel his reaction instantly, the way the muscles in his jaw relaxed and his shoulders loosened.

In any other situation, I would've been ecstatic to be staying in a house like this. Everything was smooth and pristine, untouched or marred by anyone living. Even the windows were b**e of the smallest imperfection. I would have searched this house top to bottom, and wandered every single room inside. Given the situation, and our current state of exhaustion, I opted for the first room we stumbled upon.

The bed could easily fit the three of us, and even more if we tried. It was plush, set atop an oak bedframe, and was covered in a silk bed spread. I

let out a small whimper as Alec walked past the bed, and towards the large bathroom.

“You can go to sleep, doll.” Alec turned from messing with the shower k***s and gave me a gentle smile. It was just the slight curve of one side of his mouth, but it held his usual tenderness that I had missed endlessly.

The bathroom was larger than necessary, especially the shower with its six built-in heads. My favorite part was the long marble bench within the shower, a blessing to have when you need to shave. I couldn’t help but wonder what Jaspar’s personal home looked like, considering his safehouse was a mansion in the forest.

“What happened to never leaving my side?” repeated with a hint of a smirk.

“Then I suppose you’ll have to shower with me.” He chuckled, and I placed my hand against the hardness of his chest to feel the sound vibrate across his skin. He wrapped an arm around my waist, and toyed with the hem of my t-shirt. “If I slip into bed now, it’s going to smell disgusting.”

“I think you smell good.” I mumbled, not at all flustered from the way his eyes flickered down to my lips.

Even though I wanted to stay awake, to make up for lost time, I could see how exhausted he was. I hadn’t a clue how hard their trip was, or how they had managed to get free of the hotel in the first place.

As Alec gripped the hem of his t-shirt, I wiggled my fingers into the waistband of his sweatpants. I didn’t miss the way his eyes flicked up to my face, his eyes onyx and endless under the white light of the bathroom. I inched them down his hips, taking care not to catch them on his growing member.

“Sleep sounds less appealing with every second.” Alec smiled a bit cheekily, and the sight invoked an instant reaction within me.

“You won’t be saying that in the morning.” I teased, pulling my own shirt from my head. I swatted his hands away when they veered towards my chest, and unbuttoned the pants I wore.

Only when we slipped under the steam of the shower, did I let him take me into his arms. The heat of the water enveloped us, chasing away the chill and fear that had followed for so long. The glass that surrounded us began to fog, blocking our view from the open bathroom door.

The minute his lips clashed against mine, all thoughts of sleep went out the window. The taste of him danced on my tongue, sweet and masculine as it wrapped around my brain and jumbled my thoughts. I could feel his rough hands roaming over every part of me; the soft flesh of my chest, down to the curve of my waist and bottom.

His hands scalded the places they touched, pairing with the hot water to make my skin flush. He memorized my body, all without delving into the places he craved the most. After he mapped out my flesh with his fingertips, I settled into his embrace and watched the dirt and grime of the last few days swirl down the grated drain.

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“Are you sure?” I gasped as my back hit the cool tile of the shower wall.

It jolted up my spine and through my shoulders as the cold moisture met my skin. I wrapped my legs around Alec’s waist, using him to keep my face level with his own. He had been devouring my lips for minutes now, leaving me flushed and shimmering with a thin sheen of sweat.

Once the pine smelling soap had carried every last ounce of dirt and grime down the drain, his hands wasted no time lifting me up to pin me against the wall. I could do nothing but whimper as his fingers trailed up my chest and towards my throat.

“You’re the one who was concerned about what I’d say in the morning.” Alec chuckled lowly, lightly pressing his fingers into the sides of my jaw.

His lips traveled down the length of my neck. Little huffs of his breath caressed my skin, but it wasn’t what I wanted. He refused to place his lips against me, to scrape his teeth against the smoothness of my flesh. Only when his lips reached the mark that sat on my shoulder, did he finally sink his teeth into me.

Stars danced behind my eyes as every muscle in my body went taut. It was his strong arms and the shower wall that kept me from falling over. Violent waves of pleasure pulsed down my neck, swirling around my n****s before delving even lower.

I was already at my limit when I felt the rough pad of Alec’s fingers graze my c**t. The swollen flesh reacted instantly to his touch, making me shake around him. With his teeth and tongue still playing with our mark, he spread my legs further with his hips and slid his fingers along my damp slit. As two of his fingers entered me, I wasn’t prepared for the desperation behind his movements, the carnal need to see and feel everything we both had been missing.

“Do you know what it’s like to be separated from the one you love, only to wake up nearly a week later?” He murmured against my shoulder, thrusting his fingers inside of me. He curled them as he drew back, making my jaw fall slack. I couldn’t force myself to answer other than the slew of sounds that left my lips, but he didn’t seem to care. “To hear

from everyone else what happened, to know that I should've been there—there isn't much worse than that.”

I was shaking and riding his fingers within seconds, trembling against the hardness of his chest as my o****m rocked through me.

“Rest assured, it's never going to happen again.” He snarled, breathing heavily against my shoulder.

There was a finality to his words that sent excitement skittering up my spine and down my limbs. Alec was the more playful of the two, and to see him so worked up and desperate—it only reignited the fire that burned low in my stomach.

As the stars faded from my eyes, I set my gaze on his. I wasn't sure how much he knew, how much Kade had managed to tell him. Did he know that I was now a soul-eater, or that I had k****d Desmond Deville?

“It won't happen again.” I agreed, flushing when his eyes flickered down to the rise and fall of my chest. A sort of possessiveness washed through me, carrying heat and need so strong that it physically hurt. I remained quiet for a few moments, catching my breath so he could hear the strength of my words. “I don't know what Kade has told you, but my powers are different now. I'm a soul-eater, and I've used that skill more than once. I don't know if that makes me a monster, but I've only done it to protect myself or the people I care about. If Marcus tries to take either one of you, I won't hesitate to use it again.”

“We're all monsters in some way, doll. Even the humans.” He said softly, tracing his thumb down my jaw. “Our world just as brutal and cruel as theirs, only in a different way. You weren't given powers to suppress them.”

There was no contempt in his eyes, no flicker of anything other than pure acceptance. It made my chest flutter, and renewed warmth grow between my legs. Alec tracked the change with darkened eyes, and pressed me tighter against the wall.

“I’m not going to be gentle this first time.” He murmured softly, brushing the wet strands of hair from my forehead.

My core throbbed painfully when I felt the swollen head of him brush against my inner t***h. The groan that rippled through him from a simple touch send my brain into a euphoric haze. Good, I wanted to say. The desperate sense of urgency that pulsed through me mimicked the feel of adrenaline. I needed him in his entirety, his hands and lips painting the canvas of my body. I was sure I’d go insane if he took his time with me, drawing out the torture until I could take no more.

The look in my eyes was confirmation enough, and he took my lips with a ferocity that made me gasp. He set me down on my two feet before nudging me closer to the glass wall of the shower.

“Put your hands on the glass, and don’t move them.” His voice was low and raspy by my ear.

His hands felt like hot coals as they guided me forward. The pleasurable bite of cold lashed at my n*****s when he pushed me against the dewy glass. After spreading my legs with a nudge of his foot, he positioned himself behind me. I could feel the heat of him at my back, and every second I waited only increased the building moisture between my legs.

A yelp left my lips when I felt the head of him rub against my c**t. Electric danced through me, making me shake from how sensitive I currently was down there. As he pressed himself against my opening, a few inches slid inside from how wet I was.

There was always a flicker of pain whenever one of the twin's entered me, stretching me to accommodate for their thick lengths. My hips bucked, and I pushed my bottom against him.

“F**k, just the feel of you is going to make me come.” He hissed, digging his fingers into my hips until I stilled.

I could feel half of his length pulsing inside of me, reacting to the tightness that had it in a vice grip. He stilled for a few agonizing seconds, before shoving the rest of his thick length in one rough thrust. My n****s flattened against the glass of the shower, and a sound foreign to my own ears left my mouth.

One of Alec's hands fell against the glass, while the other reached forward and grazed the sensitive folds of my p***y. Pain and pleasure melted into one another, tearing the light and color from my eyes.

“All f*****g mine...” He panted in between thrusts, running his slick fingers over my c**t until my legs shook.

My mind had been such a haze that I hadn't thought of peering through the glass that was only inches away from my face. The water in the shower had begun to cool down, making the condensation run in thick streams.

My eyes widened and a jolt of surprise raced through me when I met a pair of dark eyes.

Kade was leaning against the sink, very much watching what was happening between his brother and I. My legs were spread wide, and Alec's hand was all too easy to spot as he continued stroking me to climax. I hadn't a clue how I didn't feel the weight and heat of his eyes on my skin, or how I hadn't noticed his naked form standing there.

My eyes were drawn even lower as I saw his hand move to grasp his length. Navy veins bulged from his shaft, ending at a swollen head. I cursed and whimpered as Alec continued thrusting into me, stretching me with every grunt; all while I watched his brother.

“You like it when my brother watches, don’t you?” Alec snarled in my ear, pressing even harder against my c**t.

“Yes—I f*****g love it.” I gasped, spurred on by the filthy words that came from his mouth, ones laced in so much need it made me feel drugged and delirious.

Precum glistened on the head of Kade’s c**k as he quickened his pace to match Alec’s. I watched the way Kade’s hips pumped, his thick shaft sliding against his hand, when Alec delivered the final incinerating blow that sent me spiraling.

“Oh f**k, that’s it.” Alec groaned against my shoulder, the sound gravely and dazed. His thrusts grew rough and his words incoherent as he grew stiff inside of me. My core pulsed and throbbed, milking him for everything he had. I wouldn’t be satisfied until I felt him dripping down my thighs. “You take my c**k so well, doll.”

I was first to topple over the edge, followed by Alec and then Kade. I remained where I was for a few moments, feeling the moisture leak from between my legs. When I was sure I could move without falling over, I went to turn the water heat back up.

Kade hopped in the shower with us, which means I had to smack two sets of wandering hands away as I rinsed the shampoo from my hair. Once I felt like I had scrubbed the grime of the High Table from beneath my skin, I wrapped myself in the softest towel to ever exist.

“We should upgrade our safe houses.” Kade pointed out as both he and Alec emerged from the shower. “I had no clue you guys had safe houses.” I shook my head, “There’s so much I still don’t know about my own pack.”

Alec stepped forward and gave me one of his lopsided grin’s. The sight made relief blossom in my chest, proof that he was still himself after what he had been through.

“No one blames you for not knowing much.” He reassured me, tugging at the towel I had around my torso. His grin only widened when I relented and let the warm piece of fabric fall to the ground. “The High Table has been gunning for you since the very beginning. Once all of this is over, you’ll have the time to learn everything you want to know.”

I was silenced by his lips before I could say anything further. My train of thought was derailed completely when we broke apart, and my two mates lead me to our inviting bed.

I was woken to the sound of shouting, two heated voices clashing against one another. It took me a few minutes to register where I was, and who I was with. Both the twin’s masculine scents lulled me back into that blissful line between sleep and consciousness. When the faces of Tori and Zayne flashed in my mind, I jolted up from the bed, the haze permanently broken.

Kade reacted first to my movements, sitting up as his eyes scanned the room. Alec was just a few seconds later.

“I’m not sure if she’s brave or a fool for going back for him.” Kade sighed, his voice still deliciously rough from the early morning hours. He ran a hand down his face and glanced towards the windows, staring at the sliver of sunlight that peeked through. “We’re going to have to keep them

from k*****g each other. Something tells me we're all running on just a few hours of sleep."

Thankfully, the closets were fully stocked with clothes. It was a hit or miss to see what fit best, but after a few tries I found something that covered the important parts. With every movement the muscles in my legs ached, along with the welt on my bottom, which may or may not be in the shape of Kade's hand.

We came downstairs just in time to see a red-faced Tori emerge from the kitchen.

Ava was perched on the couch, looking much like a cat would as its eyes drifted lazily at the chaos unfolding. She held a bag of chips in her hand, shoving one into her mouth as she watched Tori. The distinct scent of barbeque chips permeated the air, along with the acidic taste of Tori's rage.

Zayne, unbothered as ever, was seated at the end of the sectional. A crystal glass of what I suspected was alcohol, sat on the table beside him. After a whiff in his direction, I could easily tell he had been drinking.

"Day drinking already?" Kade asked, his voice flat.

"I spent the last four hours sleeping, slowly healing from my father's favorite brand of torture. I can feel the silver in my veins still, and the Advil in the f*****g cabinet isn't going to help." Zayne snapped, but rolled his eyes and huffed when Kade took a step forward. The man wasn't p**s drunk, but his guard was most definitely lowered from however much alcohol he had consumed.

Tori came out from the kitchen with two plates in her hands. Thick pancakes rose from the plate in a tower of golden sticky syrup. A stack of

bacon sat on each side of the plates, sending the smoky scent into the air. She handed one to Ava and sat down beside her.

“Oh, I didn’t expect you three up so early.” Tori cleared her throat, trying to hide some of the anger that still pulsed through her.

“Since you patched me up with your mediocre sewing skills, think you could bring me a plate of food?” Zayne swiveled his eyes towards Tori and asked smoothly, his face a mask of cool indifference. “I’d hate to tear a stitch and have to suffer through a repeat.”

I instinctively took a step back when Tori sat her plate on the table, making it clatter as she stormed to her feet. Her emotions were a thunder storm of anger, resentment, regret, and just a whisper of need. Her emotions had been stronger since Zayne rejected her, more volatile when it came to his petty jabs. I couldn’t blame her, knowing how she felt whenever he was near. Rejection turned happiness to anger, and sucked the joy out of every moment. It felt like seeing the world in black and white, when everyone around you marveled at the colors.

“If it weren’t for my mediocre sewing job, as you so ignorantly call it, you’d still be bleeding out. Not to mention Ava and I carried your heavy a*s through the forest for hours to get you here.” She snarled; her fists clenched at her sides. I was nearly eighty percent sure that if he weren’t already injured, Tori would’ve swung at him. Her voice grew a few octaves as she sharpened her words and flung them like daggers, “I have never met someone so f*****g ungrateful. If you put as much effort into doing the right thing as you did complaining, you would’ve rescued half the white wolves in your father’s pack by now!”

What was even stranger than the anger that crackled and surrounded Tori like tendrils of flame, was what I felt coming from Zayne.

Since meeting Zayne Novak, I felt next to nothing when it came to his emotions. He had been refined by his father, molded and morphed into the damaged man he was today. I wasn't sure how much he had to drink, but it was affecting that carefully crafted wall he placed over his emotions. The wall held them back, making him all but numb to the world. It was how he survived; a defense mechanism bashed into him by Marcus. I saw it for what it was, a way to survive the horrors of his life without being affected.

This new side of Zayne, the one where his wall was lowered, it gave me a glimpse at him. I wasn't sure what kind of emotions a man like Zayne would feel, but the last I expected to find was amusement.

It shimmered and danced like a flame, playful where Tori was fueled with frustration. Every ounce of the emotion was directed at her, and the way her face reddened and her emerald eyes flared like glittering jewels.

He was enjoying this, seeing her worked up and angry with him. Most of the time, feeling others emotions gives me a glimpse into why they do the things they do. Feeling Zayne's emotions for the first time—the man clearly had some deep-rooted issues if he was enjoying this, purposefully riling her up for whatever reason he could concoct in his head.

When Tori finished snapping at Zayne, she turned on her heel and stormed back into the kitchen. I could hear the clatter of dishes and her furious mumbling as she rummaged around.

“You're a dumbass. She's going to take your head off if you keep f*****g with her.” I frowned down at him, only feeling irked when my comment rolled off of his shoulders.

“She's so very easy to rile up.” He cocked an eyebrow at me, “By all means, give me some other form of entertainment while I'm stuck here.”

“Try watching tv like a normal person.” I replied dryly, narrowing my eyes at him when Tori walked back into the room with a plate in her hand. She stopped in front of Zayne, her lips thinning when he gave her an oily smile. “Fine, do what you want. There’s plenty of room in the backyard to bury you once she’s finished.”

“Oh, but she won’t k**l me.” Zayne shook his head confidently, bringing the crystal glass to his lips. His frost-colored eyes remained locked on Tori, and didn’t waver when she dropped the plate on his lap.

“Don’t make a f*****g mess, I’m not helping you bathe yourself.” She hissed, drawing back all of the anger that previously exploded from her. I commended her strength, because the amount of energy behind her emotions was staggering.

“Care to bet on it?” He replied darkly, knowledge flashing in his eyes. “Wouldn’t be the first time you’ve lost.”

What he said had an impact on Tori, and made her bristle. She snatched up her own plate and headed towards the stairs, stopping to give me an apologetic smile.

“I’ll catch up with you guys in a few hours.” She promised, turning her eyes to Zayne. They narrowed upon impact and her words sharpened. “I think I’ll finish my breakfast in my room.”

Zayne glanced down at his plate and frowned, “Who doesn’t put syrup on their pancakes? I’m not a complete monster.”

Tori ignored him, which he rightfully deserved, and went upstairs. I followed the twins into the kitchen, surprised that Tori hadn’t just cooked for her and Ava. A stack of pancakes sat beneath a plastic cover, along with the rest of your typical breakfast foods.

I snickered when the twins began piling their plates up high, even though I was incredibly relieved Alec was eating solid foods. The sight of them with plates bigger than their heads, it brought a shred of normalcy back into our lives.

As I sat at the kitchen table eating with them, I let my mind wander to what things could be like after this mess was over. I still hadn't forgotten my idea of a bakery, even though I wasn't sure when I'd ever have the time to run a shop when I fully became Luna.

"Being Luna doesn't have to run your life, sweetheart." Kade said in between forkfuls of pancake. Lately we've been reading each other's thoughts more and more, using that channel of communication. For some reason, it felt more natural to share my thoughts with them. "You should always have time to do the things you love."

"Well, I don't exactly know how to bake." I chuckled, shoving another forkful of eggs into my mouth. "Beth taught me some things, but really she just kind of told me what to do."

"Mom would love to help you. She's been complaining lately that there isn't much to do—well, she said that before all of this started." Alec grinned, leaning back in his seat.

The conversation quickly turned to their parents, and if they were currently safe. The twin's parents had sent them ahead to the safe house, opting to head home to make sure Julian and Garrett made it out safely.

With Marcus stirring up a nationwide manhunt for us, the best thing to do was lay low. When it was safe to travel, then we could head home. It was the safest place for us, to be within the borders of our own pack.

“They’ll be in touch with us either today or tomorrow.”^c Kade reassured me with a soft look, “When it’s time for us to leave, we’re going to need their help. Hopefully the search will have calmed down by then, but I doubt it. Marcus won’t quit that easily, and we don’t have weeks to hide out here.”

“I think Jaspar might be able to help as well.” I explained, going through what exactly happened when his daughter wrapped her hand around my wrist.

Both of my mates seemed stunned at Jaspar’s involvement with rescuing the white wolves, even though this was his safe house we were staying in.

“His help could change the outcome of this war, depending on who Marcus calls to his side.” Alec frowned, and I could already see the gears turning in his head.

The twin’s helped clean the kitchen once we finished eating. Alec was still loading the dishwasher, so I wandered out to the living room. Ava was still perched on the couch, a bag of chips in hand. Her eyes were glued to the television, and the colorful show that played across the screen.

“Marcus doesn’t let us have junk food.” Ava rolled her eyes, “Not that most of us see him personally anyway. He just keeps us healthy so he can study us, and use us when he needs. Which is why I plan on eating whatever I want while I’m away.”

“For some reason, I’m not surprised.” I said, my voice grim.

I glanced up to where Tori had gone, feeling a pang of guilt hit my chest. What she was going through wasn’t easy, and I hadn’t been there a s

much as I could've. I made a beeline for the stairs when Ava's voice called out to me.

"I'm not going to even try understanding Zayne, but as someone whose known him for a long time, I can tell when he cares about something. The more he feels for your friend, the more he's going to push her away." Ava frowned, but the serious expression only lasted a second before she shrugged. "Doesn't mean he isn't a manipulative p***k, but your friend seems like she can handle herself."

I wasn't sure what to say to that, or whether it should bring some shred of comfort or not. Zayne was so deeply rooted in the lifestyle his father had created, that he shoved anyone he cared for away. It was a way to protect them, and himself.

Regardless, a person could only take so much before they shattered entirely.

I made it to the top of the stairs when I heard a deep groan, followed by some quietly muttered words. I stopped myself before I turned the corner, nearly speaking when I saw Zayne crouched on the floor of the hallway. Beside him was Tori, her face contorted in a grimace as she helped him up.

"You idiot, I told you not to drink so much." She hissed angrily, draping his arm over her shoulder to shift some of his weight onto her. "And you've torn your stitches."

"Quit f*****g helping me." He snarled back, but there was no venom in his words considering Tori held up most of his weight.

Even though I should have turned back long ago, I stood there watching until Tori opened the door to her bedroom and walked the two of them

inside. As she closed the door behind her, I swore I could hear her say; “I wish I could.”

Mated to the Alpha Twins by Jane Doe Chapter 106

The twin’s parents contacted us nearly an entire day later. While they had the address for the safehouse, there was no way for us to contact anyone in the outside world. There were no telephones in the entire house, and our own cellphones were lost or broken during the chaos.

“They won’t come here.” Kade reassured me, ” Marcus’s men could be anywhere. Coming here would only bring trouble.”

Even though I cherished these hours with the twin’s, they were wrought with anxiety. I couldn’t help but feel like the world was holding its breath, waiting for the next move to be made. Marcus had clearly made the first move, ordering my capture along with Tori and the twins. It was our turn, but we were in no position to do anything.

Both Tori and Zayne stayed in their rooms for most of the day, managing to come downstairs at different intervals. While it might’ve been chance, I had the distinct feeling they were completely avoiding each other. I thought back to last night and the interaction between the two of them, wondering if something more might’ve happened once, she shut the door behind them.

Ava had actually stayed in the living room all night. The twin’s and I had come downstairs to her wrapped in a cocoon of blankets, with various snacks littered around her body. While she didn’t go any further into detail, Ava mentioned her large family and the closeness between them all.

The day passed slowly, but the twins had their ways of distracting me. In truth, I think they needed the distraction as well. I knew that not only were they worried about the countless white wolves within Marcus's walls, but they were worrying about their own pack. Actual war, it's not something an eighteen-year-old ever thinks they might experience. Where the concept was once concrete in my mind, I now couldn't wrap my head around it. Even with the confusion and guilt, I knew I'd remain strong. It wasn't just about me and my freedom anymore, it was about the freedom of thousands.

I was finding it hard to sleep that night, even after hours spent in their embrace. I listened to the ringing in my ears when the silence became to deafening, staring up into the darkness that cloaked the ceiling. The twins had both fallen asleep already, even though I knew both would wake from little more than a whisper.

I was the first to hear the feather-light knock on the door. Both Alec and Kade woke up, awareness already forming in their eyes.

You could have easily convinced me I was dreaming when Kade opened the door to reveal a pale looking Zayne leaning against the frame. The three of us were silent long enough for Zayne to roll his eyes and come walking in. I could feel how he forced himself to stand upright, to shove and bottle his pain until his entire body throbbed.

"Look, Tori's the one who knows all of the medical stuff." I told him, crossing my arms over my chest. "You're going to have to get over being around her so she can fix your wounds. I'll only end up doing more damage, the twin's even worse."

"I am not here for medical attention." He said through clenched teeth, his eyes hardened into sheets of ice. "I am here because this is the only way to speak with you without her overhearing. As you're well aware,

she's—difficult to get along with. I don't need her interfering in these plans, not when they can tip the scales in this war.”

“We'll go back to the part where Tori is the difficult one later, but explain this plan.” I toned my snarl down into a venomous whisper. “Staying in the shadows only works for so long Zayne, especially with something this big. This isn't just about rescuing a few white wolves; it doesn't just end with that. Not anymore.”

“I understand clearly what's going on, more than you know. I'm all but signing my f*****g d***h warrant.” He grunted, walking slow and stiff to the couch across the room. There was pain in his stiff movements, even if they looked formal and polite. Shadows hung in the depths of his eyes, and his emotions were just as blocked as they had been when he was sober. “I fully intend on coming out of the shadows, at the right moment. When you take my father's head, I will be the one to bring him to his knees.”

As much as I despised Zayne, and only tolerated him for the sake of this war and Tori, this was what we needed. We needed the upper hand, an advantage against the most powerful person in our world.

“What's your plan?” Alec was the first to ask, his once carefree face now hardened from equal parts loathing and determination.

“First, I need you to tell me something.” Zayne said, his eyes directly on me. “How is it that my father found out about our involvement with rescuing your mate here?”

I figured Jasper hadn't the time to tell Zayne with him getting dragged off and tortured, but the two actively worked together, which meant I trusted him with the truth.

“A white wolf that Marcus brought, she saw the memory in my mind when she touched me.” I explained as best I could, recounting the woman that had bumped into me.

“Cleo. She works for my father willingly. You’ll find that not all white wolves are unhappy with their positions. They thrive just as much on cruelty as my father.” Zayne said darkly, “The only good thing out of this, Cleo can only see a single memory at a time, and she has to know what to look for. My father must have fed her the information about your missing mate, and she followed the path in your head.”

“This is a good thing, how?” Kade asked, sitting beside me on the couch. I sat between my twin’s, thankful that I wasn’t still tossing and turning in bed. Hopefully discussing war plans would help calm my mind. “Marcus has no reason to trust you knowing that you helped us.”

“Cleo’s abilities are like watching a recap of a television show. She can’t hear your thoughts or most of the conversation. The longer she keeps contact with you, the more details she can get. She must’ve seen just enough for my father to assume guilt.” He explained, his eyes peering out the window, to the darkness that peeked between the c*****s. “Which means he’s still clueless about my involvement with the white wolves. He also has no knowledge of our agreement or the reasons behind my helping you.”

“You’re going to feed him a story, something that would put you in the clear.” I pieced it together, feeling my stomach sink for both Tori and Zayne. “You’re going to go back.”

“Yes, I am going to go back. I plan on leaving tomorrow night.” He answered smoothly, his eyes betraying nothing. “I will tear his pack down from the inside, while you gather your armies.”

That small shred within me that still housed the fearful human girl—she wanted to run for the hills. It was becoming all too real for her, some magical fantasy turned dark and b****y. She had signed up for the endless, eternal love—not the magical enslavement, m****r, and lies.

“How—how does war work?” I asked plainly, even though the question itself wasn’t stupid in the slightest.

“Packs always formally announce acts of war against one another. They’re recorded so we can always remember our history.” Surprisingly, it was Zayne who explained. I liked to think that he wanted to speak, to distract himself from whatever mess was going on inside of his head. “At times, an Alpha will challenge another to single combat, to save their packs the pain and loss of war.”

“I don’t suppose Marcus would be interested in single combat?” I suggested with a brittle laugh that quickly sputtered out.

“My father will not show such courtesy. He will use every ounce of power at his disposal, even if it means sending his warriors to their deaths.” Zayne said in a gravelly voice. “Most of the warriors are just a formality, bodies to protect the white wolves that are his most powerful.”

“What’s this story you plan on giving to Marcus?” Kade asked, his dark eyes like bright orbs in the poorly lit room. “I assume it’ll paint Aurora and I as the enemies.”

“As bad as it sounds, I think that’s the smartest thing to do.” I frowned, “That’s what Marcus is trying to do, show the world that were the bad guys. If his own son shows up telling a story about how we held him against his will, it’ll give Marcus even more reason to believe it.”

“Then what’s the story?” Kade grunted, some of the hardness in his eyes eroded as he looked down at me.

“Well—we caught Zayne off guard and attacked him. We forced him to help us get Alec back and left him in one of the hotel rooms when we were finished.” I suggested, knowing that the story had holes. It was the best I could come up with at three in the morning.

“He’s going to torture me regardless, so I better get my stories straight.” Zayne said evenly, without a trace of emotion. What hurt me the most was how nonchalant he sounded, as though that kind of punishment was normal growing up.

“Won’t he just use Cleo on you once you get back home?” I pointed out, knowing that could ruin his plans before they even begun.

“Once I’m in my father’s pack, I have allies of my own. There are a lot of protective abilities among the white wolves, and more than enough owe me a favor or two.” He replied without looking away from the window, “We’re going to need more details. If you and Kade subdued me, why did I not simply mind-link my father or his men?”

I paused for a moment, working through the steps.

“We used silver on you, enough to knock you out and cut your connection to your pack.” I said a bit slowly, feeling the pieces click together in my mind.

“Up until we went there, you had no clue the house existed. Won’t Marcus know that?” Kade asked, which turned out to be a very good point.

“I’ll tell him I’ve known about it the entire time.” Zayne shrugged, meeting Kade’s eyes. “I know he purchased it nearly a year and a half ago, and who the buyer was, which will be proof enough for him.”

“Once we had Alec back, we left you in one of the hotel suites. We knew you couldn’t miss this meeting or it would draw attention, so we injected you with just enough to knock you out for an hour. It wore off in time for the meeting, which you then showed up for. You didn’t have the time to tell Marcus what happened, because the meeting had already begun.” I concluded, feeling somewhat proud with myself.

“What about Ava? Won’t he know from Aurora’s memory that she was there as well?” Kade pointed out.

“Your cynical nature is really proving handy on this one, brother.” Alec smirked from beside me.

“How long did Cleo touch you for?” Zayne asked, his voice sharp. “I need you to be as accurate as possible.”

“It couldn’t have been for more than a few seconds, but there’s no way for me to know for sure.” I replied, refusing to balk under his gaze.

“It’s a risk we’ll have to take.” He said with finality, “She was with Kade for the first half. Let’s hope that’s the part that Cleo viewed.”

While I wasn’t exactly happy with sending Zayne back to his father, it wasn’t a horrible plan. If it worked, it would give us that upper hand we desperately needed. In the end, it was Zayne’s choice to make, but there was still something bothering me. I could feel it in my chest, picking and scratching as it made itself known.

“Why can’t we tell her, Zayne?” I asked seemingly out of the blue. “She understands just as well as anyone that you make your own choices. If this works, it could change things, but it’s your risk to take.”

“She will know nothing about it, Aurora.” He said harshly, his cool demeanor turning bitter. I could feel next to nothing from his emotions, and the wall he had erected around them. Brick by brick, Zayne and his father built that wall. “I don’t want her mixed in with what I am doing, and not for the sentimental reasons I’m sure are going through your head right now. She has no place in any of this. I might be stuck working with you three, but she is a distraction I never asked for.”

I wasn’t sure if he noticed that last part had slipped out, but his anger was palpable. The twin’s stiffened on either side of me, but I quickly told them both to cool it.

When Zayne had first showed up at the door of the twin’s cabin, I felt absolutely nothing from him. The wall around him was of thick granite, impenetrable and solid. After meeting Tori, the rock began to chip and erode; seared by her intensity and passion. That wall around him was going to shatter, and I only hoped Tori was free from the explosion when it did.

Against my better judgement, I pushed again. He was finally doing the right thing, standing up to Marcus in the one way that mattered. He was stepping into the light and accepting his role in creating this new future, but I still couldn’t fathom why Tori couldn’t be a part of this new future with him. One where Marcus wasn’t there to exact control over him, one where he was free to choose Tori.

“What you’re doing doesn’t make any sense, Zayne. Did Marcus mess you up that badly that you can’t see what you’re giving up? She’s literally meant for you, in all of your ignorant, stubborn, a*****e ways.”

I scoffed, hardening my face as anger flashed in his eyes. “We’re trying to change things for everyone, to create something new and better. There is no reason for you to be doing this to her. She deserves better, and yet she’s saddled with you.”

Anger sizzled and burned through the cracks in his wall, though the emotion wasn’t scalding like Tori’s was. Zayne’s anger was through lashes of ice and spiderwebs of bitter frost.

“I don’t have to explain anything to you, not a single f*****g thing.” He snapped, his voice dripping with rage.

He stood from the couch, his hands trembling as he clenched them at his sides. He never even bothered looking at the twin’s as he turned and walked stiffly from the room.

Just as he opened the door, I spoke loud enough for him to hear.

“Your emotions come out when your drunk, Zayne. You can’t hide that.”

The door clicked shut, sending the room spiraling into silence for the second time.

Zayne’s plan was a good one, but it was one full of danger. In my mind, Tori had a right to know. She was a part of this mess, hunted by Marcus for simply being important to me. While I supported Zayne’s choice—I knew I couldn’t lie to her.

My hope about war meetings and sleep had come true. Wedged between Alec and Kade, with nothing more than their body heat and a thin sheet to keep me warm, I floated in that blissful space between sleep and awareness.

My eyes were torn open by sunlight covered daggers that clashed in my brain as they collided. Aware of nothing more than the pain and the sheet tangled around my legs, I groaned and heaved myself into a sitting position.

“Get dressed, sweetheart.” Kade grunted, walking past me with a lot more speed than usual.

A shirt and a pair of jeans was tossed on the bed in front of me, but I was still having trouble processing. Instead of asking questions, I stood and took a few minutes to get dressed. I must’ve been moving too slowly because Alec strolled over to help me.

“You’re a very heavy sleeper.” He smirked, slipping my arms through the shirt holes.

“Did something happen?” I asked, fighting to keep the grogginess from my voice.

“Yeah, something happened.” Alec grunted; his relaxed demeanor replaced with one of frustration. “Zayne left last night.”

Like a bucket of water splashed against the side of my head, I was fully awake from that point onward. Alec and I came downstairs to a furious Tori, and Kade who took the brunt of it.

“Were you going to tell me that he planned on leaving?” Tori snapped, her narrowed eyes on Kade. When she noticed Alec and I standing in the doorway, her emerald eyes fall on us.” Were any of you going to tell me?”

“I was going to tell you, I swear.” I promised her, leaving Alec’s side to step forward. I could feel the anger and betrayal radiating from her,

sinking into my skin like razor sharp daggers. “He said he wasn’t leaving until tomorrow night. I figured it could’ve waited until the morning. I had no clue he was going to leave a few hours later.”

She looked skeptical, and the thought of her doubting me made my chest throb and ache. I masked the pain and hoped she could see the truth, that I wouldn’t keep something like this from her, not about her own mate.

“The moment Zayne told us what he planned; Aurora made the decision in her mind to tell you.” Kade spoke up for me, meeting Tori’s gaze head on. His voice was strong and sure when he spoke, “On mine and my brother’s honor as Alpha’s, Aurora had every intention on telling you before Zayne left.”

Little by little, the suspicion in her eyes dissolved, taking the pain in my chest along with it.

The rest of the day was wrought with tension, as that looming sensation of the world holding its breath grew stronger. After a few hours of mindlessly watching television or exploring the house, I was ready to break free from this place. What I hated worse than the violence and betrayal was the waiting, waiting for something to happen.

As the clock on the far wall hit ten o’clock, the tablet on the table erupted in a shrill blaring around. Where it was first annoying in volume, it ratcheted up when the sound connected to the speakers on the television.

Alec came running into the room, a plate of forgotten food in his hand. There was nothing on the screen, nothing but darkness. The shrill sound continued for a few more seconds, when a click sounded from the television mounted on the wall.

The television blinked on, bringing bright light and the enlarged image of Jasper Fox's face. He was standing a few feet away from the camera, his onyx hair an untidy mess on his head. The leather jacket he wore was ripped in a few places, and the patches were peeling off. He looked at the camera, and began speaking.

"Hello, Aurora. If you're getting this message, it means I am d**d."

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"Hello, Aurora. If you're getting this message, it means I am d**d."

Every muscle and fiber in my body locked up at his words. His face remained plastered on the screen, while Delilah's played in my mind. My stomach rolled at the thought of something happening to that little girl, of Marcus getting his hands on her. Her strange teleportation abilities would certainly pique his interest, which I'm sure was why Jasper kept her hidden from the world.

"Your current location is safe, for now. I have prepared evacuation plans for you and your crew. Three days after you receive this message, a man and woman will knock on the front door. Trust these people with your lives, go where they take you, and for the sake of the future—stay alive."

The television clicked off, blanketing the room in darkness. After a total of two seconds, I scrambled from where I stood for the remote. Before I could grab it, Alec snatched it from the table and flicked onto the news. I had no clue what channels were human news and what were werewolf, but the twin's seemed to know just fine.

"Mere hours ago, a battle to the d***h took place when head of the High Table, Marcus Novak, sent his troops through the lines of Ex-High Table member, Jasper Fox's territory. What began as a casual encounter

quickly turned carnal when Mr. Fox unleashed his warriors on the troops. Multiple rumors had depicted Mr. Fox's pack as a safe-haven of sorts for white wolves, forcing the High Table's hand. As it currently stands, no evidence of white wolves has been found on Mr. Fox's land." A somber news caster with doe eyes and heart shaped lips frowned, giving the camera a look of genuine sympathy. "I'll pass this on to Nathan Dolohov, who is currently at the scene of what marks the end of Mr. Fox's reign."

The screen shifted, now showing a man in a casual suit, standing in front of the charred husk of a house. Its wooden bones were blackened, leaning as it held itself together with nothing more than luck and a few stubborn nails. Nathan Dolohov looked at the camera, brushing back his golden hair with a hand, and began speaking.

"I'm here at the Fox's family estate, and what looks to be a tragic accident that claimed the lives of Jaspar Fox, his mate Emily Fox, and their daughter; Delilah Fox. One of our paramedics on scene have confirmed that three sets of remains were found. The origin of the fire is currently being investigated, spearheaded by Jaspar Fox's eldest son. When we return in an hour, I hope to glean more information from the Head of our High Table, Marcus Novak."

The screen changed again, flitting back to the brunette with sad eyes.

"Until the High Table's investigation surrounding Jaspar Fox have been concluded, he is assumed innocent from all accused crimes. Our team, along with agents from the High Table, interviewed many of Jaspar Fox's pack members. All vehemently expressed their Alpha's innocence, even though a mere hour before Marcus Novak entered their land, Mr. Fox transferred all power and titles to his eldest son." She spoke, her unwavering gaze on the camera.

“He made his son Alpha, and a member of the High Table.” Alec scoffed, swiping a hand across his jaw. His face was illumined by the television, making the darkness in his eyes swirl. “He knew this was going to end in a fight, the man was prepared for it. Question is, do we think he’s still alive?”

“Would he really go through all of the trouble to fake his family’s death?” Tori questioned, her eyebrows knitting together as she picked at a few stray fibers on the pants she wore. “They would have had to—acquire three bodies, and b**n them. Which is deeply unsettling.”

“Not nearly as unsettling as what Marcus would do to them if caught.” Kade grunted, settled on the couch with his elbows on top of his thighs. Strands of hair fell in his face, but my attention was quickly diverted back to the screen when the woman continued speaking.

“The entirety of Mr. Fox’s land has been combed through, and within these next few days, the High Table will send warriors to scour the packs that surround Mr. Fox’s. It is within the best interest of these packs that you co-operate with the High Table and trust them to uncover the truth. As the largest broadcasting company for our kind, we will provide hourly updates on the progress of this investigation and the even more elusive search for the soul-eater and her companions, which has thus far been fruitless. In precisely one hour, we will return with more information for these cases, both of which are the biggest we’ve seen in decades.” She continued, her face neutral and her words perfectly spoken. A croak left my lips when three pictures of me flashed on the screen. All were from the hotel and the High Table meetings. “I’m Sara Barns, and thank you for tuning in.”

The television then changed to some singing commercial, which Alec silenced almost immediately. I knew without my abilities, that we were all at a loss for words. The fact that we were all wanted by the most

powerful man in our world, it was a hard pill to s*****w. Every single pack would be on the lookout for us, and we were away from home.

We sat in silence for the entire hour, having nothing better to do than to sit and watch. It was almost funny in a strange way. We were watching updates on our own manhunt. While the world watched and wondered where we were, they hadn't a clue we were watching as well.

Unsurprisingly, after an hour, no further evidence on either case had been found. The High Table still couldn't find us, though if they had any leads, there was no way they'd spill. They did, however, go over nearly every detail of my life starting with when I first moved in with Melissa and Frank. The only time Garrett or Julian was mentioned, was when my inheritance was brought up. The twins could feel my own mood souring as Sara Barns recounted the worst years of my life. She even gave some information on the twins, and even a small segment about Tori. I felt utterly drained afterwards, and jumped when Alec's voice tore through the silence.

"We've been reduced to companions, Kade." Alec scoffed, finally breaking the silence. "Can you f*****g believe it? They could've at least included a picture of us."

Kade turned towards Alec, with an incredulous look on his face. The sight made me want to laugh, especially with the stress that had just been thrown on us.

"I was comatose for nearly a week, and missed out on the entire meeting." Alec raised an eyebrow at his brother, daring him to say something. I didn't miss how the last sentence was said a bit sourly. I could tell what irritated him the most was that Marcus's men had managed to snag him. "Forgive me for wanting accurate news. The least they could have done was mention mine and Tori's kidnapping."

“I do have a name other than soul-eater.” I pointed out, giving Kade the same frown Alec was currently making. “I’m pretty sure I only heard my actual name one time.”

“Soul-eater sounds kind of badass though. Makes people think twice about messing with you.”“ Tori shrugged from where she sat across the sectional.

Alec gave her an exasperated look, “You seem awful calm considering they did you even worse than Kade and I.”

“It’s just the news.” Tori shrugged, “The details of the story all depend on the person telling it.”

“They called you Aurora’s assistant.” Alec deadpanned, jumping when my unrestrained laughter startled him.

Perhaps it was all of the stress that finally made me crack, or how truly dumbfounded Alec felt talking to Tori and Kade; but my sides ached and my eyes watered as I laughed at the three of them. Alec was second to join in, followed by Tori. Even Kade chuckled, which was the most I’d get out of him right now.

“Three days.” I sighed after finally catching my breath. I fell back on the couch and sighed when Alec’s fingers brushed through my hair. “Three more days of waiting. I think I hate the waiting more than anything else.”

For three days we spent as much time as possible with one another. After rummaging through the overstocked pantry in Jaspar’s safehouse, I concluded that I was tired of all things in shiny packages. It was the heinous workout sessions in the morning that helped me maintain some semblance of self-defense, other than my ability to tear the soul from someone’s body.

On the third day, at ten in the morning, a sequence of heavy thuds sounded on the door. The tablet with its security cameras beeped, pulling up an image of a man and woman.

When we opened the front door for them, I wasn't the only one who was a bit dumbfounded.

The woman was in her early thirties, but was dressed well—like a tourist. Her t-shirt said, 'I heart NY' and she wore an actual visor on her head, along with a pair of wide framed sunglasses. Her cargo shorts and thick soled shoes completed and confirmed the tourist outfit. The man at her side was dressed much the same. Cargo shorts and a black f***y pack, along with an identical pair of thick soled shoes.

While their clothes completely threw us off, I did not miss the alertness in their emotions, or the muscles that protruded from just about every surface of their body.

“We are here to escort Ms. Aurora, her mates, and friend.”⁶ It was the man who spoke, towering over Tori and I. My own surprise shocked me, as did the man's voice when he spoke. It was light, carefree, and actually kind of happy considering the circumstances. I could feel that positive attitude as it radiated from him in warm waves. He looked a bit gruff with the shaved head and thick beard, but the grin on his face transformed him from threatening warrior to gentle giant. “Looks like we found the right place. The name is Dex, and my cheerful partner is Carson.”

“You won't be needing to take anything with you.” Carson said in a harsher tone, one that said we needed to get going. Her demeanor was different from Dex's, much sterner and more serious. “Let's get going. We had to leave the van on an access road. These shoes aren't meant for hiking through the forest.”

During the day, the house looked much different. It wasn't the first time we had stepped outside since arriving at the safehouse, but I still couldn't get used to how large it truly was. I found myself both relieved and anxious as we walked down the steps, towards where the forest and yard met.

"What's with the clothes, anyway?" Tori was brave enough to ask, cocking an eyebrow at the t-shirt she wore.

"Right now, your friend the most important person in our world. Considering she doesn't let it go to her head, she could really change things for all of us.' Carson tossed over her shoulder without looking back. The French braid that ran down her back swayed as she walked. "She needs protection, but we can't drive down the highway with an armored vehicle and six escorts. Marcus Novak would be on us within minutes. A disguise might just buy us enough time to get you to the drop off."

"Are backroads not available?" I asked.

"Marcus is gonna have those monitored first, considering they're smaller and more likely to be used by you fugitives." Dex said with a deep laugh, like two boulders clashing together. I looked back to where he tailed us, unable to refrain from cracking a smile.

"The highway is just as dangerous as the back roads, but it'll save us a good two hours." Carson said from the front, increasing her pace to where Alec and Kade had to help me from tripping over everything.

I kept eyes on the ground, stepping over the stray roots and plants. I nearly fell to the ground as my foot slid on a patch of mud. It was Alec's arms underneath my shoulders that kept me from being coated in the d***y substance.

“What a dangerous soul-eater you are.” He smirked low in my ear, sending a flood of emotions through me that were not appropriate for the time and place.

The access road was a thin dirt road that stretched off into the forest. The tree’s parted for the little dirt road, allowing just a sliver of the cloudless sky to shine overhead. The air was brisk and cool, much different from my time spent in the twin’s pack, where the sun and humidity were constantly at war.

This time I did laugh as we came upon a navy-colored minivan. It wasn’t the floral seat covers that made me chuckle, but the wide array of bumper stickers on the back. One said “my child made honor roll this year!”. Another read, “Dog mom!”. On the back window were a cluster of those stick-man families. A muscular looking stickman posed as the father, along with a mother, four children, and a dog.

“Just another family traveling for vacation.” Dex grinned, patting the hood of the van with a firm hand.

“Is this thing even safe?” Tori asked, lifting an eyebrow at Dex.

“Oh, you bet it is.” His smile widened as though this question pleased him. He led Tori around to the side of the van and opened it up. “This thing is full of reinforced steel and bullet proof glass. Doesn’t even weigh her down.”

Apart from the mix of country and rock music trickling through the dull speakers of the minivan, there was nothing but silence and the whoosh of the passing cars to fill my mind. I sat at the very center in between Alec and Kade, while Tori sat in the far back.

“So, how do you know Jasper?” I asked, finally finding the courage.

Dex and Carson glanced at one another, a long look that just screamed silent conversation.

“Mr. Fox is—was a High Table member. He knows a lot of people, werewolves and humans.” Carson responded in a tone that let me know I’d get no further information. Her emotions weren’t ones of aggression or anger, just fierce protectiveness and a professionalism that most people could never accomplish.

An hour of mountains and steep inclines passed before we had no choice but to stop. Both Dex and Carson agreed on stopping at the smallest, most decrepit gas station to ever grace this earth. It was nothing more than a small shack, big enough to fit a handful people at the very most. An old-fashioned cash register sat on top of a fold out table. A very disinterested looking man stood at the table, picking at something beneath his nails.

Carson went inside the shack for the four of us, getting bottles of water and insignificant snacks. Both Tori and I headed around back to where the cashier claimed were bathrooms. What we found was one of those portable bathrooms, and from the looks of it, it had been sitting her for longer than either of us had walked this earth.

“At this point, I feel like it would be safer to go into the woods and use the bathroom.” Tori snorted, though the comment was one hundred percent accurate.

“Were you not able to go?” Kade asked with a tilt of his head, once we both returned.

Tori and I scrunched our noses in sync, “No, that bathroom is a safety hazard. Hazmat should be called immediately.”

Carson was a bit disgruntled at having to stop again, but it was better and faster than venturing into the forest. Yet another desolate gas station with an extremely questionable bathroom, but it was an improvement from the last one. We remained out of sight the entire time, hidden behind the tinted windows of the minivan. After another half hour, I was beginning to grow tired. Burrowed in Alec's side, my eyes fluttered. I hovered on the cusp of sleep when I was ripped away, my eyes torn open as anger and determination radiated from four of the people in the vehicle.

"Is something wrong?" I asked, pulling away from Alec to look around.

We were still coasting down the highway, signs and other cars whizzing by. No matter how hard I looked, I couldn't see anything amiss.

"Let's hope not." Kade grunted from where he sat, turning around to wake Tori up.

"What's wrong?" She asked, cracking her neck with a soft groan.

"We're being followed." Dex answered, all humor gone from his face.

If anything, I think I preferred the laughing, joking Dex. Serious Dex was downright frightening. It brought more attention to his hulking physique, which wasn't as muscular as it was mountain-like.

Carson pulled a cellphone from the pocket of her cargo shorts and placed the phone to her ear.

"Coming up on exit 74. We're being followed by a black Nissan. How is traffic from your standpoint?" She asked, forcing the words from her mouth in rapid succession.

"There are others up ahead?" I asked, leaning forwards in my seat.

“You didn’t think we came alone, did you?” Dex smirked in the rearview mirror. “It was too risky to have the others get close, so we have them stationed at different points on the highway. They’ll let us know if anything is up ahead.”

“S**t, they must have spotted us somehow.” Carson cursed, pulling the phone from her ear to type out a message. “Traffic is coming to a complete stop within the next fifty miles. We have twenty minutes to get off—“

“WATCH OUT!” Tori’s scream was timed perfectly, as a Mack truck veered onto the median from the other side of the highway, and into the left lane where we currently were.

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Dex reacted instantly, slamming on the gas as he swerved into the center lane. We narrowly missed a little maroon Buick, whose nasal sounding horn blared down the highway.

Before the vehicle could fully regain its balance, Carson lifted herself out the minivan and onto the ledge of the window. My heart stuttered a few beats as I heard the deafening sound of a gun being shot.

Bullets peppered the dark colored SUV that drove along side of us. They swerved to the right, but it seemed we weren’t the only ones with a bullet proof vehicle. The SUV veered right, trying to run us onto the shoulder.

“F**k.” Carson snarled, tearing the visor off her head and chucking it out the window. “They’re boxing us in. If you don’t act fast, Dex, we’re screwed.”

When Dex's grip on the steering wheel turned white knuckled, I knew I wasn't going to like what happened next. Dex lifted his head and eyed the four of us in the rearview mirror, his eyes straying to me last.

"Our orders are to get you to the drop at all costs." He said firmly, eyes locked on my own. Where I'm sure mine were wide with the adrenaline that thundered through my veins, his were strong and bright.

Even though I hardly knew this man, there was a sense of honor that was concrete within him. It guided his thoughts, his life, the decisions he made and the people he helped. I had no clue what Dex's stake in all of this was, but I was surprised to find that I truly did trust him with my life.

My response was a yelp as Dex turned the wheel all the way to the left; hurling us through the right lane of traffic and towards the metal guardrail that led into the forest below. Everything seemed to slow as we clipped the front of one car, and tore through the guardrail like cheap ribbon. I could feel the impact in my teeth, and hear the crunch and scream of metal as it was torn to shreds. My stomach dropped as I saw the magnitude of the hill we were about to roll down, and the thick trees that seemed to sit everywhere.

I felt like a ragdoll in the hands of a child as the minivan we were in thundered over branches and stones, the p**s poor suspension groaning from the off-road trip. It was Kade who kept the seatbelt from strangling me as I was thrown forwards. Alec helped keep Tori in place, who was pale faced and wide eyed in the back.

The tree trunk that we clipped sent us careening forwards, into a roll that made me miss our previous position. I could feel something splash against my face, and smelled the brief but fresh scent of water as it mixed with motor oil and blood. It was a tree that stopped our decent, and

forced the car to a stop. The horn of the minivan blared throughout the forest, loud and shrill as it told all nearby that we were here.

Blood rushed to my head, and a mix of crimson and onyx danced behind my eyes. Jewels of shimmering color, covering the world in a filter that seemed to move as I blinked and groaned. I had never been in a car accident before—but the feeling of having my bones crushed, it was one I never wanted to repeat. The seatbelt dug into my shoulder and waist. Glass was inches from my fingertips, which hung above my head and grazed the roof of the van. The van itself was upside down, the roof crushed from our roll.

“I’m going to get you down, doll.” Alec’s voice was a whisper away, smoothing out my panic before it could take root. “Just hold still, this isn’t going to feel very good.”

My entire body quite literally protested as I heard and felt the click of the seatbelt, followed by gravity claiming me for itself. Alec lessened the impact, but any sensation sent pain skittering along my skin and bones. Glass dug into my skin, but was a mere afterthought with everything else going on. Half-blind with blood staining my eyes, I grabbed onto Alec’s hand and crawled as he helped pull me from the minivan. Once I felt the wet dirt beneath my knees, I frantically wiped the blood from my eyes with a dry piece of my shirt.

The van was a crumpled husk, a tin can that had been kicked too many times. Shimmering pieces of glass littered the ground, along with various scraps of metal. Alec’s strong hands kept me from stumbling forwards when Kade and Tori crawled from the vehicle.

“S**t, we need to f*****g go.” Dex grunted, spitting out a wad of blood as he hurried to the back of the minivan. The back window was shattered from the roll, making it easy for him to reach in and grab two backpacks

filled to the brim. I went a little wide eyed when he wrenched open a duffel bag full of various fire arms and types of silver ammunition. It was somewhat comforting to know that despite his usual jolly demeanor, his intimidating looks weren't just for show. He tossed one of the backpacks at Kade, and within seconds, was urging us to leave.

“Wait—” I stammered, stumbling to a halt when I saw the unconscious figure of Carson.

I hadn't noticed her before, caught up in the adrenaline and pain. The seatbelt was the only thing that kept her from falling to the floor, but unlike the rest of us, she was unconscious. Blood fell in a thick stream from a wound in her head.

“No, Aurora.” Dex snarled, using a firm but gentle hand to urge me forwards. There it was—the purpose for his intimidating looks. I could see it in the way he towered over me, glowering as he urged me to move. Any sane person would have been frightened, but it wasn't anger Dex felt. His grief and pain made my legs weak, but the unbreakable sense of honor within him let me know that Dex would complete this mission, no matter what he had to leave behind. “Her legs are pinned, one is broken. She understands the cost.”

I had a split second, just one to decide what I was going to do. There was no time for thought, so I acted.

“Don't make me grab you, kid.” Dex warned, his eyes narrowing.

“Don't f*****g think about it.” Kade snarled, and I took that as my chance to bolt.

I dug my feet into the earth, and turned on my heel. Dex hadn't been expecting me to run back to where Carson was, but the twins did—they

had seen in my eyes the moment I made up my mind. I half thought they would grab at me, drag me back and fling me over their shoulder as we escaped, leaving Carson to be m*****d or worse.

Instead of making a grab for me, they ran ahead. Kade to the back of the van, and Alec to the passenger side. He kicked and tore at the door, finally getting the crumpled thing off after the scream of metal filled the air. Dex cursed and ran a hand over his face, smearing the blood on his head and cheek, before running to the twin's side.

“You two, get over here and grab a gun.” Dex snarled at Tori and I, kicking us into action. He shouted towards Alec and Kade, “There should be a crowbar somewhere in there.

Every move of my muscles sent agony through my bones and ribcage. I had definitely broken a rib or two, perhaps even my collarbone. I could feel myself slowly knitting back together. Every thread of bone was like a stinging pain beneath the skin, very carefully making me whole again.

Tori and I stumbled over to the back of the overturned minivan. Dex thrusted near identical handguns into our arms and quickly pointed at the two most important parts.

“Turn the safety off. Aim, shoot. And don't f*****g hesitate.” He told the two of us, his words fast and charged with the weight of oncoming violence. “They won't send all they have yet, takes time to travel. The ones who were following us, they'll find us before we can get Carson out. Just so you know, kid. Anything happens to you, and it's my skin on the line.”

“They wouldn't have k*****d her, would they?” I asked, rather than give into the guilt that bubbled in my stomach.

From the heaviness in Dex's eyes, he knew what I was implying. No, Marcus's men would not have k****d Carson, not with how close she had been to me. Would he torture her first? Or would he have the same wolf who looked into my head, look into hers? He would wring her for all the information she had, and only when she was no longer of use, would he finally dispose of her.

From his emotions alone, I could tell that Dex and Carson weren't mates. There was a deep bond there, but it wasn't one that stemmed from romantic feelings. They were partners, friends in every sense of the word. There was an acceptance between them that was strange, as though they saw each other in their entirety, and embraced the darkness they saw within.

"No." Dex said after few seconds, "They would not k**l her."

Behind the sound of Alec and Kade working to free Carson, there was something else in the background. I strained my ears to listen, but the pain behind my eyes made it hard to focus. I naturally looked towards Dex, who was fixated on a part of the forest just behind me.

"DROP!" The word was thrown from his mouth with deadly accuracy, each letter only a fraction of a second long. The twins had told me about an Alpha command weeks ago, and though I knew it's power wouldn't work on me, I registered the meaning behind his urgency.

A deafening blast rang out, followed by a second, at the same time a snarl ripped past my ear. Two dull thuds sounded, followed by the sound of two wolves slumping to the ground.

"You're an Alpha?" I gaped up at him, trying not to look at the d**d werewolf only a foot from where I sat.

“You shouldn’t have gone back for her, Aurora.” Dex shook his head, ignoring my question completely, his bushy eyebrows knitted together. “You are more important than the rest of us.”

“No, the change we want to bring is what’s important.” I shook my head, refusing to believe what he was saying. “That kind of thinking, that one person’s life is more important than someone else’s, that’s what helps men like Marcus sleep at night.”

Dex remained silent for a few seconds, then reached out a hand.

“Perhaps you’re right, but your powers in the hands of our enemies would cost us everything.” He finally said, once I was on my feet and brushing the dirt from my body.

Another shot rang out through the forest, and I turned to stare wide eyed at Tori.

“What?” She shrugged, nudging the d**d wolf with her foot. “Dad might be a doctor, but he has hobbies too. Plus, I actually have really good aim.”

“Good, hold onto that.” Dex grunted, “Something tells me we’re going to need it.”

I palmed the gun in my hands, feeling the cool metal that had slowly warmed to my clammy touch. I had yet to use the thing, and I desperately hoped I wouldn’t need to. With Carson on Alec’s shoulders, we trekked through the forest. I noticed Dex doing something with his hands as we walked, holding them palms up.

“What are you doing?” I asked, eyeing his hands as he held them out.

He cleared his throat a bit awkwardly and glanced down at me, “I’m covering our scents.”

“You’re covering our scents?” I repeated, my light laughter d***g out when I noticed how serious he was. “How?”

“How do you feel emotions, or s**k the souls out of people?” He asked with a lifted eyebrow, turning his gaze back to the forest. “Magic, I suppose.”

I felt my jaw slip a bit further, “You’re a white wolf?”

“One of many in my family.” Dex nodded curtly, telling me I’d get nothing more out of him.

An hour slowly turned into three, each one wracked with anxiety as every little sound brought on a wave of paranoia. Each snap of a branch was a wolf in waiting, ready to tear me away from my mates at all costs. I watched the descent of the sun as it dipped behind the trees, and felt fatigue settle in my bones.

“I found a little cave system over here.” Dex grunted, shoving back the hanging limbs of a plant. He glanced towards Carson, the concern he felt blank from his face. “Gonna have to set her leg if it’s to heal properly. You four go on in there. I’m going to see if I can scatter our scents a bit further. Buy us a few hours.”

“I can set her leg. Like I said, my dad’s a doctor.” Tori shrugged, “You got a first aid kit in one of those bags.”

“Back compartment.” Dex nodded, handing the bag to Tori. “Much appreciated.”

While I wasn't too excited to sleep in a damp cave, it was partially obscured from view thanks to a wall of moss and vine. It covered the rock like a blanket, leaving a small slit to pass through.

I kneeled beside Tori and Carson, while Alec wandered through the cave with a flashlight in hand. His reasoning was to find another exit, just in case we needed to make a fast escape. While I appreciated the forward thinking, I hoped there was enough running for the day.

That night, I sat between the twin's, feeling the chill of night settle into my bones. We weren't staying long, just a few hours until Carson woke up and her leg healed a little more. I traced patterns along Alec's arm, which was slung over my midsection as he snored softly. It was Kade who had trouble sleeping, just as I did.

'What are you thinking about?' I asked, the corners of my lips twitching from the question.

Kade let out a near silent chuckle, his eyes flickering towards where I laid beside him. I could choose whether or not to hear the twin's thoughts. While sometimes it was instinctual to listen in and communicate through our thoughts, there were other times I gave them their privacy.

'Honestly?' Kade mused, his voice gravely even in his thoughts. 'I'm thinking about what life will be like once Marcus Novak is d**d.'

'This sounds callouses, but part of me regrets not just sucking his soul out during the first meeting. I would have saved so many wolves so much pain.' I frowned through the darkness, 'How horrible is that?'

'It's not horrible at all. As a Luna it's in your nature to love your people fiercely, to protect and defend at all costs.' Kade replied, his voice surprisingly soft. It was a rarity considering how abrasive he could be to

everyone else. ‘Normally I’d agree just k*****g someone and being through with it, but I don’t think that would have helped in this case. If you had k*****d Marcus during any of the meetings, you’d only be confirming the negative rumors about you. That you’re some kind of uncontrollable monster.’

‘I guess you’re right.’ I chuckled softly, turning so that I could place my head on his shoulder.

At some point, I must have dozed off because when I opened my eyes, Kade’s heavy breathing filled my ears. A trickle of emotions played at the edges of my mind, nearly out of range. Slowly, I extracted myself from the two of them. Their body heat alone was enough to warm me up, even coating me in a thin layer of sweat.

The emotions I felt were anticipation, excitement and even fear. They grew closer, stronger only to fade off into the distance. I knew that venturing off alone was the worst possible thing to do, but there was something propelling me forward.

Just as I readied myself to step out of the cave, a hand wrapped around my wrist. A scream bubbled on my lips when I was spun around, into the hard embrace of Alec. A single eyebrow was lifted as he looked down on me, his eyes devoid of humor.

‘I feel emotions, a lot of them.’ I told him through our bond, ‘I want to see who they’re coming from.’

‘And you planned on going off by yourself?’ He asked, his eyebrow frozen in that upright position.

I opened my mouth and glanced towards the mouth of the cave, only to snap it shut. He had a point, and he knew it very clearly from the heat rushing to my face.

‘Well—‘

‘Next time, wake one of us up so we can go with you.’ He warned, the command in his voice made something inside of me flutter. ‘We’ll talk about you sneaking off without us later, when Kade is awake and we are no longer running for our lives.’

It was a good thing I hadn’t snuck out from the cave, because a second later, Dex was already awake. His eyes snapped opened as Tori sniffled in her sleep. Kade followed suit, and before long, we were all awake. The moon still reigned, even though a few hours had passed.

Carson was the last to wake up, letting out a soft groan as her fingers found the swelling on her head. The gaping wound was healing nicely, thanks to the butterfly stitches given by Tori. Half of her face was still blue and purple from the bruising, but it was a step up from earlier. Even after a few hours, she couldn’t place her full weight on her leg. Tori all but forbade it until we managed to get her to a pack doctor.

“What was that about?” Dex asked, eyeing Alec and I as we stood close to the mouth of the cave.

“I feel emotions coming from somewhere.” I explained, leaving out the part where I had planned to go off on my own. My momentary lapse of common sense did not need to be broadcasted. “There’s at least four or five, but they keep fading in and out. It’s making it hard to get a read on them.”

Even though the emotions had piqued my curiosity, I was forced to let it go when we finally slipped from the cave ten minutes later. Now that Carson was awake, and could walk with the help of the twins, we needed to be back on the move.

It was easier, treading through the forest at night. The air was light and cool, chasing away the sweat that clung to my body and clothes. We walked for at least two hours, and I waited and watched as the distant emotions grew stronger.

Dex somehow managed to catch onto the light scent of Marcus's men as they set up their camp in the forest. They were also trying their best to cover themselves, but Dex's abilities seemed to encompass all things smell related. It was an odd gift, but actually very useful if you needed to sneak around without getting caught.

We planned to veer out of the way, looping as far around them as we could. They couldn't detect our scents, not with Dex covering us, but they could hear us if we spoke. Our heartbeats and breath were drowned out by the nightlife within the forest, though I could hear the men's chortles and jokes from a mile away.

It was a snide comment, something tossed into the conversation that caught my attention and made both Tori and I halt in our tracks.

"Did you hear, Alpha's prodigal son has returned home." One of the men cackled, which led to a fit of raspy coughing. I cringed as he spat on the forest floor and continued in his grating voice. "Bet you that boy got the beating of his f*****g lifetime for helping the soul-sucking b***h and her pair of c***s."

The other men laughed in tandem, spewing vile nonsense as they egged each other on. I knew that both Dex and Carson wanted to continue

forwards, but they were clueless as to the importance of what these men were saying. They had no clue Zayne's roll in all of this, nor the fact that we needed him to help tip the scales in this war.

"He's rightfully suspicious of the ingrateful pup." Another cackled, followed by mumbles of agreement. "Don't matter he's just a figure head. Once the kid is old enough to take over, Alpha will never let go of control."

The conversation strayed, and just as we were about to continue forwards, one of the men said something that made the others halt in their tracks.

"Did you hear 'bout the rumor swirling around?" He said to his group, his voice ending in a gruff laugh. "The one 'bout the breeding?"

Gone was the jovial mood, the boasting and jokes that came with a bunch of smelly, drunk men.

"Careful where you spew that s**t, Damarcus. D**n idiot." One spat, snarling at the man who had spoken. "If his inner circle hears you even mentioned it, we're all f*****g d**d. Each and every one of us."

"It's not going to get back to him, the whole pack's talking 'bout it." He rasped, his voice deepening as he became defensive. "He's too busy looking for the leak to bother with us grunts. Don't want the people finding out what he's been doing with his little white wolf project."

"Seth, what horse s**t are you talking now?" One of the men tried to lighten the mood, but that opportunity had long passed.

"To h**l with you, it's not s**t!" He snapped, whole heartedly believing every word he spoke. "Alpha's been experimenting on the white wolves he keeps, the ones he says works for the pack. He's been making them

have kids, mixing their powers until he comes up with something—new. Word has it, a nursemaid spilled the truth last month. Said there were rooms full of screaming babies, and that some—some didn't even look human anymore.”

I could feel my blood and sweat run cold at his words, followed by rage so strong—so consuming, I promptly blacked out.

Mated to the Alpha Twins by Jane Doe Chapter 109

When all of my senses were blocked; it was the emotions I felt. They were at their rawest; churning seas of rage and disgust, boiling lakes of hatred and desperation. Those festering, poisonous emotions bubbled beneath my skin, picking and scratching as they fought past my control.

Floating in that darkness, with nothing but those carnal emotions guiding my thoughts; I couldn't remember why I was holding them back in the first place; why I shied away from what I could do.

My powers weren't beautiful or inspiring, they were blunt and vicious. Unashamed of the d***h and destruction they could cause. No matter how dark my abilities were, there was this voice in the back of my head that told me only brutality would win this war; only rage would end Marcus Novak's life.

As those last shreds of fear and shame left my mind, I unleashed the hail storm of emotions on the guards that had invoked them. I wished more than anything I could give them the full scope of my anger, my desperation to help these wolves; but I could not. That kind of anger could split the world, could crack it wide open. That kind of anger was already reserved for someone special.

I could see their faces in my mind, mixed in with those of Marcus's men. The white wolves; the men, women, and children that were used for their power. Lives deemed less than and tossed aside in the pursuit for more power. They begged for help, for someone with enough power and control to rival Marcus; to care enough to force change.

I wasn't sure when I had begun feeding from the life forces of Marcus's men, but their strength washed over me in waves of electrifying energy. They sharpened my vision until everything seemed almost too clear, too saturated.

My vision came back in pieces, flashes of images purely driven by this feral rage. It rippled over my skin, almost shimmering like heatwaves as I darted through the brush and trees, right into the center of the men's camp.

"Don't touch her." Alec's snarl was a mere afterthought, background chatter as I flung myself at the men. "She has no control over what she's doing right now. It's better we stay out of her way and let her finish. We'll step in if need be."

"Something tells me it won't be necessary." Kade murmured, and if I had been paying attention, I would have heard the awe in his voice. "Feel how enraged she is? They won't be able to lay a finger on her."

There were six in total, four of which had been rolling around in agony the moment I sent those festering emotions loose. The two that had managed to remain on their feet, they were as rotten as Marcus was. Truly devoid of any humanity that might make them cower at the devastation wrought.

I charged at the two first, noting how any surprise only lasted a fraction of a second as it crossed their faces. Only to be replaced by cruel anticipation and excitement.

The one on the left, lanky with thick ribbons of muscle along his arms and shoulders, pulled a pistol from his waist band. I could hear the click and see the flicker of metal as the moonlight caught its surface.

Not only could I see the confidence brimming in his eyes, I could feel it.

He was expecting me to hesitate, to cower as he pointed a gun between my eyes. Trusting my instincts was something I had done countless times as a human. It was what kept me from being harassed by Frank or manipulated by Melissa. Following it now was easier than ever.

Even with the gun pointed at my head, I charged. I watched as the vein in his neck bulged, and his emotions shifted from confident to unsure. It was then that I ducked, just as an explosion of heat and gunpowder rang out. Despite it being so close to me, the sound had as much impact as an insufferable fly would.

Before I could get my hands on the man that had nearly shot my head off, I felt the grimy touch of the second. His rough fingertips met the skin of my shoulder for mere seconds, and the revulsion that blasted through me seemed to have more of an impact than I thought.

For whatever reason, my arms flew out at my sides. An instinctual movement that felt righter than anything else. The warmth and unbridled energy I had been stealing from the men, it rushed through me. It crackled and snapped, like lightning beneath my skin.

I knew in that moment; I had a choice. I could let the energy out, let it escape into the world under my command. Or, I could snuff it out. There was no hesitation on my end, the weakness burned away by the truth of what Marcus was doing.

The two men who had managed to withstand the vile emotions I sent their way were blasted back in opposite directions, swallowed by the darkness of the forest.

I could hear branches snapping, some larger and louder than others as they both were shoved back through the forest. Only when they both landed, and the sounds of insects and animals returned, did I blink and back away from the damage.

I felt Alec behind me before I turned to meet his eyes. He didn't bother pulling me into his arms, knowing that I currently felt like a d**n live wire. My skin was tingling, electrified by the energy I had consumed. I rubbed at my arms, trying to chase away the odd sensation.

“Let me guess, you're going to ask me what I was thinking running in there like that.” I mumbled, taking in the carnage that was their campsite.

Beer cans littered the ground along with burnt chunks of wood. Embers still burned in various places, scattered from the blast that sent both men careening backwards. Backpacks with clothes and other various items were all over the ground, along with the unconscious bodies of Marcus's men.

“Actually, I was going to ask if you're alright.” He smirked, and despite how shaken and amped up I felt, he managed to take some of the weight from my shoulders.

Halfway through my feral take down of these men, I decided that I would no longer fear what I could do. I would use it responsibly and never to shove my power down the throats of others. Not only that, but I would no longer hesitate to use it if it meant freeing the white wolves and taking down Marcus.

“Honestly, I feel incredible.” I admitted, letting out a whoosh of breath. It was horrible to admit considering I had almost k****d six men, but it was the truth. Their energy filled my cells with strength, pouring adrenaline and life into my veins. “I guess—I guess I just surprised myself.”

I stumbled into Alec as Kade and Dex emerged from the forest, followed by Carson and Tori. Tori propped Carson against a tree and brushed herself off. Carson glanced around at the damage, forced to sit on the side lines since she was still healing. I didn’t miss the look of respect in her eyes, nor what happened when Alec and I touched.

The small gasp that left his lips, too quiet and insignificant for anyone other than myself to hear, was followed by the crackle of energy as it danced from my skin to his.

“One of the men you sent flying into the forest is d**d, impaled on a broken tree limb.” Dex huffed, and I swore there was just a hint of smugness to his voice. I couldn’t blame the emotion considering there were so many others who had lost much more to Marcus. “The rest are fucked up, but they’ll live.”

“Didn’t pick up any other scents nearby. This must have been the first batch of men sent out.” Kade said to the five of us. “Should be safe to head out now.”

“You could have saved us a lot of time just doing that from the beginning, kid.” Dex shook his head, not at all angry with how things had turned out. He ran a hand over his head and glanced around at the fallen men. When his eyes met mine, they weren’t wary or afraid, but hopeful. “There’s not an army that wouldn’t fall should you go up against them.”

“Let’s hope I can manage it on a larger scale.” I cleared my throat, shifting uncomfortably under the attention. “I didn’t exactly have control over myself just now.”

“You just need to figure out how to trigger it—which it seems you just did.” Dex responded gruffly, “Now you gotta see how far you can extend it without hurting yourself. Something tells me with an ability like that, you wouldn’t want to over use it. Let’s get the h**l out of here, I have to work harder to cover our scents now that we’ve been here so long.”

I trailed between the twin’s, beside Tori, who looked a bit worse for wear. Her clothes and hair were covered in dried mud, and I knew she’d need help brushing out those tangles. Even in the midst of my rage, I hadn’t forgotten what the men said about Zayne. I don’t think I’d ever forget a word they had said.

“He finally decided to stand up to Marcus.”“ I told Tori, keeping my voice low. The others could hear easily, but it at least gave us the illusion of privacy. “I’m guessing something you said finally worked its way through his thick skull.”

“He finally listens to me, and takes it as the go ahead to run back to Marcus.” Tori snorted, my comment breaking up some of the tension in her emotions. “It’s not like it changes anything, anyway. Even if he manages to survive all of this, he’ll never accept me.”

“I can’t understand why, though.” I sighed, unable to help myself as Tori’s emotions flitted over me one by one. It seemed taking the energy from so many people amplified my other abilities. I couldn’t ignore her emotions, or the toll they had on my own. I found myself frustrated for her, at my wits over a man who isn’t even my mate. “I’ve never been able to get a read on his emotions, or Marcus’s.”

“Do you think it’s another white wolf blocking your powers?” She asked curiously, but it was something I had already thought of before.

“I don’t think so.” I shook my head, “I think it’s because neither one actually feel much of anything. They have such a tight grip on their emotions, especially Marcus. Just recently, Zayne’s hold on his emotions cracked. You were the one who caused it, actually.”

Tori hesitated, wide eyed as she stared ahead. I wondered if my gift truly gave me the upper hand, or if Tori truly was oblivious to how affected Zayne was by her.

“It was me?” She scoffed, pressing her lips tightly together. She was silent for a few moments, but I could feel her curiosity building just beneath her surprise. “If I loosened his hold, does that mean you were able to get a read on him?”

I lifted an eyebrow at her, grinning as her lips widened into a genuine smile. I hadn’t erased the worry or stress, but these moments of normalcy were all that kept us from losing ourselves to the violence and savagery of our world.

“You clearly p**s him off more than anybody else. It doesn’t take magic to see that.” I chuckled, but continued. “I wasn’t able to get anything specific, but I can feel the bond between you two, and I know that it affects him. The more it pulls him towards you, the bigger the a*****e he is.”

We walked unbothered for another three hours. On the second hour, buttery light began to pour through the trees. It brought warmth and the scent of sunlight and dew.

At a seemingly random point in our hike, Dex stopped and lifted his nose to smell the air. The muscles on his chest contracted, and he nodded, satisfied with whatever he smelled.

“This is where we leave you four.” He said with a firm nod, eyes strong and brighter than they had been.

“Wait—what?” I stammered, “I thought you two were supposed to escort us to the drop off point.”

“This is the drop off point, kid.” Dex chuckled, gesturing to the trees that surrounded us. “Where you’re going, you’ll find you got some enemies in common. Security is tight there, so there’s some rules you got to follow before being let in.”

“What do we have to do?” I asked, more than ready to press forwards. If I had to run headfirst into this to bring change, then so be it.

“Keep heading this way another half mile. You’ll exit the forest onto a paved road. This is the important part. Get on the road and stay there, don’t move. Believe me, it won’t take them long to come collect you.” Dex nodded at the four of us, choosing to approach me. He held a large hand out, nearly three times the size of my own. I felt like a child gripping his hand, but did so anyway when he gave me a smile that held that flicker of hope. “You might have some mixed feelings about your abilities, considering you grew up a human and all, but there are thousands of us who have been waiting for you.”

Dex shook the twin’s hands next, and even Tori’s. The most we managed from Carson was a sharp goodbye. She flashed me the smallest of smiles before leaving, which was as odd as could be on a face as stern as hers. It made her look younger, less burdened by whatever she carried with her. As the two of them left, heading back the way we came to divert any

oncoming trouble, I could feel her gratefulness in her emotions. It was a thank you in her own kind of way.

We arrived at a slim paved road shortly after leaving Dex and Carson. Even the twin's felt at odds with being so exposed, standing in the center of a deserted road. We listened with ears peeled for the sounds of cars coming. What we hadn't expected, were to hear dozens of tree's shaking, their leaves rattling and branches groaning.

One by one, men and women dropped from the tree tops. On all sides they continued to fall, until we were surrounded.

“Wait—” I told the twin's, just as I felt them ready to a****k. Dozens of emotions rushed through me, each one tethered to the werewolves that stood around us. They were peaceful, happy, hopeful even. There was nothing dark within their emotions, nothing that would lead me to believe they meant us harm. I looked at each one, reading the light in their eyes. “They won't hurt us.”

The crowd of werewolves parted to let a woman through, her skin a dark shade of ebony. Chocolate braids hung down her back, the color matched the intensity in her eyes. I could feel the confidence radiating from her, and knew that this woman was a force to be reckoned with.

“I am glad to see you've all made it in one piece. That is a relief.” She greeted the four of us like long lost friends, her smile dazzling. “I trust that Dex and Carson made it as well?”

“They did. They actually circled back around to divert anyone else that might've been following.” I assured her, “Not that we don't appreciate refuge in your pack, but who are you?”

“My name is Athena, and this is not my pack.” She smirked softly, turning back to look further down the road. In the distance, I could hear the hum of vehicles approaching. “Actually, that should be them now. They insisted on meeting you here themselves.”

A single SUV approached, and pulled over on the small shoulder of the road. Some part of me had hoped to see Jaspar, or even his daughter. Any sign that their lives hadn't been taken. Nonetheless, I was equally surprised to see the golden hair of Alpha Isaiah and Luna Mera as they stepped out from the vehicle.

Mated to the Alpha Twins by Jane Doe Chapter 110

“Tell me, what did you pick up from Athena?” Mera asked, breaking the silence that I knew wouldn't last long. There were too many questions on our end, and both Isaiah and Mera could feel our rising curiosity.

We were in the dark colored SUV now, humming down the road we had once stood on as we neared Isaiah and Mera's pack. The faint scent of cherries and tobacco wafted from the front of the vehicle, where two dark clothed guards sat.

It was a bit of an awkward fit, with Tori sitting next to Mera and Isaiah, but I refused to let her take another vehicle. I was no stranger to how it feels when you lose both a mate and a best friend. It was something I wasn't willing to risk again, even if we were headed to safety. Tori didn't seem to mind, and actually liked Mera as much as I.

My mind strayed to what Mera had asked of me. It was difficult, giving a loose interpretation of a person based on just a few seconds of information. At times, someone's emotions were a direct reflection of who they were as a person. Other times, it wasn't so simple.

What no one seemed to realize is that emotions aren't just one-dimensional things. They're multi-faceted, and mix with one another to form something new. Anger and hatred turn into this festering mix, a noxious gas that poisons the soul over time. Joy and fondness, no matter if it's platonic or romantic, form long lasting connections that allows love to bloom in its wake.

It was this joy and fondness that I felt coming from Mera as she asked about Athena, though it was platonic in this case.

"She's very confident, but not in a headstrong kind of way. It's more like she's seen the worst of this world, but she refuses to let it harden her." I answered truthfully. I had picked nothing else up, and didn't want to give her false information, so I quickly changed topics. "You care about her a lot; I can feel it. She's family in your heart."

"Yes, she is." Mera smiled fondly, the sight lighting up Isaiah's eyes. "She became part of my family when she agreed to be my Beta."

"Your Beta?" I asked, unable to contain my surprise. My eyes flickered to Alec and Kade, who sat on either side of me. I was squished between them, their hulking forms taking up nearly ninety percent of the space in the back. I narrowed my eyes and frowned, "You two never told me I could have a Beta."

"Truthfully, I never even thought of it." Alec admitted, giving Mera a polite smile.

"It's not something traditional pack's do." Kade nodded, and I watched the obsidian in his eyes soften as he looked at me. His voice was gruff but there was no mistaking the kindness that hid within them. "If you want a Beta, you can have a Beta."

“No, it isn’t something traditional pack’s do.” Mera scowled, but I could feel the pride behind her words. I could feel Isaiah’s amusement towards his mate’s anger, and wondered if she had ranted about this topic to him more than once. “Traditions keep us whole as a people, but the ones that inhibit the she-wolves of this world from moving forward, they ought to be abolished. Starting with keeping us from positions of power.”

We had been driving for nearly an hour, passing caps of pine and cedar trees. The thick scent of sap mixed with crisp mountain air. Even with the two guards up front, I tried to pretend that we weren’t fugitives seeking shelter as we found our way back home.

“So, you both know Jasper as well, then?” I broke the silence, unable to stop the questions I had from bubbling on my lips.

“Everyone knows Jasper, he was a large part of the High Table. Even if he feigned uselessness with his inactivity. That was perhaps the only thing that kept Marcus from truly suspecting him.” Mera laughed, and while the sound was beautiful, it was both bitter and joyous. “Yes, Aurora. Jasper has helped us a time or two, and we have returned the favor.”

An odd thought came to mind and I found myself speaking freely, “Did those favors include helping some white wolves find refuge?”

I had my answer when surprise washed through both her and Isaiah, though their faces were schooled into identical masks of indifference. I understood the perfected looks of cluelessness, especially when Marcus held most of the power in this world. One visit from him, and you’d want to fortify your walls, protect your people.

“We all have our secrets, especially those of us against Marcus and the remaining table members.” Isaiah said, sounding wise despite how young

he looked. He locked eyes with Mera, and the two of them seemed to fade into their own world. I knew the look, the glassiness in their eyes. They were speaking through thoughts, having a conversation disconnected from the rest of us. The vehicle was cloaked in silence for the next two minutes, until they finished their conversation. Isaiah looked back towards me, worry creeping at the corners of his emotions. “You must forgive us, but we hold high stakes in all of this. Especially now that a war is brewing.”

“She will understand, Isaiah.” Mera said softly, her eyes never leaving my own. Isaiah was the caution to Mera’s fearlessness. He was the voice of reason that held her back. I could only imagine how he handled both Mera and Athena. The thought only made me like the two of them more. “I’m positive her abilities make her a good judge of character.”

“You’d be correct. I can tell that you’re both being honest, and that you’re very protective of whatever it is you’re hiding.” I nodded, glancing between the two of them. It was an invasion of privacy, but one I couldn’t turn off. I could try to ignore the emotions I felt around me, but they washed down my shoulders regardless. A smirk formed on Mera’s face as I continued, matched by my widening smile. “Actually, it was your general hatred for Marcus that piqued my interest in you both. I might have never noticed you if I couldn’t feel what you were feeling. It gave me hope that there were at least another pack who saw him for what he was.”

“I told you this girl will change things.” Mera grinned wildly at Isaiah, who gave me an apologetic smile.

“I am not an optimist.” He admitted reluctantly, sighing when Mera began to laugh. “Not like Mera is.”

“I’m not an optimist either. I’m a realist, darling.” Mera chided her mate with an intimate smile. She looked towards me, and kept her gaze locked on my own. “Sooner or later, Marcus was going to c***h and b**n. After everything he has done, that much negative energy won’t just knock him down a peg. It’ll obliterate the ladder entirely.”

This was the first time I had been up in the mountains. Each steep incline and decline had my blood pumping, but it was the rocky slope of the cliff a few feet away that had me breaking out in a cold sweat.

Over the course of an hour, every single car on the highway had exited. Just as I thought the forest and highway would never end, we took an exit towards Vail.

The exit led onto a small two-laned road, which lead through the forest and deeper within.

Both Tori and I audibly gasped when we finally made it into town. Mera and Isaiah radiated pride and I could clearly see why.

The streets were cobblestone, rounded and smoothed without any wear or tear. Robust streetlights dotted the strip of road we were driving on. The speed limit slowed drastically, giving me plenty of time to absorb everything. A few men and women walked down the wide sidewalks, towards the smaller shops that sat along the road. Behind those shops I could see mountainous walls climbing upwards, capped with snow.

They towered over us, caging us in. Oddly enough, instead of feeling trapped, I felt protected.

The only grocery store in town was a relatively small building, but its huge windows let in copious amounts of warm sunlight, and the clerk had been one of the nicest women I had yet to meet. There were two gas

stations, a quaint coffee shop with a large chalkboard sign, and even a small hair salon.

We continued through town where the shops and street lamps thinned out. Forest once again surrounded us, but I could now make out the houses within each cluster of trees. Some of the houses were larger than others, and sat towards the forests edge. Others were smaller, but had winding driveways that led deeper into the forest.

Finally, it was our turn to venture down one of these driveways. The guard driving maneuvered the SUV over the rocky path, towards a little two-story house just a hundred feet into the forest.

The outside of the house had initially been a light shade of baby blue, but whoever lived here clearly had a fondness for painting. Slashes and platters were painted across the house, porch, and even some of the windows.

There were vines of twisting flowers, curls of starving flame, and waves of cobalt and sea green. Most of the slashes and paint marks made no sense, but somehow seemed to cohesively go with the house. The front door, which had once been white, was now various shades of red and gold.

Off to the side of the house was a huge garden, the star of the show being at least a dozen fully ripened tomato plants.

We exited the vehicle as it rolled to a stop just in front of the wrap around porch. Mera led us up the stairs, but stopped at the front door.

“This place is incredible.” I told her, glancing around at the thick trees that shot far into the sky.

“We have been working on this for the last ten years.” Mera smiled proudly.

“You’ve been working on the house for ten years?” I questioned, trying and failing not to give her a strange look.

“No, the town.” She chuckled, shaking her head.

“I thought the town was the capital of your pack?” I replied, looking between both Mera and Isaiah.

“No. For all intents and purposes, this place does not exist. While you four are here, you do not exist either.” Mera said with a proud smile, and though the way she said it was a bit ominous, it was exactly what we needed.

“I am trusting you with this, not only because I hope it can win us this war, but because I would very much like to be friends in the future, Aurora. And the same goes for you, Tori.” Mera smiled softly, though I detected just a shred of nerves. Whatever she was protecting, it was very important. “I did not tell you the entire truth when we first met. Marcus did take my sister when she was thirteen, but it was Jaspar Fox who helped get her back, ten years later. It was a favor he owed me, one of my choosing. Rescuing Sabine—it nearly had him caught.”

“He rescued your sister from Marcus, ten years later?” I couldn’t keep the h****r from my words, not with the way Mera’s heart ached and her throat burned from guilt and shame.

“She is not the same as she once was.” Mera said softly, clutching the doorknob in her hand, pushing it open. “Apart of her has never come back from that place.”

The soft sound of singing trickled through the house, sounding towards the back. We found the source as we ventured into the living room, and stepped on the thick plastic sheets that lined the floors.

Standing across the room, with her golden hair pulled up in a bun, was Sabine. Much thinner than Mera, Sabine had a wispiest form. She was singing to herself, her eyes closed as she slashed and swiped with the paint brush. She made broad strokes down the wall of the living room, mixing pinks with blues and greens with yellows, as she painted in a language only, she understood.

“Sabine, I told you I was bringing guests.” Mera said softly, though Sabine still jumped at the sound. Pain passed through Mera as she recognized her sister’s reaction. “I absolutely love what you’ve done with the walls. The blues and pinks are just stunning, like a sunset.”

She hid the emotion well, but I could feel the stab of sheer terror that wrapped itself around Sabine’s neck the moment she had been startled. For that split second, she hadn’t been rescued. She was still right where Marcus wanted her.

Sabine turned to the four of us, her face slim and cerulean eyes unnaturally bright. They weren’t quite looking at any of us—more like, past us.

“One Luna has twins, and the other Luna has the cursed son.” She said in a dreamy voice, her pale lips opening and closing. I could feel Tori tense, and just when I thought Sabine might continue, she blinked with surprise. “Oh, would anyone care for some tea? It has butterfly pea flowers. They turn purple when you add lemon juice. How wonderful.”