

Mated to the Alpha twins novel by Jane Doe chapter 41

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Aurora's P.o.v

I wiped the napkin across my damp forehead, grimacing at the ridiculous amount of flour I had managed to get on my clothes.

The uniform looked much like the inside of the bakery; pink and white. Even Jake had to wear one, sporting a pink and white apron as though it were the next fashion statement. Of all the things Jake complained about, the uniform wasn't one of them.

A white shirt with the words 'Beth's Bakery' stitched into it with golden thread, followed by a pair of jeans and a pink and white apron. As I walked small puffs of flour filled the air, originating from my messy uniform.

Within the first three hours I was coated in a thin layer of sweat. The hot ovens and constant running about did nothing to help. Despite the sweat, I was having the time of my life.

I didn't have to trudge home to Melissa and Frank, nor did I have to endure the presence of Garrett. For those few hours I worked, I had almost forgotten what I was—a werewolf.

My limbs cried out with exhaustion as I shadowed Beth from station to station. Chocolate eclairs, bear claws, extravagant cupcakes, and cannoli sat on silver prep trays.

Beth had taught me the basics, and somehow, I managed to retain the information. She showed me how to make the dough for most pastries,

how to make custards, creams, and chocolate ganache. I was sure after one day the scent of pastries would cling to me like an aromatic perfume, but I had no complaints.

Jake manned the register, a task he refused to give up. While most of the day was quite hectic with heavy flows of customers filing in and out, I had fun the entire time.

Jake seemed to enjoy watching every mistake I made, laughing with gusto each time. His laughter managed to coax a couple smiles from a stressed-out Beth. For once, I was thankful for my werewolf genes. It seemed there weren't any clumsy werewolves walking around as the enhanced reflexes made it near impossible to be clumsy.

It was amusing how often Beth and Jake would bicker. If they weren't siblings, and nearly identical in every way, I would have assumed they were a couple.

By closing time, my heart was a jackhammer in my chest. Beth told me she would let me know if I had the job come closing time. Despite my mistakes, I thought I did a decent job for someone who had never baked a day in their life.

“Amber?”

My head snapped up; my attention sucked from my task. I had been wiping down the tables and booths when Beth started speaking. I hadn't recognized she was talking to me, but quickly remembered what name I had given her.

“Yeah, Beth?” My eyes snapped up to meet her own.

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Somehow Beth managed to look gorgeous even covered in flour and dried bits of dough. Her sandy-blonde hair held a hint of gold, sun kissed by the bright Missouri rays. Her eyes resembled the color of a midwinter sky, light and bemused as they fell on my startled face. Jake was nearly identical to Beth in the looks department. They both looked as though they belonged on a runway in Hollywood, not in a small bakery in Missouri.

“So—about that position.” Beth breathed; her simple gaze locked on my face.

Her words prompted me to stop what I was doing. Anxiety knotted itself in my gut as I clenched the dirty rag between my palms.

“You did good today.” Beth nodded, her seafoam eyes conveying true approval. “But I expect better tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” My eyes widened, my jaw going slack as I registered the amusement in her words.

“Don’t be late either.” Beth shook her head, casting Jake a sideways glare. “It’s bad enough one of us can never come on time.”

“You know I’m not a morning person. We could’ve just opened a nightclub; I’d come to work early every day. This astonishingly boring town could use a little night-time excitement.” Jake shouted, his attention on the money in the register. Beth scoffed and left Jake to count the till, stacking the chairs on top of the pink tables.

I shuddered against the cool breeze as Beth locked the bakery doors behind us. The streets were empty apart from the occasional drifter wandering down the wide sidewalks. This entire town had such a different feel when the sun went down. During the day it was bright and flavorful, the aromas of different foods wafting in every direction. At

night the town was vacant, houses darkened, front porch lights flickered off.

“Need a ride, Amber?” Beth asked, her eyes bemused yet thoughtful.

I pulled my jacket tighter around my torso, giving a half-hearted shrug.

“Not really, the motel is on the corner.”

“Oh—well, goodnight Amber!” Beth called out, her voice gentle as it was lifted and carried by the wind. I gave her a kind smile and began walking to the motel.

“Hey, Amber!” Beth called out, and I turned in response. “Why don’t you stay the night at my place?”

While I was elated that she asked me to spend the night, the kindness had caught me off guard. I wasn’t used to people going out of their way to help me. Why would she want me to stay the night? We weren’t friends, and I wasn’t sure we would ever be.

From looks alone, Beth was the type of girl to have a large friend group. From her athletic and toned body to her golden hair and blue eyes, Beth had never been an outcast before.

“Are—are you sure?” I asked, nearly flinching at how tired my voice had sounded. It wasn’t a physical sense of exhaustion, but a mental one.

“Well duh.” Beth chuckled; her eyes eager yet sleepy. “I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t want you to!”

Jake gave the two of us a sluggish wave and got into his car. Beth was nice enough to stop by the motel so I could grab a couple things.

I after one night without toiletries, I had given in and spent the thirty dollars to get what I needed. Beth's face contorted in distain as she looked at my crappy motel room. Torn curtains with a hideous seventies pattern, followed by the stained carpet that had a couple bald patches, and that summed up my extravagant quarters.

"This is where you're staying?" Beth grimaced her eyes trailing over the lumpy mattress I had been sleeping on.

Blood rushed to my face, followed by the swift entrance of embarrassment. The comforter I had been covering up with was littered with holes and a red stain that looked suspiciously like blood.

"It's forty bucks a night." I shrugged, turning my face so she couldn't see the embarrassment burning in my eyes.

I gathered some of my toiletries and something to wear the next day. Within three minutes I was finished and looked at Beth questioningly. Her seafoam eyes were uncertain yet thoughtful as she looked around the room.

With a long sigh, her eyes hardened.

"Grab the rest of your stuff." Beth huffed; her lips pursed as she glared at the poor state of my motel room.

"What?" My mind went blank, and for a second I thought she was playing some cruel practical joke.

"Grab your stuff, you're not staying in this shithole." Beth let out another sigh, one that made me feel guilty.

“You don’t have let me stay with you.” I shook my head. The last thing I wanted was to be a burden, I had been that enough in my short lifetime. “I’m just grateful I got the job. Seriously, don’t worry about it.”

Beth didn’t reply, and instead the room collapsed into silence. After a few moments I shifted uncomfortably, my eyes anywhere other than Beth.

“What’s your real name?”

Before I could compose myself, shock bled through my features. Beth’s lips turned up in a sardonic smile. She knew she had me caught.

“Aurora.”

“Aurora?” Beth scoffed, shaking out her sand-colored hair. “Strange name, but I believe you.”

“Thanks, I think.” I murmured, unable to do much else.

I could feel the little safe haven I discovered collapse around me. Why would Beth want to hire someone who lied? I couldn’t even tell her my name, let alone the reason for me being here. What kind of person would want an employee like that? Who would want a friend like that?

“Why’d you lie?” Beth’s features were a mask of indifference, but she couldn’t hide the curiosity burning in her eyes.

“It’s a long story.” I gulped, the motel room feeling much too crowded at the moment.

“I’d like to hear it sometime.” Beth nodded; her eyes surpassingly calm.

“Are you coming or not?”

“I’ll stay here.” I shook my head, my stomach heavy as though it were weighed down with lead. “I don’t want to be a burden.”

“I won’t offer again, so if you need a place to stay, I’d suggest you let me know.” Beth frowned, her eyes distastefully roaming the motel room.

Burden....

The word echoed in my mind, bouncing around my head as though it were made of elastic. That’s what I was, wasn’t I? I was a burden to Melissa, to Frank, to Grace. I was even a burden to Garrett; one he had abandoned for over ten years.

“Thank you—for the offer.” I nodded, forcing a kind smile to my face. “I won’t be late tomorrow.”

“I’ll see you then.” Beth grunted, heading for the door. Just as she crossed the threshold, she called out over her shoulder. “By the way, the next time someone asks for your name, don’t spend the next minute thinking it over.”

“Wait—if you knew, why’d you hire me?” I sputtered, looking on at the sporty blonde girl before me.

“Jake can’t bake for shit and—well, I really needed the help.” Beth shrugged, “See you tomorrow.”

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Kade’s P.o.v

One Week Later

With each passing day, my patience seemed to thin. We could find no witnesses who spotted Aurora that night. Our first step was heading to the nearest bus terminals, speaking with security to access the camera's. After an agonizing three days, two of four bus terminals had searched through their footage. Two had not gotten back to Alec or I. It was reasonable to assume Aurora had taken a bus to Atlanta airport and then flew from there. When my patience had run too thin, Alec contacted the Atlanta Airport on my behalf. Our territory covered Atlanta, meaning we had the authority to demand this of our people.

Alpha Garrett was determined to help us locate Aurora, though his reasons differed from our own. He was still unhappy with his daughter's mates, but I could've cared less. I couldn't risk hurting Aurora or Alpha Garrett would have been rotting in the dungeons by now. I knew without asking that Alec felt the same.

We went as far as to track her banking statements, but the most recent purchases were here in town, a week before she had left. The cellphone Tori had given her sat untouched on the bed, missed calls and texts flashing across the screen.

It seems Aurora had been quite the little mastermind, going as far as ditching her cellphones and withdrawing the money from her bank account. If she weren't gone, I might have been amused at the lengths she went to.

Naturally, Tori was distraught when she heard what Aurora had done. She had been in denial for days, claiming she must've been kidnapped. While kidnapping wasn't out of question, it was highly unlikely. As much as it pained me to be away from my mate, I understood why she would choose to leave.

And as her mate, I couldn't let her get away. If she rejected us for bringing her back, then so be it but we had to try.

A country-wide search for Aurora was our next step should the bus terminals and airport prove to be useless. We wanted to keep her identity private, sparing her from being hunted by every werewolf in the country.

Most days, I spent my time with Grace. Despite the numerous times we had slept together, I had never known the true depths of her obsession. With the putrid scent of the dungeon ledged behind my frontal lobe, I made myself familiar with her screams and ragged sobs.

Torturing Grace had been pointless, expending energy for information she did not have. Grace cracked within the first hour, much as Alec and I predicted. Her face resembled Aurora's when she had hurt her. Eyes swollen shut, the skin dark and purple. Her jaw might have been broken, but I hadn't cared enough to stop.

'She's been planning to leave this entire time.' Grace spat, her eyes bright and wild despite the sob that left her bloody lips. 'She couldn't wait to get away from the two of you.'

I reigned in the fury that made me want to take Grace's life, and refused to entertain the thought. Instead of taking her life, I left her to rot. Her death would be agonizingly slow, for every moment Aurora had been afraid of her.

'Guys, we got a problem.' Justin growled through the mind-link, interrupting Alec and I's time with Grace.

A ragged breath left her lips, one of relief as Alec and I were called away. She'd be given enough food to kept alive, but that was the extent of our generosity.

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‘What happened?’ Alec’s panic mirrored my own.

‘Alpha Julian and his men are here.’ Zane grunted; his usual care-free tone was replaced with one of distaste. ‘Stopped at the borders, but insist on being let through.’

‘Says you keep canceling a meeting with him.’ Justin continued, ‘He’s insisting to be seen.’

‘Tell him, if he wishes for an audience he will have to wait.’ I snapped, tired of Alpha Julian’s inflated sense of importance. ‘Bring him to our office, keep an eye on him and his men the entire time.’

‘Got it, Alpha.’ Justin called out, ending the mind-link.

“He waits for us.” Alec nodded approvingly, “We take our time, show him he cannot come onto our land and demand our attention.”

Alec and I spent some time visiting the bus terminals, watching over the footage ourselves for any sighting of Aurora. Unsuccessful and extremely irritable, we headed back to town.

Justin and Zane had been helpful, bringing Alpha Julian to our office outside of the packhouse. Our office inside the packhouse was personal, reserved for those we trusted. We wouldn’t allow just anyone to enter the home we resided in. Alpha Julian was brought to another building on the other side of town. The building itself was meant to fool the eyes. Large and imposing, an office building in the center of a quaint town. The building was located in the busiest part of town, citizen’s walking the streets along shops and restaurants. Gardeners tended the flowers that formed in large clumps along the sidewalks, while others trimmed the

grass. This was where we held meetings with other Alpha's, showing our position and the size of our pack.

A good three hours later, we arrived at our office. This particular office was meant to fit many, and sported a round table with multiple chairs. A fully stocked bar ran the length of the wall. The bar tempted others to get comfortable, but they were quickly reminded whose territory they resided on.

Alpha Julian sat in one of the empty chairs, his face etched with irritation at being kept waiting. Julian's men lined the wall, their silent eyes watching their Alpha. Justin and Zane were nowhere to be seen, a smart move on their part. Alpha Julian would know how unimportant he was, as he couldn't get an audience with either Alpha or either Beta.

Justin and Zane met us outside, both shooting irritable glares at the office inside. Justin and Zane both had the same towering build, a perk of being two of our best warriors. Justin's hair was the color of sand, reaching down to his shoulders in gentle waves. Zane's hair was the color of gingerbread, parted to the side of his head.

"Want us to join, Alpha?" Justin asked, to which I nodded.

The four of us entered the building, heading down the hall and to the left. A set of double doors led into the large office space.

Alpha Julian stood as we entered the room, the irritation fading from his face. Alpha Julian stood a little taller than Alec and I, but his build was much smaller of the two. With thick dark hair that reached his shoulders, Alpha Julian looked nothing like a rogue despite the nature in which he received his title. His suit was dark, but the blue in his eyes stood out alarmingly.

“Alpha Alec and Alpha Kade, a pleasure to finally meet you.” Alpha Julian approached the two of us, extending a hand. I ignored his rueful tone and the way he had spoken the word ‘finally’, accepting his hand. “Beta Zane and Beta Justin, pleasure.”

“We had other matters to attend to.” Alec informed him, strolling over to the bar to pour himself a drink.

I watched the irritation flash in Alpha Julian’s eyes as he looked at my brother. Alec moved as though he had all the time in the world, taking time to choose and pour his drink.

“Anything I could help with?” Alpha Julian questioned, his eyes flitting over to me.

I took a seat at the table, farthest away from Julian. Leaning back in the seat, I surveyed the man in front of me. Once a rogue, now an Alpha. Julian had built a pack of his own from rogues, using force and charisma to secure his place. Word has it his pack is fairly loyal and civilized, nothing like the rogues you see today. Alpha Julian had been insisting on renegotiating our territory, a meeting Alec and I were not looking forward to.

“Unnecessary.” I shrugged, my eyes bored and tone flat. Once Alec was finished, he took the seat beside me. Justin and Zane leaned against the wall, joining the men they had sent to watch over Alpha Julian.

A knock sounded on the door, and I signaled one of our men to open it. Alpha Garrett stood in the door way, sending a new wave of murderous anger into our blood.

“One of my men told me of Alpha Julian’s arrival.” Alpha Garrett nodded once at Julian, then turned his attention to Alec and I. “I feel as though I should be here, considering my territory is nearby.”

The last thing I wanted was to deal with another infuriating Alpha, but he was right. Alpha Garrett came inside, taking a seat at the table.

“Now—let’s get down to business.” Alpha Julian gave Alec and I a serpent-like smile, looking much like the rogue he used to be. “My numbers grow as more rogue’s come to join my pack. As we all know, there is a vast amount of unclaimed land just south of your pack.”

“And what would you ask of us?” Alec spoke first, his eyebrow raised as he gave Julian a look of amusement. “Should we let you and your entire pack cross through our lands for this territory? That would be quite the risk.”

“I would never ask such things, not unless it is a last resort.” Alpha Julian kept his tone polite, but his eyes were hard and determined.

“Speak plainly then.” I let my impatience shine through. I hadn’t the time for carefully crafted words, as locating Aurora was more important than a disgruntled Alpha.

“We ask that—“

The high-pitched chime of a phone went off, and my head snapped down as I felt my pocket vibrate. Dismissing Alpha Julian’s words entirely, I placed the phone against my ear. Atlanta Airport security was on the other line, their words taking my attention from the other Alpha’s in the room.

“The girl you’re looking for—I think we’ve found her.”

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Aurora's P.o.v

One Week Later

I had somehow managed to survive the week. Not only was I baking things on my own, Beth let me create some new desserts myself. I experimented with puff pastry, sugar icing, and fresh fruit. Some things turned out better than others, but Beth had a knack for selling. Jake was supportive as always with his sarcastic commentary, but the moment he had tasted the chocolate croissants I made, he was hooked.

While Beth had known my actual name for an entire week, she never pushed me to give anything more. Jake had taken my abrupt name change with little more than a shrug, flashing his lop-sided grin as he told me he liked the name Aurora more than Amber. While at first, I had listened to the two of them joke and bicker, I was now joining in. Each night I left the store, I smelled like roasted cinnamon and freshly baked puff pastry. I couldn't imagine a better smell—well, I could name one but I refused to think about my life before this little town.

Countless nights I had dreamed of the twin's, the two of them searching frantically for me. Each morning I'd wake with a new pain in my chest, and just another thing to spend the day ignoring.

Good on her promise, I hadn't heard from Thalia since the day I left. Not that I'd ever admit this to her, but I was beginning to miss the annoying voice in my head. She felt like an extension of myself. Some days when I was feeling particularly down, I'd try and reach out to her. I'd let my

fingers fumble through the dark recesses of my mind, searching for any trace of Thalia. It felt as though she were just out of reach, avoiding my outstretched hand as I searched for her.

On my last day in the Motel, Beth had managed to find me a little house to rent. She was familiar with the owner, a big burly guy by the name of Bret. The house was practically falling apart, but I couldn't argue with the price of rent. Three hundred dollars a month for a house on its last legs, fit with withered boards, cobwebs in every corner of the house, and a kitchen big enough for one person. The house had minimal furniture, a bed and a couch older than my Grandma, but it was mine to do with what I pleased. Even with the horrible state of the house, I loved that I could come and go as I pleased without fear. I didn't have to worry about drunk step-dad's or insane ex-girlfriends.

The bakery was open Monday through Friday, as Beth and Jake were both in college. Beth had just turned nineteen, while Jake had turned twenty-one a couple months ago. Their parents owned many stores in town and got Beth her own bakery as a birthday present. While their parents were often busy, they treated Jake and Beth kindly. I hadn't met them, but Beth had told me enough.

"Crap, Aurora I need a huge favor." Beth sighed, tossing down the bag of cannoli filling onto the prep table. Her phone was pressed against her ear, her white apron covered in a healthy spattering of cinnamon and nutmeg.

"What's wrong?" I called out, pulling a tray of miniature cherry pies from the oven and placing them on a table to cool.

"I just got a last-minute order from Sherry at the nursing home." Beth groaned, pulling her apron off and tossing it on an empty prep table. "I'm

not going to make it back for close. If you need any help Jake can walk you through what to do.”

Sherry managed the small but fancy nursing home in town, and I had learned of her three days into working at the bakery. She’d often place large orders for the employee’s and elderly in the nursing home. She was often forgetful and placed last minute orders, ones Beth and I had to scramble to complete.

“I don’t mind.” I shrugged, giving her a genuine smile. “I’ve helped you close enough times to remember.”

“Just don’t turn the freezer off.” Beth sighed, patting the flour off her dark jeans. “The last time Jake closed, we had to come in at two in the morning to replace all of the melted cakes.”

“It was one time, Beth!” Jake yelled from the register, “One time!”

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“Yeah, and I learned my lesson.” Beth snapped, then mumbled to herself. “Can’t trust him with anything important.”

“Don’t worry.” I chuckled, grabbing the piping back from the table to continue filling the cannoli shells. “Everything will be just fine.”

“Alright.” Beth sighed, giving me a reassuring smile. I continued where Beth had left off as she piled assorted pastries into a large cake box. When she finally finished, she called out to Jake before leaving the shop with a wave.

“Take Aurora home tonight, Jake!” Beth called out, the door jingling as it closed.

Jake and I spent the next hour dealing with the dwindling crowd. As soon as the sun began to set, the crowd walking the streets would thin out. After placing many trays of tarts, cookies, and little cakes into the refrigerator, I tossed my apron onto an empty prep table. While Jake counted the till, I wiped down the tables and booths.

Just ten minutes before Jake and I prepared to leave, a girl walked through the door. Jake had long ago flipped the open sign to closed, but he seemed to recognize the girl. Long chocolate hair and deep honey highlights, the girl looked around his and Beth's age. The smile on her face was light and contagious, her hazel eyes ringed with a deep green.

"Jake!" The girl grinned wildly as she caught Jake's eye. "Already forget about me?"

"Actually, I did." Jake chuckled, "Let me finish counting the till really quick. Taylor meet Aurora, Beth's new pastry minion."

I rolled my eyes at Jake and gave Taylor a small smile. Once Jake finished counting the till, he slipped his jacket over his shoulders and walked over to Taylor and I.

"You forgot about our date, didn't you?" Taylor raised her eyebrow at Jake, but seemed unsurprised at his forgetfulness.

"I did." Jake grinned sheepishly, making Taylor chuckle. "I just got to take Aurora home first."

"Our movie starts in ten minutes." Taylor frowned.

"Don't worry about it." I shook my head and gave the two of them a reassuring smile, "It's a ten-minute walk at best, nothing I haven't done before."

“Are you sure, Rory?” Jake frowned, using the stupid nickname he called me by.

“I’m sure.” I chuckled, “I’ll see you guys tomorrow.”

“Don’t tell Beth.” Jake called out, a pleading grin on his face. “She’ll kill me if she finds out I let you walk.”

“Your secret is safe with me.” I smirked, “Don’t forget to lock the door.”

“You’re just as bad as she is!”

I left the bakery with a smile on my face, wondering how Beth managed to be younger yet more mature than Jake. I had always found Jake attractive, with his sun-kissed hair and dimples that appeared whenever he smiled. There had been plenty of customers that caught my eye, but none seemed to evoke a response within me. My hands would no longer sweat and my stomach would no longer erupt in butterflies.

The street was nearly deserted as I walked past the darkened shops. A few stragglers lingered on the streets, most likely walking back to one of the Motel’s down the block. This town seemed quite the tourist attraction during the day, but lacked any kind of nightlife. The air was crisp and thick with humidity, making little beads of sweat form at the back of my neck.

I walked past the darkened shops; the bright colors washed out from the darkness. I hadn’t noticed the heavy footsteps behind me until I turned the corner and walked a couple more feet. Not wanting to fully turn around, I tilted my head and glanced out the corner of my eye.

Two figures- much too large to be women, were walking behind me. I told myself not to be worried, that there were still a few stragglers

walking down the road and that they could be headed anywhere. There were a couple Motel's and gas stations by the little shack I lived in, they could be heading there.

My stomach dropped as another dark figure turned the corner farther ahead of me, walking in my direction. Normally this wouldn't have phased me, but all three were dressed exactly the same. Each wore dark colored jeans and thick boots. A dark sweatshirt covered their torso's, the hood pulled up around their heads. Each of them walked with purpose, unlike the tourists that meandered from shop to shop. Not only were they dressed the same, their scents were nearly identical.

Male musk combined with something...different.

'Shit, Aurora run!' Thalia's voice echoed in my head for the first time since I had left.

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Thalia's frantic voice spurred something within me, and I took off in a desperate sprint. My feet slapped against the sidewalk, the sound bouncing off buildings and echoing down the barren street.

'They're werewolves.' Thalia hissed, 'You need to run faster.'

I veered across the street and down the sidewalk, my breaths emerging in short pants. My legs were already beginning to burn, and I thanked the heaven's I removed the boot from my foot days ago. My foot had been completely healed, a perk of being half-werewolf, I suppose. My lungs screamed in my chest, making me want to scream. While my speed and

strength were heightened, my werewolf side did not affect my horrible stamina.

‘Don’t look behind you.’ Thalia hissed as I started to turn my head.

A ragged scream tore through my throat as a pair of arms wrapped around my waist. A hand clamped over my mouth, muffling the scream before it had the chance to ricochet off the buildings. The shops lining the street were absent of light, the signs on the doors flipped to ‘closed’.

There was no one out here to help me.

‘Come on, Aurora! Fight back!’ Thalia hissed, ‘Kick them, bite them! Do something!’

I used all of the energy I had to thrash my legs, as Thalia goaded me on. A sick sense of satisfaction ran through me as my leg connected with something hard, following the grunt of a male. One of the men stood in front of me, and I could make out some of the features on his face. A wide mouth with chipped teeth, shaggy hair that grazed his eyebrows, and a look of blazing anger in his eyes.

The man holding me tightened his grip, his hand slipping as I continued trying to squirm from his grasp. I clamped my teeth down on the meaty part of his hand, biting down until the disgusting taste of blood filled my mouth.

A breathless groan left my lips as the man holding me finally let go. My head hit the concrete with a sickening crack, and stars danced in my eyes. With fear and adrenaline coursing through my veins, I scrambled into a sitting position.

“I don’t have money, but you can take my wallet.” I stammered, the words spewing from my mouth like vomit.

“We don’t want your money, darling.” The man with the wide mouth and shaggy hair cooed, as though I were a startled cat. “Our boss sent us to find you.”

‘Alec and Kade wouldn’t send someone to get us.’ Thalia murmured, ‘They’d come and get us themselves. Someone else sent these men.’

‘Garrett?’ I asked, my eyes flitting between the three looming figures.

‘I don’t think so.’ Thalia paused, ‘These wolves, they smell—wrong.’

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I scrambled backwards as one of the men reached for me, grimacing as small rocks and shards of glass dug into my skin.

‘Do you feel that?’ Thalia hissed.

‘I’m not feeling anything other than terror right now.’ I snapped, thrashing as one of the men lifted me to my feet.

“Are you going to behave?” One of the men asked, his voice was soft considering the situation we were in. “We don’t want to hurt you, but we will if you force our hand.”

‘Alec and Kade, their close.’ Thalia whispered.

I ignored the sudden rush of excitement that coursed through me, blaming it on Thalia when I knew she wasn’t the source. Every hair on my body seemed to stand as I heard their name echo in my mind. The bliss I felt was short-lived, followed by the most horrendous pain.

‘We need to shift, Aurora.’ Thalia whispered; sympathy laced in her harsh tone. ‘This is going to hurt, but you’ll survive.’

‘I thought we needed Alec and Kade to shift?’ I stammered.

‘Their close enough for you not to die during the process.’ Thalia responded, ‘Brace yourself.’

I hadn’t a clue what she meant, or how to brace myself for what was coming. Nearly a second later, a searing pain shot up my spine. Liquid fire coursed through my veins, seeping into my muscles and bones. A sickening crack echoed throughout the street, followed by a wail of pure agony. Everything seemed to detach as my body was consumed in flames. I no longer knew where we were, or what we were doing here in the first place. The three men faded from mind, their voices a slurred jumble in my ears.

‘Shit, shit!’

‘He said she couldn’t shift yet.’

‘Not without the two Alphas.’

‘Shit, they have to be close by. Her wolf wouldn’t let her shift without them.’

‘Inject her with the wolfsbane.’

‘It won’t work—not when she’s just shifted.’

‘It’ll work in a couple hours. Just do it!’

My lungs were numb, expelling oxygen as though it were poison. Crack after sickening crack sounded, followed by something soft brushing against my skin. I felt my legs give out from under me, vaguely hearing Thalia's soft voice filling my head.

'I'm sorry, I'm sorry.' She hissed gently, 'It's almost done. Stay conscious, Aurora. You need to stay awake.'

I could feel myself sliding into the dark, hands grasping for something—anything, to keep me from falling. My hands grasped something firm as the image of Alec and Kade came to mind. The pain in my bones dulled, and when I opened my eyes, everything had changed.

I was on the ground, staring up into the faces of my captors. It seems little time had passed, as they were approaching me slowly, cautiously. Their hands were raised, their eyes bulging from their heads as they looked at me.

A snarl rang out in the night, and I whimpered as I realized the sound had come from me. I ran my tongue over my teeth, noting how strange everything felt. My mouth felt wider—longer, my teeth sharp and jagged.

I stood from the ground, nearly toppling over as I caught a glimpse of fur.

'You did it.' Thalia breathed, beaming with pride. 'We shifted Aurora. Look at us.'

Thalia was right, we had shifted. Fur the color of pure snow coated my body, reflecting the moonlight beautifully. I gazed down at my paws, noting how large they looked. I wished I had hands, to run my fingers through the soft fur on my body.

“She’s—she’s white.” One of the men scoffed, glancing at the other with an incredulous expression.

‘Why’d he say it like that?’ I grimaced, ‘Is something wrong with me?’

‘I’ll explain later.’ Thalia responded, ‘For now, we need to get the hell out of here.’

‘What about Alec and Kade?’ I found myself asking, wincing at the intensity of the pull I felt towards them.

‘Now that we’ve shifted—they’ll find us.’ Thalia reassured me. ‘Now, let me take the reins. I’ll get us away from these idiots.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Trust me, Aurora.’ Thalia replied, her tone soft. ‘I’ve known you your entire life. You can trust me above anyone else. Well, beside Alec and Kade.’

Letting Thalia take control was easier than I expected. It felt like pulling a car over and stepping into the passenger seat. I watched through Thalia’s eyes as she barreled through the three men, snapping at their limbs as she plowed through the narrow space between buildings.

We leaped over a chain-link fence, barreling through bushes and shrubs as Thalia led us into the woods. My eyes were wide as I looked at our surroundings. We maneuvered past trees and over rocks, kicking up dirt behind us.

‘Will they follow us?’ I asked, marveling at the strength of my new legs.

‘They’ll try.’ Thalia nodded, ‘They won’t get far. We’re fast.’

‘We are?’ I asked, as I hadn’t seen the speed a normal wolf runs at.

‘We are.’ Thalia replied, chuckling at the awe in my voice.

Everything felt different out here, alone with Thalia in the forest. I could feel her instincts merge into my own, as we finally worked as one.

Her speed became my own, and soon I was aiding her, laughing breathlessly as the wind brushed through our fur. The feeling was completely liberating, and soon I had forgotten why we were running in the first place.

We barreled through a small stream, and I couldn’t hold back my joyous laugh as water sprayed all around us. I couldn’t remember the last time I felt this open and free, relishing in the little things I often overlooked.

‘That’ll help disperse our scent.’ Thalia nodded, ‘Sooner or later, they’ll pick up on it again.’

Minutes faded into hours, and exhaustion began setting in our bones. I could tell Thalia was tiring, as we began slowing down. Trees no longer whizzed by in blurs of color and smell. I now had time to appreciate each tree, the pattern of its leaves and the rich bark that protected it.

Far ahead smoke scattered into the sky, dispersing through the air and mixing with the clouds. A dull ache began to set in our bones, and I winced as the feeling became stronger.

‘Oh, hell.’ Thalia groaned, picking up her pace.

‘What?’ I asked, my voice cracking as the pain began to grow. ‘What’s happening?’

‘They injected us with wolfsbane.’ Thalia hissed, a groan of pain coming from our lips. ‘This was your first shift, so it takes longer to kick in. I won’t last much longer like this—neither will you.’

‘Get to the smoke.’ I hissed, biting back the scream that pushed itself towards my lips. ‘There could be a house.’

I gave Thalia all of the strength I had left, propelling us forward with a garbled scream. Branches whipped across our fur, mud splattering in every direction as we stumbled forward.

A cry of pure relief left my lips as we emerged from the forest line at the top of a steep hill. At the bottom of the hill sat a farmhouse, the windows lit and the chimney spewing heavy smoke.

Black spots danced across my vision as our limbs felt like lead. The ground tilted and rolled, our eyes shutting as pain encompassed our body.

I forced my eyes open, groaning at how heavy they felt. The green of the earth bled into the blackspots in my vision, but through the haze I could make out something. My fingers ached as they twitched, and I noticed the fur had left my body. A warm breeze caressed my bare skin, but I hadn’t the strength to care.

Thalia and I had made it to the bottom of the hill, tumbling down as we faded in and out of consciousness. Mud coated my bare skin, drying in itchy patches.

Hovering an inch away from my eyes, was the face of an old woman. The sight jolted me, and I struggled to move away from her. Before I slipped into the darkness, I noticed the gentle smile on her soft face.

Mated to the Alpha twins novel by Jane Doe chapter 45

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Mated to the Alpha twins novel by Jane Doe Chapter 45

For a moment, I convinced myself I was at home with my Grandma. The smell of soup filled the air, thick with garlic, thyme and oregano. The tomato mixture invaded my senses and left me with the feeling of comfort and security. My Grandma's humming floated through the kitchen into the living room where I laid on the couch. The heat lingering in the California air warmed my skin, soothing my aching muscles.

It was when I found the strength to open my eyes that I realized how wrong I was. I wasn't in California, and my Grandma was dead. The peaceful humming was coming from an old woman, whose hair was white as snow. She stood in the kitchen, stirring something in a large iron pot. The heat that danced along my skin was from the crackling fire, just a few feet in front of me.

Horror flooded through me as I realized I had been naked when I was found, and that I now wore a long nightgown. A thick quilt was placed over my body, smelling of lavender and other herbs. I watched in stunned silence as the old woman ladled the soup into a large bowl, her delicate humming filling the house.

I felt my body stiffen as the woman looked my way, a smile forming on her face as she approached me with the soup. Her eyes held the same kindness my Grandma's used to have, but that was the only similarity between the two. Grandma had been old and frail, her limbs thin and weak. This woman was old, but she was strong. She walked effortlessly; her posture straight yet relaxed. Her hair hung down her back in snow-colored waves.

“Eat this, dear. It’ll make you feel better.” The woman murmured, setting the steaming bowl of soup in front of me. She sat herself in an arm chair, watching me with expectant eyes.

‘Thalia?’ I called out, but was greeted by darkness.

“Your wolf will be back, child.” The woman nodded serenely, “Wolfsbane, nasty business. Try the soup, it’s minestrone.”

As much as I wanted to resist, the kindness in her eyes and the growling of my stomach overwhelmed me. Tentatively, I spooned at the soup. Carrots, celery and onion floated around in the bowl. As I brought the spoon to my lips, the old woman grinned happily.

“Is it good?” She asked with bright eyes, “My son always says it’s too salty. What’s a good soup without a little salt?”

“It’s good.” I nodded, surprised at how strong my voice sounded. “It’s not salty at all.”

“Well thank you, dear.” She grinned, turning her head towards the dark hallway and calling out. “See! She doesn’t think it’s too salty.”

“Trusting her already?” A deep voice scoffed.

An older gentleman stepped into the light, around thirty years old. His hair was dark, but had streaks of light grey. His eyes narrowed on me suspiciously, and I resisted the urge to sink into the plush sofa. His build was large, but tension rippled from him in waves.

“Don’t go frightening the girl, Miles.” The old woman spat, waving at the man with a deep sigh. “Ignore my son, he’s spent too many years battling his own paranoia. You can call me Sage.”

“I’m Aurora.” I replied, giving Miles one last glance before eating another spoonful of soup.

“Beautiful name.” Sage murmured appreciatively, “Now, why don’t you tell us about your first shift. The first is always the worst.”

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“My first shift?” I gulped, my eyes widening as I looked between the mother and son. Understanding crossed Sage’s eyes as she read the panic on my face.

“Ah, I see.” Sage nodded, casting a frown at her son who loomed in the hallway. “You haven’t known about your heritage for long, have you? If you did, you would’ve sniffed us out.”

“You’re both werewolves?” I asked, surprise laced in my tone. “I haven’t known for long. It came as a... surprise.”

“An unwelcome one at that, I assume.” Sage frowned, sympathy burning in her eyes. “It couldn’t have been easy. Living your life as a human only to find out you’re the daughter of an Alpha, and a white wolf at that.”

“A white wolf?” I frowned, “What does the color of my wolf have to do with anything?”

“She’s absolutely clueless.” Miles scoffed, shaking his head. “I give her a week.”

“Quiet, you’ll frighten the poor girl.” Sage snapped, then turned her attention to me. “White wolves are exceedingly rare, child. That’s how you found me. I’m the last white wolf in over five hundred years.”

“I found you because you’re a white wolf?”

“Like calls to like, Aurora.” Sage nodded, “I’ve been in hiding for quite some time. White wolves are coveted for their abilities. White wolves appear when the world is in need of them. There is no telling when or where they will show up.”

“Abilities?” I sighed, exhaustion weighing my limbs down. “I thought I had enough to worry about. I never wanted to be a werewolf, let alone one with abilities.”

“Power is often given to those who do not want it. It’s best you learn what you’re capable of.” Sage replied, her face quickly turning serious. “Just because you reject your heritage, does not mean those who covet you will simply stop. Accept the life you’ve been given, Aurora. Learn to defend yourself.”

“I don’t know where to start.” I scoffed, “I ran to get away from all of this. Now I’m back where I started.”

“I disagree.” Sage mused, “I think you’ve made an improvement. You enjoyed shifting, yes? It was liberating, wasn’t it?”

“It was incredible.” I confessed, feeling Thalia stir in my mind. “I’ve never felt so free, so strong.”

“You have more strength than you think, Aurora.” Sage smiled, standing from the arm chair. “Follow me.”

With one last wary glance towards Miles, I followed Sage out the back door. I cringed against the harsh sunlight, wondering how long I had been unconscious. As my eyes adjusted, I looked on in wonder at Sage’s backyard. I had thought the forest at night was beautiful, but it was nothing compared to this.

Her back yard consisted of rolling hills, plush trees with drooping canopies, and rows upon rows of wildflowers. Rose bushes grew in clusters, unlike anything I had ever seen. Sunflowers, daisies, gardenias, and flowers I had never seen before were sprawled out along the earth. The grass was a brilliant shade of emerald. A small stream cut through the earth, it's water clear and bright.

"It's beautiful." I breathed, my eyes looking on in wonder.

My eyes grazed every vibrant petal, every crisp leaf, and every blade of grass. This small patch of earth was like a personal heaven, a private glade for Sage and her brooding son.

"This, Aurora, is my ability." Sage beamed at the small slice of heaven, pride shining in her eyes.

"Flowers are your ability?" I asked, unable to tear my eyes away.

"Not flowers." Sage chuckled, motioning for me to follow her.

We hopped over the thin stream and continued through the plush grass. Sage held back some of the flowers for me, treading carefully through them. We approached a bushel of tulips, and I frowned as I realized they had not yet bloomed. Everything else in this glade was thriving, but the tulips seemed to be far behind.

"Watch." Sage murmured, cupping the tulips with her withered hands.

The air around Sage turned warm, a gentle breeze ruffling the night gown I wore. I watched in silent amazement as the tulips bloomed, the fragile petals opening for her.

“My ability is nature itself.” Sage smiled proudly, looking on at the plants and tree’s as though they were her children. “Tell me, child. Do your mates know you’re a white wolf?”

“How did you know?” I asked, flinching as I wondered what Alec and Kade might think of my whereabouts.

Thalia had said they were close. Were they still looking for me? Would they simply grow tired of this game of cat and mouse?

‘They will never stop looking for us, Aurora.’ Thalia murmured, ‘They’ll search the ends of the earth until they find us.’

“I see your wolf is awake.” Sage chuckled, “And to answer your question, white wolves have sharper instincts than your average werewolf. Sometimes we can tell who someone’s mate is before they turn of age. Other times we simply get small bits of information.”

“No, they don’t know.” I frowned, “I ran away before they could find out.”

“Does anyone else know?” Sage asked, turning her full attention on me. I resisted the urge to squirm under her gaze, but I couldn’t wipe the nervous frown that appeared on my lips.

“Yes, these men tried to kidnap me. I think they were wolves, but they smelled...different.” I shook my head, unable to ignore the sinking feeling in my gut. “They watched me shift, they know what I am.”

“Then you must proceed very carefully.” Sage murmured, “You are lucky, you have two mates to protect you. My mate died when I was very young, as did my parents. I was left to fend for myself.”

“I’m so sorry.” I replied, and I truly was. I wasn’t sure I loved Alec and Kade, but the thought of them dying twisted my insides painfully.

“Don’t fight your mates, Aurora.” Sage smiled softly, gently patting her hand against my cheek. “They will choose you over anything—over anyone. That kind of bond is important, it could save your life someday.”

My heart ached under her touch; under the motherly touch I had been denied for so long. I couldn’t help but wish my Mom was more like Sage, that she had loved me and cared for me when I needed it most. Instead, she left me alone, she left me to fend for myself and discover the world for what it truly was, cruel and cold.

“How could they ever forgive me?” I chuckled, though my laugh quickly turned into a dry sob. “I ran away from them. They should hate me.”

“I’m sure you had your reasons for leaving, no matter what they might be.” Sage replied, “Tell them your reasons, Aurora. They will forgive you; I promise.”

“I’ll try.” I breathed, finally beginning to understand that I couldn’t run from this. I couldn’t run from who—what I was.

“Speaking of your mates, I suspect they will be arriving shortly.” Sage murmured, her eyes roaming the forest along her house. “I sent Miles to cover up your scent, though I believe your mates have quickly figured out how to track you through the bond. Highly unusual you know, having twins as mates.”

“Tell me about it.” I chuckled dryly, wrapping my arms around my torso as my heartrate skyrocketed. Excitement danced along my skin, raising goosebumps and igniting a fire in my stomach. I hadn’t let myself accept how much I truly missed the twins, and I still refused to think of Tori.

“I am sympathetic, men are difficult to deal with.” Sage grinned, looking half her age. “Though it means more protection for you.”

“You could come with us...” I offered, desperately hoping she would say yes. My stomach dropped as her eyes softened. “I don’t have anyone else, not really anyway. Melissa-my Mom stopped caring a long time ago, and my Father only wants me so that I can take over his pack.”

“Visit me as often as you can, child.” Sage smiled, but the expression didn’t meet her eyes. “But please, tell no one of this place or what I am. I have remained in hiding for so long, I’m afraid I have no place in this world anymore.”

“You’ll always have a place in my pack, Sage.” I murmured, speaking the words as Thalia whispered them in my mind. While the words felt foreign on my tongue, they also felt right.

“Thank you for that, Luna Aurora.” Sage beamed, and I couldn’t help but return the gesture.

The two of us headed inside where I finished off the remainder of my soup. I couldn’t remember a time where I felt this happy, this at ease with what and who I was. That feeling only lasted so long as I realized I wouldn’t be showing up at the bakery today. I wondered what Beth might think, and hoped Alec and Kade would let me visit her one last time.

I grew more and more nervous as the minutes ticked by. As a hard knock sounded on the front door, I was on my feet in an instant. Their scents hit my nose within seconds, nearly sending me to my knees.

‘They’re here.’ Thalia murmured joyously, ‘They’re actually here.’

“She’s here, Alpha’s.” Sage responded with a kind tone. “You may come inside.”

Their footsteps echoed through the house, and for a moment, I wondered if the soup I ate would make an appearance. Just as I contemplated fleeing through the backdoor, Alec and Kade stepped into the room.