

Mated to the Alpha Twins by Jane Doe Chapter 91

“Take a deep breath, sweetheart.” Kade chuckled in my ear, but I was not oblivious to the tension in his own emotions.

We were being escorted down to the second floor, where the meeting would take place. The entire floor was heavily guarded, and was much wider and more open than the other floors.

“Do not speak unless you’re called on.” A tan-skinned woman in a pencil skirt warned Kade and I. She walked effortlessly in her heels, swaying her hips like a runway model. “If they wish for you to speak, they’ll call on you. That’s your chance. You can also call as many witnesses as you please, so those you came with are free to speak on your behalf.”

Kade and I had been debriefed as much as possible, but nothing could prepare us for what the outcome might be. Other than Marcus Novak, we hadn’t a clue what the other High Table members might want.

I adjusted the dress I wore and grimaced as the rigid material rubbed against my b**e leg. The heels I wore sent little clicks and clacks echoing through the hallway. They were miserable to walk in, and horribly loud. My feet already ached, and we hadn’t even begun.

“These shoes are going to be the d***h of me, if the High Table doesn’t k**l me first.” I huffed under my breath, glancing at the group of silent body guards that escorted us down the hall.

Kade’s arm was the only thing that kept me from tumbling forward. I had never worn heels before, and though my legs looked incredible, they were becoming a nuisance to walk in.

We entered through a set of wooden doors, which led into a huge room. It was much like what a court room would look like, only with a few alterations.

The five High Table members sat at the head of the room, with guards placed comfortably on either side. Scattered throughout the room were clusters of families, Alpha's to other notable packs. Their personal insignia were emblazoned on a bronze plaque that hung on their respective sections. The witnesses—I realized, there were so many. They openly talked with one another, and even spoke across the narrow walkways that lead to the center of the room.

There was a box of my own at the center of the room, twenty feet away from the High Table members.

As our scent flooded the room, and people began to notice us, everyone fell silent. Kade's hand flattened against my back when I sucked in a sharp breath. The emotions were lashing out at me, flashing through my mind and body at a rate that was disorienting. My skin crawled from the multitude of emotions. There was a lot of fear and hatred, but there was also a lot of curiosity. Curiosity could be a good thing.

Kade glanced down at me, conveying what he could with his eyes. We couldn't speak freely here, and this wasn't the time for public displays of affection.

I kept my face neutral, though I really wanted to scream. There were so many ugly emotions battering me, and I had to constantly shove them back in order to focus.

“Now entering, Alpha Kade Maddox and his mate, Aurora.” A man who stood beside the main doors spoke loudly to the room. If there had been anyone left talking, they were all silent now.

Kade and I were escorted over to our own personal section, practically at the center of the room. I felt all eyes on me, a spectacle—an animal in the midst of other animals.

In our section sat Kade, his parents, Tori, Garrett and Julian. Each one met my eyes as Kade and I took our seats.

Silence engulfed the room, and Marcus Novak stood from his seat at the very head of the room.

His navy suit matched his stormy eyes perfectly, capturing the blue within their depths. He was beautiful in a smooth and shiny way, free of any blemish that might reveal him as human. His son was much the same way. In fact, sitting towards the left-hand side, in a space of his own, was Zayne Novak.

Marcus did not acknowledge his son as he stood and took the room's attention.

“It's been hundreds of years since we've had a gathering as large as this. There has not been a need for discussion this urgent in so very long.” Marcus greeted the room, sweeping wide with his arm. “As it stands, the longevity of our species has been the High Table's priority. Our kind has been flourishing for the last fifty years, in ways we haven't before. No matter the results of these meetings, we are here to protect our kind, and ensure its success.

His voice was rich and smooth, perfectly balance as it stretched to all corners of the room. Even his emotions were calm and balanced, like perfectly smooth waters. There was nothing about this man that revealed a monster within.

There were murmurs throughout the room, and I found myself tuned into every emotion that fluttered my way. To the right of me were a small

group of people. In their own section, sat an Alpha and Luna. Both had a guard with them, but were watching the spectacle with a calm expression. Their hair was golden, and their eyes a rich shade of caramel. They were both tanned, letting me know they lived somewhere warm and bright.

I could feel the underlying tension within their emotions, the distaste whenever Marcus Novak spoke. It was a realization on my part, that my abilities could be used in ways I had never anticipated. I made a note of them in my mind, perhaps they might be persuaded into changing sides.

“Let the meeting commence.” Marcus commended, taking a seat once more.

“I call Philip Heald to the stand.” Brayton Cliff was the first to speak, much to my surprised.

He eyed me from where he sat, his grey eyes calculating and interested. I was sure he could read the surprise on my face. I hadn't a clue who Philip Heald was, much less what he had to do with me.

Philip Heald was many werewolf men looked like. Muscular and large, even with his greying hair and patchy beard. He emerged from a section across the room, and began walking towards the middle. This stranger I had never met before stood at the center of the room, addressing the High Table on a matter than involved my life.

The pieces clicked together moments later when Brayton Cliff began speaking again.

“You were witness to the rogue a****k that had taken place on April, 23rd. Correct?” He asked, leaning forward in his seat.

“Yes—I was witness to that a****k, fought in it myself. Wouldn't be here if I weren't worried about my Alpha's. They're—they're not like

their father. This girl, she's bringing some pretty heavy stuff to my pack, stuff were not equipped for." He grunted, clearing his throat.

Kade stiffened from where he stood, and it took me a moment, but I recognized this man's face. He was someone I had seen in town a few times, usually emerging from the hardware store. He was always covered in grease, but I had never given him much thought.

A sharp pain stung my chest at the thought of a pack member speaking against me, but I steeled myself. Kade was fuming, but I knew he could keep it together for this meeting.

Feeling someone's emotions makes it hard to be angry, because I understand the reasoning behind those decisions. Philip was concerned, worried for the twin's he had watched grow up. No matter how much it hurt, he thought he was doing the right thing.

"Would you explain the details of that event? More specifically, when Ms. Aurora found herself in battle." Brayton clarified, all but ignoring what Philip had said.

"Yes—things were going to s**t, there were too many of em'. Biggest battle I've seen in my time, but that's not saying much. Alpha Alec was wounded, nothing serious. He would've recovered if she hadn't trounced onto the battle field. The girl nearly got both our Alpha's k****d. They were too worried about her to concentrate on the rogues." He grunted, glancing over towards Kade. He paled significantly, but still managed to turn and continue. "She got overwhelmed, used that power of hers. She started howling, nearly split my ears. All them rogues started actin' strange, fell to the ground like they were in pain. They were writhin' and screamin'. Didn't stop until she quit her howling and collapsed."

“Mm, yes.” Brayton nodded thoughtfully. “That will be all, Mr. Heald. I would like Ms. Aurora to come to the stand.”

My heart dropped into my stomach, and I instinctively tensed beside Kade. Every instinct I had was telling me not to stand at the center of the room, that it was much too close to Marcus Novak and his son. It was telling me that though they were the worst, there were other monsters in this room.

Kade squeezed my hand, and I used his touch to force my limbs to move. I walked rather stiffly to the stand, trying not to shiver when all of those eyes were placed on my shoulders.

Marcus Novak regarded me with interest, an almost familiar smile on his face. Desmond Deville smirked, and looked me up and down like some kind of frat-boy. Brayton Cliff had that calculating look on his face, as though he were mentally dissecting me. Jasper Fox had absolutely nothing on his face, no trace of interest or emotion. He was leaned back in his seat, clad in leather pants and a vest. He was the most unconventional of the bunch. I could feel the hostility that radiated from Sebastian Sable. Pure disgust and fury whenever he sneered my way.

“Ms. Aurora, can you confirm Philip Heald’s accounts of the rogue a****k on your mate’s pack?” Brayton Cliff asked in his smooth voice, slicking back his wheat-colored hair. “Did you use your abilities to harm those rogues?”

“Philip Heald’s account of the battle was correct, and yes, I did use my abilities on the rogues.” I nodded firmly, forcing my voice to remain steady. It was hard, speaking this loud without faltering, but I managed. I couldn’t help but add this last bit, forcing a bit of sweetness into my voice. “I could feel my mate’s pain, and I ran to defend. As I’m sure you can tell, their pack is mine, just as much as my two are theirs.”

I left out the part where I had absolutely no clue what I was doing, and that the power had exploded from me without any rhyme or reason. It had been pure luck and rage that directed my power onto the rogues.

“So, it seems she has some semblance of control over her abilities, no matter how slim.” Brayton mused.

“It proves she can be taught, but to what extent?” Desmond Deville asked, surprising me a bit. “There is no one to teach the young wolf.”

Desmond Deville was easily around thirty-five, and was currently the oldest unmated male. He was handsome in a woodsy, rugged way. There were some light lines on his face, but they only added to his looks. His hair was the color of rust, thick and full on his head. His smile was one of sweet poison, expectant and alluring.

“Many white wolves come into their abilities naturally. If she already has this shred of control, more will come in time.” Brayton flashed Desmond a disapproving look and continued.

“Maybe it was a fluke.” Sebastian Sable cut in with an oily smile. If I could’ve guessed what a psychopath felt like, it would’ve been this particular High Table member. Sebastian and Marcus were two sides of the same coin. Marcus was charm and smile; Sebastian was blood and vengeance. “Maybe she has no idea what she’s doing. How can we trust her power won’t just emerge again?”

“Despite the understandable concerns of Alpha Sebastian, I do believe in the preservation of life and extraordinary circumstances.” Marcus Novak chimed in, sounding as though he were actually on my side.

If I didn’t know how he was, I would’ve fully believed him. He seemed so genuine and sincere as he smiled down on me. “This ability has not been seen in thousands of years, should we not discover what Ms.

Aurora's purpose is in this world? How might she better our species, and preserve our longevity?"

"You wish for her to work for the High Table?" Desmond Deville blinked in surprise, which soon morphed into a coy smile. "I wouldn't particularly mind that. Her development would be under our supervision, as well as at our disposal."

"I'm not some toy you can pass around. My power isn't at everyone's disposal." I blurted without absolutely any regard.

I could feel Kade's surprise, but was shocked at the perverse joy that hid beneath. He was enjoying how I defended myself, how I snarled at these self-absorbed men.

I wouldn't make myself small and docile for them.

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The room was silent for a few long seconds before the room erupted in chaos. Witnesses were shouting on all sides, emotions flung like daggers at my neck and chest. Many were outraged that I dare disrespect the High Table. They hurled insults my way, blaming my upbringing.

Much to my surprise, there were some coming to my defense. Though their voices weren't as loud, they shouted that I had a right to stake claim on my life and abilities. They accused the High Table of becoming too powerful, a thought that made me shiver.

I couldn't help but notice that the Alpha and Luna with the golden hair remained silent, their emotions conveying no animosity towards me.

The chaos lasted a total of five seconds before Marcus Novak silenced the room with a wave of his hand.

“Enough, we cannot blame the girl for her outbursts. She was not raised on our values and customs, so she can and will be excused.” Marcus told the room. The flimsy compliment made me narrow my eyes.

“It is understandable that we might be eager to explore your abilities, Aurora. You are unique, incredibly so. Abilities such as these are gifted to the world for a reason. Think of this as an opportunity to discover that very reason. I very much believe that working with the High Table might provide you the answers you’ve been looking for, whilst aiding us in our endeavor to better our species.”

Marcus Novak was very good with his words, infecting the crowd with his subtle poison. There were murmurs of agreement and even those insisting I offer aid to smaller packs. I could feel my walls closing in on me, a million greedy hands tearing at my clothing, my hair and limbs. They all wanted something from me, each and every one. It took me a moment to realize that Marcus Novak wasn’t asking, he was insisting.

“I see the concern on your face, Ms. Aurora. I can only imagine what you must feel in this room, from each and every one of us. How truly incredible.” Marcus smiled softly, his perfect mask locked in place. “I have no intention of forcing your hand, though it has long been custom between the packs of the United States to exchange bargain’s and create deals. While I cannot speak for my fellow Alpha’s, I am very much interested in working with you. Should any of my fellow colleges wish to work with you, they will provide their terms. Now, if you wish to refuse us, we might speak again on what your future shall look like, and any other concerns we might have.”

It was this moment that I realized how dangerous Marcus Novak was. To the public he was this incredible figure of honor and prosperity, spouting his dreams about preserving our kind. In reality, he was a power-hungry sociopath with a knack for manipulation and good looks.

To many in the room, what Marcus said was generous. I should be elated that the regal High Table would want my services—that they would want to work with me. It was an incredible honor that I did not want. But to them, it was crime to simply want to live my life. All while Marcus offered me this incredible chance, my other mate was sitting in some cell. It made me want to scream, to throw everything I had at the five of them.

I could feel my power surge through my body, and dug my fingers into the wooden podium that stood before me. Jaspar Fox cocked his head, making his shaggy hair shift. He leaned forward in his seat and squinted his eyes. It was the first sign of interest I had seen in him. Even his emotions were disinterested and even bored. Now—now, he was curious. The power that bubbled in me vanished at the surprise, and Jaspar's disinterest quickly returned.

“Let us adjourn for the time being, to think on these negotiations that will be the start of history for our kind.” Marcus Novak beamed at the room, “We will resume tomorrow. For those of you who wish to remain in our stands, please await further instruction.”

And just like that, my first meeting with the High Table was over. I desperately wished it were my last. This hotel was reserved solely for the High Table and its meetings, which meant we could stay here until a decision had been made. It was blindingly clear that the High Table would soon come to a decision, and that I might not like the outcome.

We met with Julian, Garrett and the twin's parents after the meeting. I was becoming edgy without Alec, and I was sure the others could see me unraveling. Both Julian and Garrett dispatched their own fighters. I noticed how neither hesitated, even though Garrett still looked a bit sour. I appreciated the gesture, but nothing would soothe that madness inside of me except for Alec.

Afterwards, the three of us returned to our rooms. I was feeling a bit claustrophobic with all these guards around, a constant wall between you and everyone else. It only reminded me of the danger here.

A servant was granted entrance to the room to serve us dinner. Tori, Kade and I sat around a small table, eating silently.

“That went to s**t pretty quickly.” Tori rolled her eyes, “So, you either work with them, or they say you’re an uncontrollable weapon?”

“At least I get to pick between the five of them.” I commented dryly, taking another bite of my burger. It tasted like ash after the meeting, but I needed something in my stomach.

“Does the food usually come with a note?” Tori asked randomly, lifting my plate to pick up a small note card.

She flipped it in her hands and stared at the back. Her eyebrows grew closer with every second, until a scowl tore across her face. I could already tell from her emotions who the card was from, even though I hadn’t a clue what it said.

“What does he want now?” I frowned, plucking the card from her fingers when she turned her head sourly.

The note read;

Room 412, 7:00pm.

Do not be late, these meetings are hard enough as is.

“As much as I’m beginning to loathe him, we need to get Alec back.” I sighed sharply, pinching the bridge of my nose when my head began to ache. I gave Tori an apologetic look, “If you want to miss this meeting, I understand. If not, you’re welcome to come with us.”

“I know, Aurora. You don’t have to explain yourself to me.” Tori’s smile was small, but friendly. “I’m not going to hide from the p***k. He’s not important enough for that.”

We stood outside of room 412 nearly two hours later. It had taken ages to divert the guards, but my abilities had come in handy when it came to detecting anyone nearby. Turns out, I could sense emotions up to a certain distance away. With some concentration I could feel how far and close those emotions were, they helped a lot when trying to identify the oncoming guards.

We slipped inside the room, and my eyes tried to adjust as we stepped into low lighting. Only two small lamps were lit, the light dull and yellow. Zayne was leaning against the countertop, his arms crossed over his chest. His suit jacket was folded over the chair in the small dining room.

“You look ruffled.” Tori noted a bit indignantly, arching an eyebrow at him.

“This was the first meeting, and it’s already going to s**t. Are you not also ruffled?” He sneered, pushing off the counter to approach Tori.

“Working with her is only the beginning. Once she steps foot on my father’s territory—she is gone. Do you think there will be proof? Maybe you believe one of the other members will help her. If so, you’re a fool. You’ll waste your own resources trying to get her back, and destroy your pack in the process. It is absolutely, Fcking hopeless. The ship is sinking, and you can either jump the Fck off, or go down with it.”

I paused with bated breath, stepping back from the tension that radiated off the two of them. That kind of hostility—it would come to a head, and

soon. Whoever had made them mates, I wondered if they knew how explosive they would be.

“Nothing is hopeless, Novak. There will always be a way. You have to keep fighting to change things.” Tori scoffed, “You might be jumping ship, but I plan on staying behind to fix the d**n thing.”

“Let’s not prolonged this. I’d like my brother back before the month is up.” Kade’s snarl rippled through the room, cutting through their tension and dismantling it. “Fight when this is through.”

“It’s time to hold up to your end of the bargain.” Zayne grimaced, the fire in his eyes fizzling out. I felt a flash of worry in his emotions, but he had smothered it rather than give it life. “There are a few white wolves I know of that need safekeeping, and I need them to stay in your pack.”

Kade was just as stunned as I. This wasn’t what we expected, not by a long shot.

“You want us to hide some white wolves?” I reiterated a bit slowly, “Why these specific white wolves?”

“They aren’t very powerful. If they were, they’d be noticed.” Zayne commented gruffly, “I owe a friend a favor, this is that favor.”

Kade paused for a long moment and looked my way, “We’re going to need more details if we’re to transport them to our land.”

“You’re willing to risk war if we’re caught?” Zayne asked, his head tilted just a bit. It was a slight show of interest in his sour demeanor.

This time, Kade’s answer was immediate.

“This agreement will not change the war that’s sure to come.”

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Marcus Novak considered himself a collector, but things became difficult when your possessions were living humans with thoughts, feelings, and a will of their own.

His own son had slowly begun to turn against him, though not for the same reasons most would. For reasons completely unknown to the three of us, Zayne Novak needed a group of ten white wolves transported from his father’s territory.

It was strictly a stealth mission; in and out. The white wolves would be deposited at the edge of Marcus’s territory by an ally. Our job is to transfer those white wolves to our territory.

Being caught would ensure a huge mess, one most of us might not escape from.

Marcus Novak would have all rights to a****k us for taking something of his. If we were to be the ones venturing on his territory—d****h sentence. So long as Marcus remained in the dark, all parties were safe.

“Naveah and Isaac, they’re the most important. They have to get out at all costs. The others will stay behind and help them escape if need be.” Zayne told the three of us, a sour look on his face as we committed the details to memory.

“What makes the two of them important?” Kade asked, all business.

I stuck close to Kade, using his towering form to give me some confidence. “Any abilities we need to know about?”

“Isaac can help. He’s good with emotions, in a different way than you, Aurora. Naveah, not so much.” Zayne replied curtly. I tried to suppress my surprise as he said my name for the first time. It wasn’t progress, as much as I wished it were so for Tori’s sake. What he said next sobered the three of us a bit. “She’s pregnant, there’s no telling what the kid might be. It’s only a matter of time before my father grows impatient.”

“You can’t speed a pregnancy along. Even Marcus Novak can’t force nature.” I scoffed defensively.

It was more a reflex than anything else, a need to put down the monster that reared its head. A monster with the face of Marcus Novak.

“He has no need for Naveah. He keeps her around because she’s Isaac’s mate. Her abilities are incredibly rare and unique, but they are passive. My father has no use for passive abilities.” Zayne replied darkly, “If the kids powerful enough, he might not need Isaac either. The baby’s been showing signs lately, doing magic from inside the womb. Not only do they have limited options, but they’re also running low on time.”

We had twenty four hours to come up with some sort of plan. Come tomorrow night, we would need to act.

“Alec—when do we get Alec back?” I said a bit frantic.

Zayne must’ve seen something urgent and unpleasant in my eyes, as he felt the need to take a few steps back before replying. I could feel myself bristle at his words, even if I did understand his side of things.

“I’ll help your mate when these wolves are safely transported.” He replied thickly, his eyes darting between Kade and I as though one of us might lunge for his throat. Again, I couldn’t blame him. “If it isn’t clear—I am trusting you with these wolves lives. Even after I help your

mate, you'll still have them in your custody. All I have is your word that you will not harm them, and you haven't even given me that."

"Somehow you don't strike me as the type of guy to honor someone's word." Tori snorted in Zayne's direction, her words neat and venomous.

"There's very little you actually now about me." He replied cold and flat, but that didn't deter the inferno that was Tori.

"Mm, let's see. Self-centered, rich, spoiled, sadistic." Tori nodded to herself, ticking each attribute off on her finger. As much as I wanted to stop her, she deserved this. Just as Zayne deserved to be reminded of his idiotic choices. "You're like a diamond, Novak. All pretty and shiny to look at, but at the end of the day, it's just a rock."

I could feel the tension in the room snap, but even with the forewarning, my reaction wasn't fast enough.

Zayne snarled and lunged at Tori. Instinctively, I darted to place myself in between the two. Kade's arm created a cage around my midsection, pinning me against him.

I remembered the vague comments about werewolves and dominance, something the twins had told me when I first returned to town.

Proving yourself through trials and tribulation, that was a huge part of belonging to a pack.

I'm not sure what Zayne was trying to accomplish. Whether it was the fractured mate-bond, or Zayne's own warped morals, he didn't seem to be trying to k**l Tori.

Zayne's hands grasped the tops of Tori's arms, as he pushed her back towards the wall. He snapped at her neck with semi-elongated teeth, and it took me a moment to realize what he was doing.

Tori dug into the thick carpet that covered the floor and pivoted. The movement was smooth and graceful, leaving Zayne against the wall.

She slammed her weight into his gut, and I couldn't suppress my smile when he grunted.

Tori stood on her toes until her eyes reached his, and snarled in his face with a voice that was full-blooded Luna.

"I will not submit to you, Zayne Novak." She snarled, spitting the very flames that lived within her curly locks. "I will only bend my knee to someone I can follow. You—you are a selfish, misguided, coward that has so much power, so more than he realizes. Power to change things, but you won't. The world is made of miserable men like you."

Zayne took every insult and spiteful word, pulling them into the snowstorm that constantly clung to him. His eyes were shards of ice as they burrowed into Tori's skin.

What was even more interesting, his face was flushed. Rosy red across his cheeks and down his neck.

The blinding rage he felt, it was the first emotion I had sensed from him. The first unbridled, human emotion. It wasn't encased in ice like the rest.

Tori turned her back on her mate, who was both hero and villain, and left the suite with her head held high.

The three of us called a meeting with Julian, Garrett, and the Twins parents. For the time being, we were shifting our focus from Alec to these white wolves. It made me sick thinking about it, but we only had twenty-four hours. I reminded myself that this would get us Alec back, but even that was making my ears ache.

Both Tori and I were escorted back to our rooms one floor below. Kade decided to stay with Julian and Garrett for a few more hours, planning out what I was now calling, the great white wolf heist.

I lay curled up on the sectional in the suite, bleary eyed and heavy hearted. I had tried tugging down Alec and I's bond, like I did with Kade. I could still feel the bond there, but something was blocking it.

One hour and a massive headache later, a knock sounded on the door. I tiptoed over and looked through the peephole, seeing nothing.

What was even more worrisome was the fact that there were no posted guards at our room tonight. We had our own men watching over us, but there were none tonight.

I chalked it up to some kind of scheduling error and cracked open the door.

Sitting on the floor was a small and plain note card. While it looked as though it were from Zayne, the handwriting was entirely different. Not nearly as neat as Zayne's handwriting, and a few lead smudges made me wonder if the author were left-handed.

It wasn't the room or floor number that caught my attention, but the scribbled note at the bottom.

'If you want to stop Marcus Novak, meet me at eleven sharp.'

Kade was still with Garrett and Julian, and I knew heading off on my own was dangerous, so I stopped by Tori's room. After a few knocks and several minutes, I figured she'd went to bed.

I knew it wasn't a great idea, but if the note were true, we needed those kinds of allies. I was near-certain the note was from the golden haired Alpha and Luna, the ones who very clearly detested Marcus.

I crept through the silent hotel hallways, smelling airfreshener and previously washed laundry. My phone was snug in my back pocket, and I kept a hand on it incase this was all a huge mistake—or worse, a trap.

I slipped inside the darkened suite and jumped when the door slid shut. The lighting was poor, but I could clearly make out a large form over by the bookshelves.

Reclining on a leather love seat with a scotch in hand was none other than Desmond Deville.

“I wondered if you'd show up.” Desmond mused in that musical voice of his. Both gravely and smooth, much like the scotch he was drinking. “I find g*****g enlightening. You can learn so much about a person based on what choices they've made.”

“I'm not really here for chit-chat.” I cleared my throat, shifting uncomfortably on my feet at his amusement.

His gaze was thick and oily, and I knew it would take a few showers before I no longer felt his eyes on me.

Desmond Deville wasn't wasn't unattractive man. For someone in his mid-thirties, he looked incredible. His rust colored hair made him even more unique, unxonventionally beautiful.

“Don’t you wish to know what I’ve learned about you based on your decision to meet me?” He asked with a coy smile, one I’m sure led him into the pants of many women.

“Tell me, what did you learn?” I asked dryly.

This was already going badly. I was here without Kade, itching to grab my phone and call him to my rescue. I inched towards the door, a movement Desmond caught.

His smile widened to nothing short of reptilian, “I’ve learned that you’re rash, and incredibly naive.”

A second later, two men appeared at my sides. They seemed to emerge from the darkness itself, and wrapped their meaty hands around my arms.

Adrenaline and panic surged through me as I thrashed and snarled against their holds.

I gritted my teeth as one put significant pressure on my shoulder, making it bruise and ache. I noticed the flash of something as one of the men pulled a syringe from their pockets. I vaguely remembered when I had first gotten injected, and scrambled to keep that from happening again.

“Knock her out and we can snatch the red haired one.” Desmond mused, running a hand through his messily styled hair. “She might not be a white wolf, but I’ve always been partial to redheads.”

I snarled at what Desmond had said, but the action only made him laugh.

“Also, when were finished here, give Zayne Novak my regards. It was a cute alliance while it lasted, but were more powerful than a spoiled child.” Desmond chuckled, “As for her other mate, set him loose on

Marcus. I'm sure Marcus will snuff him out eventually. At long last, I'll have the upper hand."

Everything seemed to slow, and in the midst of my panic, I could feel my power bubbling beneath my skin.

There was something radiating from the three men in the room: the two guards and Desmond Deville. It was like a light bulb beneath their skin, flickering with different colors and intensities.

My power was attracted to those lights, like magnets. Panic and power rushed through me, and I latched onto those individual sparks and pulled.

I was met with a wave of power that was so strong, I fell to my knees. I expected the two men to fall with me, to pin me to the floor and inject me with their poison.

The men fell to the floor, but not to subdue me. The two thuds were loud, but muffled from the plush carpet.

A wheeze that was supposed to be a scream, left my lips. The two human-sized lumps on the floor were not moving, and they looked—off.

Their skin was grey and wrinkled, barely covering bruise-like veins that wrapped and crawled up the neck and arms. Their mouths were twisted open, and eyes were vacant and glassy.

I wouldn't admit what I had done, even though I was vibrating with power. I had never in my life felt so strong—so indestructible.

I had no choice but to face what I had done as I turned and met the h***r-frozen face of Desmond Deville.

I had absorbed the power of his soul as well, all without realizing it.

“Well, well—k*****g High Table members, what will the illustrious Marcus Novak think of that?” Jasper Fox scolded me, emerging clad in leather pants and a biker vest, from his hiding place in the kitchen.

Mated to the Alpha Twins by Jane Doe Chapter 94

Jasper Fox held the fourth seat at the High Table, and was more of an enigma than anyone else I had met. He was quite literally covered in scars. They began on his face, a previous broken nose and some stitches to the cheek. All down his arms and back were scars, rumors said there were even more beneath his pant line. Those particular words had been whispered by blushing she-wolves, witnesses to this entire debacle. They were too afraid to attempt approaching him, but had no problem whispering from the sidelines.

Jasper was the only one who seemed completely disinterested in the entire meeting. Even as Marcus and Desmond spoke of using my abilities for their own gain, he hadn't batted an eyelash. His emotions reflected that relaxed demeanor, one that made me wonder if he had ever truly cared about anything.

“I didn't—” I began, but stopped as I met the frozen eyes of Desmond Deville.

I k*****d a High Table member, the second to be exact. Desmond Deville was ranked just under Marcus Novak, which meant he was wealthy and incredibly powerful.

My stomach twisted painfully, and I had but a moment's notice before I was bent over, hurling up the contents of my dinner. My nose burned and my eyes watered, but I couldn't register the pain over my frantic thoughts. It wasn't like I hadn't k*****d before. Many rogues died during the battle, especially when I used my ability to subdue them. This, however, was

confirmation of what I was. A soul-eater. What good could come out of a gift so horrible? What was even worse was how euphoric it felt, how strong and bloated with power I was. Disgust poured from my mouth in the form of acidic vomit.

Jaspar Fox waited patiently for me to finish. I stumbled into the connecting kitchen and rinsed my mouth with water, scowling when I noticed the blank look on his face.

“Well, I’m sure you won’t deny it again.” Jaspar said evenly, glancing down at the three bodies on the floor. He prodded at Desmond’s corpse with his foot and nodded, “Never thought I’d see a soul-eater at work before. Really, though. Did you have to k**l Desmond Deville of all people?”

“It’s not like I had a choice, he attacked me.” I snarled back, finally finding my voice. “I never meant to k**l them, but they backed me into a corner.”

“Be that as it may, what do you plan to do now?” He asked, cocking his head to the side. Jet black hair fell over his forehead, grazing a scar on the side of his neck. “Where will you hide the bodies? Or perhaps you’ll confess and tell the truth, believing you’ll be found innocent?”

I opened my mouth and closed it again before realizing he was right. I could tell the truth all I wanted, but then the world would know what I could actually do. There was no way in h**l I’d be allowed to live freely after that.

“Kade.” I whispered to myself, glancing up at Jaspar. “My mate can help.”

“Can he? It seems he’s already quite busy. Searching for your lost mate must be proving difficult.” Jaspar mused, tapping his chin with a finger.

There was some subtle shift in his emotions, some decision had been made in his head. “Run to your mate, Luna Aurora. I’ll clean this mess for you, but take care not to tell others of what happened here.”

Like any sane and rational werewolf, I scurried along. My heart raced with every twist and turn I made in the halls, convinced some of Desmond’s men had found out the truth.

I barreled into Kade in the hallway, colliding with a wall of muscle that made my bones groan. My hands were shaking as I shoved Kade inside the suite and buried my face in his chest.

“F*ck, sweetheart. I could feel you panicking from across the hotel.” He grunted, brushing back my hair until he found my paled face.

Within seconds, I was scooped into his arms and surrounded by his rich, masculine scent. His arms formed a barrier around me, and made me feel protected despite everything. I could still feel the throb in my chest as I worried for Alec. As much as I wanted to curl up and stay in his embrace, I couldn’t. There was no way in h**l I trusted Jasper Fox, and needed to tell Kade exactly what had happened.

His eyes darkened as I told him the events in the last hour, ending with Jasper Fox’s offer to help hide my mess. Kade pulled me to my feet and placed his lips against my forehead in a swift kiss before tugging me along. I jogged a bit to keep up with his fast pace, but I understood the need to hurry.

As we opened the door to the suite I had been attacked in, my mouth clicked shut. This had to be the right room—I still had the note crumpled in my hands. The entire room was spotless. Even my vomit was gone, the carpet clean and white.

“That’s not possible, it’s only been ten minutes.” I scoffed, unable to believe the scene before me. There was magic and then there was this. It brought an uncomfortable question to mind. If Marcus Novak kept white wolves as slaves, did the other High Table members do the same?

“This isn’t good—we’re indebted to him now, and he’ll want repayment.” Kade grimaced, reaching out when a wave of guilt washed over me. I let him thread his fingers through my hair, and looked up as he tilted my head. His gruff voice was unusually soft, and it sent a little flutter through my chest. “None of this was your fault, sweetheart. If he were still alive, I’d hunt Desmond Deville down myself. When Jasper Fox comes knocking, we’ll handle it. It means he’ll hold up his end of the deal, which keeps the rest of the High Table from finding out what happened.”

“You can be quite the optimist when you want to be.” I pointed out with a small smile, just enough to get a gravely laugh from him.

“I have two roles to fill until we find Alec—which we will.” He replied with a snort.

Even though it physically hurt to be away from Alec for this long, I trusted Kade and knew that together we would bring him home.

We had to wake early that morning, to meet with the others and plan out how we would successfully get the white wolves into our territory.

Garrett looked impeccable as ever in his crisp suit, while Julian looked a bit bleary eyed. I couldn’t blame him, not even the incredible coffee machine in our suite could wipe the cobwebs from my eyes. I was on my second iced mocha of the day, and was already thinking about a third.

“Nothing I love more than early morning war plans.” Julian yawned loudly, stretching his arms wide over his head. Garrett cast him a sour look which he dutifully ignored. “Especially with so much on the line.”

“We’re running on limited time.” Garrett snapped, his thick eyebrows furrowing. “This war, as you so eloquently put it, cannot wait for your schedule to clear.”

“We’ve worked through some of the details so far, now it’s time to put things in motion.” Kade told me, cutting off any further bickering that might come from Julian and Garrett. Despite Garrett’s put together appearance, he certainly wasn’t a morning person either. “There’s orchards below the southern border to Marcus’s territory. We have some men planting supplies there in a few hours. They’ll have to get themselves one mile away, to this abandoned railroad station in the woods. Marcus’s men rarely leave the pack borders, but if they do, they always take the main road. They use vehicles for transportation and have always stayed on two legs. There are a few backroads going through the forest, they’ll be used to get the white wolves farther away. The next town over is almost an hour’s drive. Once they make it there, we’ll have them in an armored vehicle to the nearest airport.”

“You were busy last night.” I noted, staring at Kade a little starry eyed. I was near positive Kade felt the flash of guilt that crossed my emotions, from the mess I had caused last night.

“You needed some time off.” He replied, his lips twitching. “Besides, I’ve never been a strategist. That’s always been Alec’s skill. I’m not nearly as good as he is, but it’s nice to know I can handle my own.”

The second part of my High Table meeting began a few hours later. The anxiety in my gut chased away any remaining exhaustion from my eyes.

We were escorted to the same room as before, and gathered in our own group at the center of the room. I counted the seconds, hearing the dull tick from the clock across the room. Kade's fingers traced small circles on my back, but I could hardly feel his touch.

I was hyper focused on the men entering the room, the four men with grave looking faces.

Mated to the Alpha Twins by Jane Doe Chapter 95

"Welcome, everyone." Marcus called out to the room, turning hushed whispers into silence. His suit was navy blue this time, which made his eyes seem brighter and more vibrant. This man was what most strived to be; attractive, charismatic, wealthy and powerful.

That's what's dangerous about the soul. No matter how beautiful you are on the outside, no matter what favors your appearance gains you, the soul can rot from the inside out.

Many of the murmurs were regarding Desmond Deville's sudden absence. I listened to each and every one, forcing myself to remain calm.

"As I'm sure you all have noticed, we are missing a certain table member." Marcus lifted an eyebrow towards the room full of witnesses. He turned to face where I stood in particular, and though his eyes were not on me, I couldn't help but feel a bit paranoid. "Desmond Deville was called back to his pack sometime early this morning. There is nothing to worry about, simply a pack misunderstanding turned into a larger inconvenience. While he regrets leaving ahead of schedule, he does hope to return before the conclusion of our final meeting."

I tried not to let out my exhale of pure relief too loudly. As though my body couldn't help itself, my eyes darted over to where Jasper Fox sat.

He wore a thick leather jacket this time, and his raven hair was brushed back from his head. I noticed the faint white line of a scar running across his forehead, and wondered how I hadn't noticed it before. I instinctively stiffened when my eyes traveled down, and I realized he was staring back at me. His pale eyes were unnervingly calm as they burned into my own. And very slowly, so gentle that no one would notice, Jasper Fox nodded his head at me.

It was an expression that said, "I've held up my end, can you hold up yours?"

"With that being said; Nico Deville, eldest son of Desmond Deville, will take his father's place for the time being. He will arrive within the hour, and will be fully debriefed on everything discussed thus far. On our final day, should Desmond Deville be unable to return, his son will make an educated vote that represents his father's authority and expectations."

There was some whispering that echoed through the crowd, and I turned my ears to each and every word that was uttered. I paused with baited breath, expecting someone to utter those words. There was nothing, no suspicion of foul play. I counted to ten and let out a shallow breath, then intertwined my fingers with Kade. The last helped to relax me the most.

"Now that all announcements have ceased, let us begin today's meeting." Brayton Cliff nodded towards the crowd, smoothing down the front of his platinum grey suit. He looked impeccable and professional, but there was a certain rigidity to his body that made him seem uptight and a bit unapproachable.

"Sebastian, you were rather quiet our last meeting. Would you care to begin this one?" Brayton asked thoughtfully, casting a cool glance towards the lowest High Table member.

Sebastian Sable had the most to lose out of any of these men. If I joined the High Table, Sebastian would be tossed to the side. He would be nothing more than your average Alpha. It was clear from his poisonous emotions that he was not joining my team in the foreseeable future.

“Yes, well, I needed more information before I jumped to any conclusions.” Sebastian smiled at the room, but it was a completely empty gesture. It was like watching something alien mimic human expression and emotion, hollow and transparent. “While it is my seat on the line, I wish to be as unbiased as reasonably possible. I do believe it would be best if Marcus here continued. In the meantime, I’d like to think over what we’ve discussed so far.”

The silent snort I let out under my breath was completely involuntary. I stiffened immediately after, praying no one had heard. Conversation continued to flow evenly, and no one seemed to bat an eyelash at my silent exclamation.

“Ouch.” I hissed, my narrowed eyes darting up to Kade’s face.

I rubbed at the spot on my arm Kade had pinched and eyed him angrily. He glanced towards Sebastian and back to me before smirking.

“Oh.” I mouthed sheepishly, “Sorry.”

“Per our last meeting, we confirmed Ms. Aurora’s abilities and discussed what potential she might have in our world.” Brayton continued without missing a beat, “While she seems to have control over her abilities, it’s within the interest of our kind that we monitor this progress and ensure she matures into her powers with full control.”

“That being said, she could be of use to our packs, ensuring our kind’s success and all of that.” Jasper Fox chose his time to speak up, tossing me a lazy smile with eyes that had far too much to hide.

“How right you are.” Marcus agreed, a friendly smile on his face. This time his eyes turned to me, cold and calculating beneath his warm exterior. Kade’s emotions turned brittle, but he managed to keep his rage contained while we stood in silence, unable to do anything but watch. “Even though you know little about our world, you have an opportunity to make a difference. So rarely does something like this happen, and it is our hope that you might see this as an opportunity. While we each may have different terms and requests, you are in no way forced to choose. It is your right to accept or deny as you see fit.”

I straightened my spine and approached the center of the room as instructed. Only I could hear the pattering of my heart, which mirrored the whispers being flung from all sides of the room.

“I make no promises, but I will listen to your offers.” I chose my words carefully, forcing myself to stare Marcus Novak in the eyes the entire time.

He was not a stupid man. He knew I wasn’t fooled, and I would no longer pretend to be. Any deal made with him would surely end in my d***h—or, enslavement. How many other white wolves walked into his land willingly, completely ignorant of what actually lie ahead?

“Though we communicate and work as one, we are five individual packs with land and customs of our own. As such, any agreements will reflect our singular pack.” Marcus continued with a thin smile.

His words were surprising to some, and murmurs erupted throughout the room. I only caught bits and pieces, but the words I heard were troubling

at best. Words like; takeover, always share, selfish, and plotting, came from the mouths of some witnesses. Others denied it, claimed Marcus was doing what was best, and that he had more experience than any other High Table member. Many of these people trusted him, and for the life of me, I couldn't understand why.

A flicker of surprise went through Jaspar, Brayton Cliff went still, and Sebastian practically ignited with rage. What Marcus had done was definitely unusual.

“As head of the High Table, I believe I'll begin with what my pack might offer you in return for your time and service.” Marcus gave little time in between for argument, and from the emotions picking at me, most were too terrified to interrupt him. I caught wind of the golden-haired Alpha and Luna again. They weren't afraid of Marcus—and seemed to detest him more than anyone else. “First, you would have my entire collection of knowledge at your disposal, including anything regarding white wolves. You also have access to my outside sources, should you need more information. It is known that I have a few white wolves living on my territory. I would be willing to transfer any that wish to move, over to your domain. Most in my pack provide protection from rogues. Lastly, you must reside in my pack four months out of the year. There you will train and aid me in High Table matters. These months are up to your discretion, and your mates may attend as well. Should you accept my terms, I would welcome you into your seat as head of the High Table, and provide as your mentor.”

His terms were surprising, to say the least. I had almost missed his last requirement, the one that promised my doom. Four months out of the year I'd remain in his pack—like I was an object being passed around. The crowd murmured and cooed at his generosity, while I wanted to snarl and shout. It wasn't a gift; it was a d***h sentence.

What was even more surprising—Marcus Novak was cutting his long-time accomplice, Sebastian Sable, out of the picture. He was essentially handing me my seat on a silver platter, and kicking Sebastian off to the side.

Sebastian would be lowered in status after this, made nothing more than a basic Alpha. I was also fairly positive he'd lose whatever agreement he had going on with Marcus Novak. What a way to end a partnership.

My legs buckled with the rage that blasted through him. Even from where I stood, I could hear the snap and creak of the wooden dais breaking under his fingers. His eyes conveyed h**l-fire within their depths, and it was all directed on me.

I was no fool to what was going on. Clearly, Marcus Novak was the wealthiest of the Alpha's. He had the most assets and I'm assuming the whitest wolves. The other High Table members only agreed to using me so long as it benefited them all. Marcus had flipped the script on them.

“Well, though it's pointless, I suppose I'll go next.” Brayton cleared his throat and shifted in his seat. I could feel his discomfort with the situation, along with an underlying tone of worry. He met my eyes and I could feel a shift in his emotions. Curiosity and something else, possibly hope? “While my collection of knowledge is smaller than Marcus's, I assure you, you'll find things even he does not have within my walls. I offer you my knowledge and my pack should you ever need my aid. Rather than force you to my own land, I would pay you monthly visits to ensure your development and magical abilities remained stable.”

There were a few murmurs as many caught the snide comment Brayton placed carefully within his words. In truth, his proposal wasn't a horrible one. It was essentially an alliance, one with a bit more stipulations.

I smoothed any emotion from my face, but nodded at Brayton Cliff. Next was Jaspas, who had reclined in his chair. He was currently cleaning underneath his nails with a serrated blade, paying no mind to the conversation around him.

Brayton nudged Jaspas, catching his attention. The knife was away in a flash, faster than my eyes could perceive.

“Ah, my turn, is it?” He grunted, stretching out in his seat. He brushed back the inky hair that fell across his forehead and gave me a long look. When he spoke, it was slow and drawn out. I wanted to laugh for a moment. The man had the audacity to be bored, during a meeting that discussed my right to live. “I got no use for your abilities, kid. I can give you information, training, whatever you need. Wouldn’t mind a powerful pack having my back—and vice versa. You want an alliance? We can talk. I don’t need a guard dog.”

Some part of me desperately hoped Jaspas wasn’t a s****y person, because he was the type of man I could see myself getting along with. He was strange for sure, but honest. This place was built on lies, and having the truth was refreshing. His offer on the other hand, it had been the best one yet. It wasn’t an offer of servitude, but one of an alliance.

The only one who was silent was Sebastian Sable. It was horribly unfair how this entire thing was set up, and if he weren’t a psychopath, I would’ve felt sorry for the man.

There was no point in Sebastian offering me anything. I would accept one of the others and kick him from his place at the High Table, that was an inevitability.

“Three very generous offers. All of which could benefit our species.” Marcus finally spoke, cutting a sharp look towards Jaspas. “Should you

choose one, contracts will be drawn afterwards. As well, these offers are on a trial period basis. We still do not know the full extent of your abilities, though we certainly know what you could be capable of should your powers hit full maturity. During this trial period, you will be closely monitored. Whomever you choose will ensure you have complete control at all times.”

It was a p****n sentence, basically. No matter what I chose, Marcus Novak would get what he wanted. I could easily choose Jaspar and decline Brayton and Marcus, but he would retaliate. No way in h**l would Marcus let me slip through his greedy fingers.

“What will happen should she decline all three offers? What will happen then to ensure she maintain control over her abilities?” Sebastian Sable asked, his voice oily and beady eyes narrowed. He stood from his seat and spoke directly to the crowd. “You all are not thinking of the future. Yes, she might learn to control her abilities, but it is her who is able to use them. How can we dictate what she does with these gifts? What would happen if one morning, she wished to eradicate the High Table? It would take an army to stop her. What ensures us that this day will never come? I am thinking of our future, of your grandchildren’s children. What is truly best for us? This ability might’ve been celebrated in a time of war. We are at peace, right now. Perhaps, we do not need her abilities at this given point in our history. Even worse, she is causing chaos that has long been purged from the High Table. I will not fall for the allure of power, no matter how the package might look. This she wolf wields d***h, and she is here to bring war.”

Mated to the Alpha Twins by Jane Doe Chapter 96

The entire room erupted in chaos. People on all sides shouted angrily, screaming obscenities and threats. They called me a monster—a beast that needed to be put down. Their words bounced off me, but their

acid-stained emotions burned and slashed at me. There were some who did not join in on the chaos, the golden-haired couple being two who remained quiet and stoic during this charade.

While horrible things were said, and d***h threats were thrown like spit from their bared teeth. The guards that lingered around the room were on alert, emerging from their places hidden amongst the crowd. They came out one by one, blending in with the people around them.

I was genuinely surprised when each guard came to the center of the room. They stood around the High Table and the section containing my family. I knew the High Table would be first priority in a situation like this, but I hadn't expected my family and I to be included.

During the chaos, Nico Deville chose his moment to arrive. The oak doors that served as the main entrance were flung open, but that did very little to calm the manic witnesses.

Sitting above it all, staring down at the chaos like an unruly g*d, was Marcus Novak.

He did not intervene, where he certainly could have. These people would listen to him, they would quiet for him. He remained sitting, poised and serene as he watched the unfolding chaos.

It was Jaspar Fox who stood, slamming his hands on the table in front of him so hard that the witnesses who had been pressing forward, flinched back.

Even I took a step back as Jaspar's emotions registered with me. My skin erupted in flame—searing hot as though it were real. His irritation and anger washed over me, just as his eyes met my own. They were not pained, nor were they haunted. They were frustrated and pissed off.

As his eyes met mine, I could feel him suppressing those emotions, purposefully trying to dampen them. Perhaps he knew the strength of his own emotions. I was beginning to think that Jaspar Fox must be much more than what he seems.

“Enough.” His voice was whisper silent, but each and every one of us could hear him. There was another whisper or two from across the room, so quiet I had nearly missed it, but Jaspar Fox did not. He lifted his head, and his eyes scanned the room. Thick chords of muscle moved beneath his leather jacket as he searched with his eyes. His lips twitched, and I knew he found the two poor individuals he was looking for. He speared them with his eyes, and both of the middle-aged males went completely still. “I said enough.”

The entire room was quiet now, hardly breathing as nearly all of us cowered. Kade, of all people, happened to be intrigued at Jaspar’s outburst.

I could hear several sighs of relief when Jaspar slowly lowered himself to his seat.

I could still feel the remnants of his anger, like a harsh sunburn that I knew would peel. While I wanted to meet his eyes and thank him for quieting the room, my attention was caught on Nico Deville.

Perhaps it was Desmond’s genes, but Nico was a near replica of his father. The only singular difference was his eyes. Nico had the auburn hair and stocky build of his father, but his eyes were hazel in color. The green and golden tones seemed to show more, brought out by his tanned skin.

I wasn't the only one with my attention on Nico Deville. I could feel much more than I wanted to, and questioned how desperate some of these women truly were.

I knew the type of person Nico Deville was the moment his emotions registered in my mind. He was confident, satisfied, and utterly above it all. He sauntered into the room, basking in the attention while also managing to look cool and confident.

Nico walked to the center of the room, but turned and met my eyes. It was only a second or two glance, but the damage had been done. Desmond's wrinkled body flashed behind my eyes, along with the two others at his side. I swallowed my guilt, even though it felt like a golf ball traveling down my throat.

Nico approached the raised platform the High Table sat at, and greeted each of the men. Marcus played the part as respectful businessman, Brayton was polite and a bit robotic, Jasper was uninterested and unimpressed, and Sebastian was still furious enough to spit h**l-fire from his nose.

"It seems things became quite heated." Nico Deville commented with a haughty smirk. In no way, shape, or form did I miss the snarl that sounded from Sebastian's lips, nor the way his emotions turned dark and murderous. I wasn't sure whether or not Nico was speaking of Sebastian's furious expression, or the crowd that had once been shouting obscenities.

"Yes, well it's in our nature, is it not?" Marcus asked, his eyes narrowing just the smallest of amounts. Nico Deville was far too much like his father, without the brains to back himself up. Marcus stood, and the entirety of the crowd's attention moved from Nico to Marcus. Nico seemed to realize that, and had a few mixed emotions bubbling to the

surface. “Nico Deville, eldest son of Desmond, will now temporarily take seat at the High Table.”

Once all five men were seated, Nico began to speak.

“My father feels the same as many of you.” He began, addressing the crowd before turning his eyes on me. His eyes were pretty, earthy like bark and moss. It was his attitude that made my eyebrows inch closer and closer together. “This she-wolf, we know so little about her. Facts are easy to come by, but who is this girl? Can she handle a power that brings all men to their knees? My father has served as warrior and protector of his pack for a decade now, and will continue to protect us, even if those battles might take place in the future.”

With every emotion of his that passed through me, my stomach dropped a little further. Nico Deville was very much not on our side, and I highly doubted he would be changing his mind anytime soon.

If I hadn't been stunned silent by Nico's greedy and power-hungry emotions, I would've missed the man that swept through the crowd. He was dressed casually, in a black button down and slacks. His hair was dark and just a little curly on the sides where it protruded from a dark cap on his head. He was dressed near identical to the other security guards, but I was certain he wasn't a guard himself.

There was nothing special about this man, and I had almost looked away—almost.

Just as I turned my eyes, I noticed him veering to the left, towards where the High Table members sat. The stranger, fast as lightning, approached Marcus Novak and dropped a notecard onto the table in front of him.

The split-second Marcus's head was turned, was all it took for the man to slip back into the crowd. I tried to follow him with my eyes, but lost sight as a few seconds passed.

Naturally, I was a bit curious. I watched as Marcus finished saying something to Nico, and happened to glance down at his hands.

It could've just been a note, or some kind of reminder, but I couldn't shake the feeling that the man wasn't a security guard. He had moved so fast; he did not want to be caught.

Marcus eyed the paper for just a second before slipping it into his hands. I had to give it to him, he was a natural. He smiled and nodded, replying to something Brayton had asked without skipping a beat. His eyes darted down for three seconds before flickering back to the crowded room.

I could feel the moment those mystery words registered, because that perfectly carved stone that encased Marcus Novak—it cracked. I could see it in the way his eyes flared, and his fingers twitched idly. From his voice and demeanor alone, you'd never be able to tell that this beast had nearly broken free from its cage. The note card was in his pocket before anyone could notice, and would soon be destroyed.

Marcus stood and addressed the crowd, quieting any murmurs or whispers. His movements were slow, but I knew he was only trying to seem relaxed. While he was an expert at keeping his emotions under wraps, that crack was giving me a glance inside of him. While I couldn't feel any of his other emotions, I could tell that he was impatient. Marcus Novak was in a hurry to leave.

“The duties of an Alpha are never ending, and often not nearly as entertaining as one might hope.” Marcus sighed to the crowd, who gave little chitters of laughter, like he had cracked a joke of some sort. I had to

stifle my own laugh when Kade rolled his eyes. “I have business calling me away at the moment. While it is urgent, it will not keep me from our final meeting tomorrow, where we hope to bring this issue to its end. Perhaps, Desmond Deville will return when I do. Until then, this meeting is adjourned.”

“What was on that notecard that made him scurry out of here so fast?”

Kade whispered low in my ear as we followed his parents out of the council room.

The council room let out into a large foyer. A crystal chandelier half the size of a car, hung from the ceiling. There were four elevators on both the left and right side of the room. Many of the witnesses here were Alpha’s and Luna’s, which meant sharing an elevator with others you don’t know, not always the safest move. Many of the witnesses were heading down to the restaurant within the hotel, while some others were planning a trip to the bar down the street.

“Why am I not surprised you saw that too.” I chuckled, placing my hands against the smooth material of his button down. Like all moments have since Alec was taken, we both quickly turned serious. “I have no clue what it could’ve said. Whatever it was, it caused a crack in his self-control. He’s able to manage his emotions so well, I can’t even detect them. This crack, it let me see just a little.”

“If it made him crack, then it had to be important.” Kade grunted, “Information is never a bad thing, and it might be worth knowing what caused Marcus Novak to run so quickly.”

“I might be able to ask Jaspar, but there’s no telling if he knows.” I replied with a shrug, but then thought of Zayne. “Or we can ask—you know who, but I doubt he’d be willing to help us.”

Kade's response was lost to the wind, because something else caught my attention. The golden-haired Alpha and Luna were emerging from the council room, their four guards trailing alongside them.

"I want to talk to those people." I mumbled to Kade, pushing past him as I scampered after the Alpha and Luna.

Their emotions were so steady, like the sun that would inevitably break through the storm that darkened the world.

"Excuse me!" I shouted, maneuvering past an older couple as I jogged a few more feet forward. I kept enough distance not to be perceived as a threat, but I don't believe the couple was actually expecting me to speak to them.

The woman turned around first; her eyes narrowed into slits until she realized who I was. Her glare turned into a look of surprise, then one of anticipation. It was strange to feel her go through these emotions. It felt like she already knew me, and knew where this conversation might lead.

"Come, Aurora. I will not speak in front of these people." The golden-haired woman met my eyes, and spoke with a delicately accented voice. The tone of her words, they were warm, but held the potential to set the world on fire. She began walking forward with her mate again, but paused and turned back to Kade and I. "You may bring your mate. Now, come."

"You sure about this, sweetheart?" Kade asked low enough for only I to hear.

We both watched as the couple continued walking, stopping to press the button on one of the elevators. I had only a few moments to decide before

those doors opened, letting in the two people who actually seemed to see the truth.

“I’m not sure, but I know I need to talk to them.” I grinned a bit sheepishly and took off after the couple.

“You trust the High Table enough to step into their domain, but you cannot extend that courtesy to us?” The man remarked in a sour tone. His emotions pointed more towards offence than any malice, and his glare towards the council room lead me to believe the same.

“She does not trust the High Table, Isaiah.” The woman frowned at her mate and patted his hand with her own. “She is wise for trusting only those she brought at her side. Now, bottle your anger, and let us speak.”

Isaiah was silent as the eight of us stepped into the elevator. He swiped his key against the pad, which allowed us to travel to their respective floor. These elevators were larger than your normal ones, and fit us easily. Classical music played quietly through small speakers within the elevator, and the woman seemed to hum the tune under her breath.

Their room was a suite that mirrored mine and Kade’s. It made me feel a bit better to know that I wasn’t receiving any special treatment while here. My room was the same as everyone else’s, extravagant as all h**l. I was beginning to miss my room back at the twin’s house.

“It is safe to speak in here.” The woman told Kade and I as she locked the door behind us. She wandered into the kitchen and pulled out two wine glasses. Her seafoam eyes would occasionally dart to where Kade and I stood as she talked, “You both may call me Mera (Me-Rah). You are as safe here as in your own suite. We keep guards posted in our room, even if we are not here. We have everything checked for microphones and camera’s daily.”

“You really believe that’s necessary?” Kade asked her, to which Isaiah responded instantly.

“Don’t you?” Isaiah snorted. The sound was somewhat amusing with his delicate accent, but I couldn’t mistake the irritation bubbling away beneath his skin. “The High Table are children, children who fight over every shiny toy they come across. They have destroyed packs, families, and lives in pursuit of the newest thing. Then they shove platitudes of preserving our species in your gullet until you’re so stuffed with their sh—.”

“Do not work yourself up again, dearest.” Mera sighed, running her fingers through Isaiah’s close-cropped hair. Some of the tension faded from his shoulders, and I instinctively sought out that same comfort from Kade. “You become too stressed as of late.”

“When you were speaking about the High Table, were you speaking from personal experience?” I asked a bit boldly, but I had a feeling Isaiah and Mera might like that quality in a person.

Both stilled, their questioning eyes on me. They were weighing what they should tell me—what version of the truth I might be privy to.

Deciding to take another route, I hardened my voice and hoped the two of them could read the determination in my eye, the desperate need for change that pulsed in my veins.

“I’m here fighting for my right to live, proving that I deserve to live like everyone else.” I told them both, feeling my own anger swell in my chest. No one should have to prove their right to live, it was one thing we were all given freely. “If anyone understands hating the High Table, it’s me.”

“What many of us feel—it goes beyond hate. Once hate festers and grows, it becomes a disease that traps you.” Isaiah growled under his breath. I could feel the last of his resistance chip away as he saw the same light burning in my eyes that also burned in his. “The High Table was once just. It was a time we truly flourished. We did not overtake human cities, but lived amongst them.”

“Your kind was not hunted during that time.” Mera said in the same strong voice as her mate, “There are still just as many of you now—but you know what happens to most of them.”

“Marcus.” I nodded, seeing the approval in her eyes. She was weighing how much I knew, while giving me some information of their own. It was a give and take, I realized. We were trusting one another, getting to know one another. Was this how alliances were made?

“Good, you are not ignorant like many of our kind.” Mera spat, looking truly angry for the first time. “He hides behind his smiles and pretty words, but there is no beauty inside, only rot.”

“My wife has more reason than most to despise Marcus Novak.” Isaiah frowned, taking Mera’s hand in his own and tugging her until she conceded and sat beside him on the couch.

“It was a long time ago; much has changed since then. Much has gotten worse since then.” Mera sighed, leveling her gaze on my own. “You want to fight against Marcus Novak? Fine, then you should know what you’re up against.”

“Are you sure about this, Mera?” Isaiah asked, his eyes flickering over to Kade and I. His voice went a little quieter as he talked, even though Kade and I could still hear every word he said. “You do not need to

reopen these wounds for them. I will not see you in pain. I will tell them what they need to know while you are away from the room.”

“Dearest, you’ve always protected me.” Mera smiled fondly at her mate, placing her hands on either side of his face. Isaiah looked older now, no longer his early twenties as he stared at the woman who had become his entire world. “There are times where I must be strong. I have not in the past, but I will learn from these mistakes, Isaiah. I will heed my sister’s word.”

Isaiah smiled sadly at his mate and placed his lips against her forehead, “I protect you, because even now, I cannot stand to see you in pain. I will gladly shoulder it all if it means you remain free.”

“I will never be free, Isaiah. Not until they are all free.” Mera said softly, and Isaiah nodded, as though he had agreed to this very thing many times before.

“Tell them your story, Mera.” Isaiah’s smile was small, but it was one solely reserved for Mera, a smile created for her. “Let Sabine live and breathe through your words.”

“When I was fourteen years old, Marcus Novak became the third member of the High Table. His father won this battle by the skin of his teeth, which meant the land was surrendered to the Novak family. Marcus’s father ruled as the third High Table member for five years before he finally passed away, then Marcus took over. Two years later, none other than Marcus Novak was visiting my pack.” Mera laughed dryly, her narrowed eyes filling with tears she would not allow to fall. “Our pack was large, and sometimes gained the attention of the High Table, but never had they visited before. My father was beta of our pack, his childhood best-friend had grown up to become the Alpha. You see, it was all very picturesque. Until, the day Marcus showed up. We didn’t

know it at the time, but there was something he had been looking for. He spent two years looking, searching endlessly while all of the other High Table members remained clueless. He was searching for white wolves.”

“Marcus has been head of the High Table for eight years. Those first two, he had occupied the third seat.” Isaiah chimed in, crossing one leg over his lap as he reclined on the couch.

“So, he jumped from third place, to the head.” I noted, unable to ignore the fishy feeling I got. “How’d he manages to jump spots ? Shouldn’t that be hard to accomplish ?”

“Oh, it’s very hard. You have to make your own pack and land larger, which means picking off smaller packs. You have to be careful when doing that. A lot of those smaller packs have alliances with High Table members, and you don’t want to s***w over a fellow member.” Isaiah shook his head.

“Marcus Novak jumped to the head shortly after leaving my pack with what he had been searching for.” Mera said darkly, her seafoam eyes turning navy in color. “My little sister, Sabine. She had always been special, prone to fits at night. She’d thrash and scream, but always quiet and fall back asleep. One night, she didn’t. She started speaking, saying these strange things that made no sense. We hadn’t realized she was an oracle, and that this was her white wolf ability manifesting itself. After a few years, she actually got the hang of it. The last time I saw my sister was when she was thirteen, and Marcus Novak was escorting her away.”

“Your sister was an oracle ?” I asked, marveling for a moment. The ability seemed like a taxing one, but it sounded nice to be called an “oracle” and not a “soul-eater”. Nothing says run in the other direction like being called a soul-eater. “She could see the future ? How did that work ?”

“It was hard on her as a child, having that kind of responsibility. It can take some of the magic and fun away from a childhood. She handled it as well as a child could, some days were better than others.” Mera confessed with a look of longing on her face. Even after all this time, her grief was still so raw, so close to the surface. She carried her pain with her, and spent every waking moment remembering its name. “There was one night that I remembered most, the only night she had told me what she saw.”

“You believe this is relevant, Mera? That Sabine meant her?” Isaiah questioned, his eyes brightening just a bit.

“I do believe this is who Sabine spoke of, and I will honor her request to completion.” Mera nodded, her voice stern and true as she stared down her mate.

“You know I would follow you anywhere, Mera.” Isaiah nodded, letting her take the lead.

“The day before Marcus Novak came into town, she woke me in the middle of the night screaming. Tears were pouring down her cheeks, and her heart was racing fast enough to frighten me. She was sobbing, speaking of some b****y battle. I grabbed her shoulders, and I screamed her name. I screamed and screamed until my voice went hoarse. Her eyes snapped open, and she sat up from the bed in a start.” Mera shuddered, “She told me, ‘When you meet the girl with eyes of water and earth, help her. Give her what she needs, and the world will flourish.’”

“Eyes of water and earth.” I scoffed, turning my face towards a golden mirror that sat on the far wall.

I shook my head, unable to believe that some child years ago had seen anything to do with me. I really, really wanted to believe I wasn't the girl she had been talking about, but even I couldn't tell a lie that big.

I had known all along that war could come once the High Table knew about me. I accepted that I would fight with my mates and pack, and survive or d*e alongside of them. This bit of information was only confirming what we all knew, but it was all I could take for the moment.

“Having a great destiny is not something one wishes for. They are difficult, painful, and often messy. And rarely do they end the way we hope.” Isaiah told me, his voice firm and resolute. He was not the type of man to run from his problems, but the type to embrace the pain and charge forward. “There are always lives lost when change comes to the world. It is horrible and b****y, a waste of life, but it is a fact of the world. One that will never be altered. Those who bring change will always be resisted. The question is, is this cause worth it to you, Aurora?”

I didn't need time to think to come up with an answer. My answer had been there all along, something I knew but was unwilling to admit to myself.

“This—this cause is more important than what I want, than what we all want. It's worth giving our lives for. We'll save generations of children from being hunted, enslaved, and used for their abilities. White wolves will fill the world again, and we will allow them to live the way they see fit.” I told both Isaiah and Mera, mustering up much more confidence than I actually had. “Those willing to change and adapt can keep their place on the High Table, but those who want to plunge us even further into darkness—they won't survive in this new world, none of them will.”

“We have long been on the side of white wolves, even when we have to stomach the insanity of the High Table.” Isaiah growled, “Our pack will fight with yours, Luna Aurora.”

“We know you do not wish for war, but we are less hopeful.” Mera smiled softly, “Years spent under the High Table’s thumb, watching Marcus become more and more powerful. He will never bow down, not unless forced.”

Kade and I called down our own guards to escort us back to our suite. I was feeling a bit lighter, filled with just a little more hope. We had stayed for another half hour, talking with Isaiah and Mera. I told them of how I met the twins, and Mera explained how she had run into Isaiah when he was a young Alpha. We were still strangers by all accounts, but Mera was the kind of person you wanted to trust. She was wholeheartedly honest, brutal, and completely savage when it came to those she cared about. Isaiah was a bit rough around the edges, but every ounce of pain his mate experienced at the High Table’s hands had weighed on him as well.

“I doubt I’ll be able to sleep after that, especially with everything that’s going on tonight.” I sighed, leaning back against Kade’s chest. “Do you think Zayne will really let Alec free if his wolves get out safety?”

“He better, or he’ll find himself gutted before the day is up.” Kade snarled softly, “We’ve never been separated for this long before. It’s not how it is with normal siblings. We’ve never fought before, and neither of us feel any need to spend time apart. We’ve always been one person.”

“It feels the same for me too, you know.” I murmured, curled up against Kade’s side. My throat ached, and my eyes burned with unshed tears, but I was tired of crying. I craved and missed Alec so badly my body ached, but I refused to sit here crying about it. That’s not what a werewolf

would do, and it's certainly not what a Luna would do. "I feel like a part of myself is missing. I can feel it out there, but I just can't reach it."

A knock on the door draws us from the bedroom and into the living area. Kade opened the front door while I perched on the arm of the couch with a cup of coffee in hand.

The two of us were staying up tonight. I had been plying myself with caffeine since dinner, but I knew I wouldn't be able to sleep regardless. Tonight, we would find out if our plan to transport Zayne's white wolf friends worked or not. The thought that I might have Alec back in just a few days—it was too much to handle. I was wired with or without the coffee.

Garrett stepped into the room, followed by Julian. Garrett seemed to blend in with these people. He was always impeccably dressed, and carried that same snooty air about him. While I didn't completely despise Garrett anymore, we were a long way away from becoming friends.

"Mind if—"

"Let's just get into this, will we?" Garrett sighed, pulling out a manilla folder full of documents. He pinched the bridge of his nose briefly before continuing, "These offer's you're getting from the High Table members, here are the official documents. They outline everything, including the fine print."

"The question is, are you interested in any of them?" Julian asked, shooting Garrett a d***y look. Sometimes I forgot the two of them were in their late forties. They so often acted like warring siblings around one another.

“If Marcus Novak wasn’t the man I know him to be, his offer would’ve been golden.” Garrett scoffed, shaking his head.

“Brayton’s offer isn’t bad as well, but the fine print is loaded with additional stipulations.” Julian said, pulling out a small stack of papers from the manilla folder. He spread a few of them out in front of us, pointing at some highlighted bits on the page. “You would essentially allow him to preform experiments, to monitor you, and to test your abilities in any way he sees fit.”

“He’d have a lot of power over me.” I noticed instantly, “All of that could easily be used against me.”

“Agreed.” Garrett nodded, meeting my eyes. I cringed away from the protectiveness that seemed to hide within him, and was content on pretending I hadn’t felt it at all. “It’s best not to consider his offer at all.”

“That leaves Jasper Fox.” Julian said, again pulling out a few sheets of paper. He snorted as he handed me the page, and I understood why when I looked at the contract Jasper had written up.

Where the others had pages upon pages of stipulations and conditions, Jasper’s contract was roughly a paragraph long.

“He just wants to be allies?” I scoffed, “That’s it?”

“Specifically, it says under no conditions or circumstances would Luna Aurora be obligated to defend Alpha Jasper Fox or his pack, using her White Wolf abilities.” Julian repeated, smirking as he finished. “Straight forward man, not always a bad thing. Always better than tiptoeing around, using them fancy words.”

“They’re not considered fancy if you have an education.” Garrett rolled his eyes, a very unrefined action.

“What do you think of Jaspar’s offer?” Kade asked, pulling me closer across the couch we both sat on.

Even though I was Luna, it still made my stomach flutter when he asked what I thought we should do. I wasn’t used to having the power to make all of these decisions, but I was enjoying finally taking control of my life.

“I think—I think I want to know him more. Julian was right, he is straightforward, but that can’t be all there is to him.” I told Kade truthfully, “He seems like the type of Alpha we could actually have an alliance with, but we also hardly know the man. It isn’t very smart to agree to an alliance with someone we hardly know.”

“I was thinking the same thing.” Kade chuckled, “Unfortunately, they’ll be expecting an answer from you tomorrow. That gives us little to no time to figure out what kind of man Jaspar Fox is.”

“Also, there is no contract from Desmond Deville.” The use of Desmond’s name cut through my attention, tearing it away from Kade. It was Julian who had spoken, “It’s pretty odd he wouldn’t make an offer, considering the other members are. Usually, he jumps on whatever team Marcus vouges for.”

I had never been the best liar, so I could only hope I managed to clear the shock and guilt from my face. Kade’s hand at my back, and the fact that neither seemed to notice a thing, was what helped calm me down.

Julian and Garrett left nearly an hour later, after going over the plan for the white wolves a fifth time. Tori showed up shortly after, flustered and more than ready to stay up all night with us.

The three of us did what we could to distract ourselves, but movies and video games could only get you so far. Eventually, there was nothing left to do but think and wait.

“Are you going to spill already?” I asked once Kade retreated into the bathroom to take a shower. Truthfully, he had gone to give the two of us some alone time, but I appreciated the gesture nonetheless.

“Spill?” Tori asked cluelessly, even though she knew exactly what I was talking about.

“Yup, spill.” I chuckled, “You’ve been wanting to tell me something since you’ve gotten here. Now, what is it?”

“Oh—yeah, well.” Tori stammered, which was completely unlike her. She wasn’t someone who became flustered easily, which made me worried something bad had happened. “I was just trying to pick the best moment to say something.”

“Well, now you’ve got me worried.” My laugh fizzled out at the end, making Tori’s eyes widen.

“Oh, no! It’s nothing like that!” She laughed breathlessly, but I could hear how forced it sounded. I waited until her laughter trailed off, and she finally gave in. Within her emotions, there was a flicker of that soul-deep pain that constantly ate at her. “Oh, alright. Something kind of happened—with Zayne. I mean, with him and I.”

I paused for a few moments, confused. My mind had first jumped to the thought of them sleeping together, but wouldn’t she be happier? Unless it wasn’t very enjoyable, I supposed.

“Don’t even go there. I can practically see what you’re thinking, and no. We did not. Don’t even disrespect me by putting that into words.” She groaned, burying her face into the pillow that rested on my bed. I let her have a few moments. When she came up for air, she was only a little red in the face. “I can—feel the pull of the bond, and I know he can feel it too. He think’s treating me like s**t will make the bond face, but it’s only making him lose his patience. Yesterday, I went outside to video call my parents, and on the way inside, I ran into him. Literally, I ran into him. He flipped out when he noticed it was me, and you know I’m not taking any of that s**t, so I stood my ground. He pushed me against the wall again, and before I could kick his a*s, he looked down at my lips. I knew he wanted to kiss me—I knew because I could feel it too, and I just—I froze there, I couldn’t even move.”

It took me some time to figure out what I wanted to say. The last thing I wanted to do was tear down any hope she might have of a mate. No matter how I felt about Zayne, that wasn’t what Tori deserved.

“If he changed his mind, would the bond between you two be intact?” I asked, as there were still some holes in my knowledge. There wasn’t much I could say, and even less I could do. So instead of making false promises, I did all that I could to remind her I was here. “Is that something you would want? I know—the outcome for rejected wolves, and I wouldn’t ever want that happening to you. You know that no matter what, I support your choice, right?”

“I’m not sure what I want, Aurora. The bond makes me want him, but how can I ever love someone who never wanted me to begin with? I wasn’t good enough for him, so how can I ever be?” She asked, and I could feel my heart break along with hers. I had no clue how she managed to remain tearless. My eyes were already filling, which I fought with vicious blinks. A final testament to Tori’s strength; her voice never

once cracked as she poured her heart out to me. “This is the last thing I wanted. When I pictured my mate, I saw my future. I saw my family, my children and my parents. What makes it even worse, Zayne looks exactly like how I always pictured my mate. Maybe someday he’ll regret what he had done, but I won’t beg him to want me. A short life where I’m free is better than a long one, trapped by a man I’m destined to love.”

I let Tori say everything she needed, even when her face turned red with anger, and she spewed all sorts of colorful words towards Zayne. Her temper would often override everything else, but she was one to never, ever back down.

The three of us stayed up until our eyes grew heavy and dry. The coffee I drank now tasted stale and bitter, even though the machine in our suite was easily a grand. No amount of caffeine in the world was keeping me awake, and when my eyes fluttered shut, I hadn’t the strength to question it.

A small, steady beeping sound dragged me kicking and screaming from my sleep. It wasn’t the sound of a heart monitor, but something—something more annoying. The beeps were fast, high pitched and blasting throughout the room.

It took a few cycles of that beeping sound to finally come-to.

“The phone!” I gasped; my voice painfully hoarse.

I flung myself from the bed at the same time Tori and Kade did. The three of us had fallen asleep across the king-sized bed, a mess of limbs and crumpled blankets.

The three of us snatched for the phone, until Kade managed to grab it first. He pressed the answer button swiftly, and I eyed the tuft of hair on

his head that somehow managed to stick straight up. I promised myself I'd laugh at it later if we had good news.

Kade's emotions were impassive as he responded to the man on the phone. I was practically bouncing up and down on my feet, waiting for the words that would get us Alec back.

I sucked in a sharp breath as grief rolled through Kade. I was sucked into my own mind, unable to feel the weight of my body. I was sure I could feel myself falling, but didn't fully snap back into reality until Kade's arms wrapped around my waist. He kept me from falling to the ground, but could do nothing to stop the tears that left tracks down my cheeks.

"They're in Garrett's territory, sweetheart. In just a few hours they'll be in our town. The men did it, the white wolves are safe." Kade whispered against the top of my head, holding me close as I cried out my relief.

Mated to the Alpha Twins by Jane Doe Chapter 97

"They did it? They're safe?" I gasped, my hands covering my mouth as I gaped at Kade, my happiness was overrun with confusion. "Why were you feeling grief?"

"We lost a few of our men out there." He grimaced, "Typically Alec and I would visit the family ourselves to break the news, but Alec's not here, and home is far away."

"I've done nothing but worry this entire time, and I can't take it anymore." I admitted with a sigh, "Now that we've held up our end, Zayne has no choice but to hold up his. I wouldn't be able to live with k*****g him, not when he's Tori's mate. You can rough him up a bit and hand him over to her though, I'm sure she'd enjoy that."

“I wouldn’t do that to her, not unless she approved.” Kade promised with a small smile. I knew it went against his nature to leave a threat alive, but he couldn’t go around picking off the High Table. I had already offed one member unintentionally, and I refused to let that number creep higher.

“We will—“

A knock sounded at the bedroom door; feather soft. The two of us hesitated for a moment, and watched as a note card was slid beneath the door.

Kade motioned for me to wait, and darted over to the door. Whoever had delivered the note were gone before he had the chance to slide the lock.

“What’s it say?” I asked eagerly, figuring it were from Zayne.

“Guards are distracted for fifteen minutes. Meet in room 213.” Kade repeated in his deep baritone, “Seems Zayne’s gotten the news.”

“How did he find out so fast?” I asked.

“I gave Zayne one of those disposable phones, and gave the men his number.” He shrugged, “Figured it save me the trouble of sneaking the message.”

“That was nice of you.” I noted, unable to help it when my lips twitched.

Kade’s eyebrow’s lifted, “Nice of me?”

“Yeah, to help Zayne like that.” I nodded, nearly choking on the laugh that tickled my lips.

“You tease me when we’re in a rush.” He sighed sharply, narrowing his dark eyes at me.

I felt a tingle of excitement between my legs as I thought of what might happen once, we had Alec back with us.

We brought Tori along as we snuck down to room 213. The note had been right. The two guards were currently down in the lobby, confused to how they got there.

We slipped in the room and found it already brightly lit. Zayne Novak sat in an arm chair, and held a glass of scotch in his hand. He looked too neat and pristine to be a drinker, but the half-empty bottle spoke for itself.

“You all look horrible.” Zayne commented.

I absolutely refused to let this p***k sour my decently good mood. I bit back my response, but it seemed Tori was feeling extra feisty today. I had almost forgotten how snappy she gets when she’s tired.

“It’s hard to F*cking sleep when the fate of your best-friend’s mate rests on sneaking a group of white wolves out of a psychopath’s territory.” She snarled, pointing a finger at Zayne’s chest. I could tell the moment his eyes darkened ever so slightly, and something vicious and starving flashed within his emotions.

He said nothing to her, but glanced down at the inch that kept her finger from touching his chest. He lifted a pale eyebrow and kept his seafoam eyes on hers.

“Also, there is another problem.” Zayne said to Kade and I, choosing to turn his attention away from Tori.

I could feel her anger snap and fizzle out as she backed away from Zayne. While Zayne’s emotions were strange like his father’s, I could feel how

he affected Tori. I also knew that Tori had some sort of effect on him as well.

“Is this about my brother?” Kade all but snarled, and found myself digging my nails into the soft fabric of his t-shirt.

“No, that’s another matter altogether.” He sighed, waving his hand. His eyes turned from Kade to I. Ever since he showed up at the cabin, Zayne’s gaze had a strange affect. Where most people would look away at some point, his focus was unwavering. It was sharpened and honed, a weapon in its own right. “My father has found out about the missing white wolves. He has no proof who was truly involved, but we’re going to deal with some backlash if he even suspects we had anything to do with it.”

“We’ll keep our end; he won’t suspect a thing from us.” Kade promised him, to which I also nodded.

“Very well. There’s something else I might tell you, then.” Zayne cleared his throat, and actually looked a bit uncomfortable. “Sebastian Sable has created a movement against you, and it’s been gaining some traction. Some of the witnesses are actively turning against you. Sebastian will expect the High Table to come to a vote today, most likely regarding your place in our world. It’s also to my knowledge that Nico Deville will be siding with Sebastian on this argument. So long as my father doesn’t know what we’ve done, I can assume he would side with you.”

I wasn’t surprised about the news regarding Sebastian. I could feel how much he absolutely despised me. It was only fitting he’d retaliate in some way, though I expected it to be much more violent. I was certainly disappointed in Nico Deville, but again, the news wasn’t very astounding.

That left Brayton Cliff and Jasper Fox, and I had no clue how either would vote. Jasper certainly seems like he's on my side, but that talk of an alliance could've easily been false. Brayton seemed on the side of logic, which left me clueless. The man wanted to experiment on me for crying out loud, how was I supposed to know what he'd choose?

"We'll just have to deal with it then." I sighed after a few moments of silence, squaring my shoulders. "They can try, but my life isn't going to be dictated by a F*cking vote."

"It's time to hold up your end of the deal, Novak." Kade grunted, stifling a snarl that threatened to tear from his throat.

"Getting your brother isn't going to be as simple as I made it out to be." Zayne huffed, rolling his eyes when Kade stormed forward snarling.

"Enough." I snapped, grabbing Kade's arm. I gave Zayne my best murderous glare, which must've been pretty good considering he had the wit to pale. "Do you have a d***h wish? Quit F*cking with him, or I won't bother holding him back. As miserable as your life might be, we have more important things to worry about."

"I said it wouldn't be simple, not that it's impossible." Zayne snarled, smoothing down his suit. "It took time to get the information I needed. I had to make sure nothing—absolutely nothing, made its way back to my father. There has to be no trace of our interference here today."

"Our interference?" I asked slowly.

"Unless there's someone else you trust to come with me to rescue your mate." Zayne said in a flat voice, "Turns out there's more security than I anticipated, and the friend I have helping us can only take out so many."

I gave Kade a long look, and I swore he knew what I was thinking. We were both clearly on the same page from the looks of it.

“We’re in.” Kade nodded, “Now, who’s this friend you have coming?”

“She’s here already.” Zayne replied, gesturing to one of the bedrooms. “My father doesn’t know she’s here, which has to remain that way. He’ll be able to connect the dots if he finds her.”

“She’s a white wolf, isn’t she?” I asked, unable to conceal my interest.

“She is.” Zayne said after a long moment in silence. Clearly, he favored a new subject, because he changed tactics rather quickly. “Alec is being kept half an hour from here, in River Crest. River Crest was meant to be a bustling city, but things happened and money came up short. They turned it into half-assed houses that aren’t worth what they’re sold for. A lot of them are abandoned, and that’s where your brother is being kept.”

“He’s been this close the entire time?” I said weakly. “I haven’t felt anything through the bond.”

“Since seeing the mark on his neck, they would’ve been keeping him sedated the entire time.” Zayne frowned, “I’m sure he hasn’t been awake for much of anything since he was taken.”

“When are we leaving?” Kade snarled, as ready to get his brother back as I was.

“Now, if you plan to sneak past your guardians.” Zayne shrugged, “If you plan to run it by them, I’d say in an hour or so.”

“They’re going to k**l us.” I told Kade, leaning to whisper at him from the back seat of the sedan we arrived in. “I am never ever going to hear the end of it from Garrett.”

“I will rip his tongue out if you wish, sweetheart.” Kade smirked from the driver’s seat.

Kade was currently driving the sedan, with Zayne sitting passenger. It was an awkward duo, especially compared to the three of us in the back. Yes, I said three.

Zayne’s help was a white wolf named Ava. She was clearly only a teenager, but looked older in her fishnets, pleated skirt, and torn t-shirt. She was actually pretty cool, though I didn’t believe her when she vogued that Zayne really wasn’t that bad.

Zayne’s one redeeming quality was that the white wolves he used weren’t slaves, they willingly worked with him. He had been helping wolves out of his father’s clutches for years, but had never done anything to actually stand up to the man.

I was currently seated between her and Tori as we sped down the highway. No matter how sweetly I asked, she absolutely refused to tell me what she could do until the time came. She was more than enthusiastic when it came to my own abilities, and my potential to become a ‘soul-eater’. I could hear the music blasting through the headphones she wore, but was silently grateful for the distraction.

Question after question bubbled in my mind until I had no choice but to ask them.

“This house, does it belong to the High Table?” I asked Zayne, my thoughts running a mile a minute.

If the High Table owned this house, that meant they were exclusively responsible for taking Alec. They wanted to use him against me, and bend me to their will.

Zayne was quiet for a few moments, and through that crack in his shell, I could feel just a whisper of worry.

“The deed says it’s owned by Desmond Deville.” Zayne said slowly, “I’ve been checking all documents of my father’s, and I decided to check this one. He’s been known to hold things in other people’s names, to use them as a scapegoat. This deed is one of his documents. He placed it in Desmond Deville’s name for a reason, most likely to draw attention to him should Alec be rescued or escape. I have another—acquaintance with the ability to procure memories from an object. She told me what I needed to know.”

“That’s not all you wanted to say, though. Is it?” I asked, hoping he’d be truthful instead of becoming all sour and shut down. I knew a man like Zayne wouldn’t appreciate me eavesdropping on his emotions, so bringing those up were out of the picture.

Zayne let out a long sigh, “I know everything about my father’s businesses, even the unsavory ones. I had absolutely no clue he owned this house, let alone it even existed. I’m second in command and in line to take over, but now I’m beginning to wonder if there might be more I don’t know about him.”

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“Men like Marcus are always hiding something, always.” Kade said, his voice not cruel and demeaning, but factual. “They have piles upon piles of skeletons in their closets. They might let you see a few, but they will never give their full hand.”

Apart from the muffled heavy metal music blasting from Ava's headphones, the inside of the sedan was silent. The purr of the engine as we coasted down the highway was the only thing to be heard.

The emotions that sat within this small confined space, were beginning to give me a headache.

Only Ava seemed completely at ease, so utterly joyful that she was like a Tylenol to my aching head. Her teenage ignorance and excitement for danger felt good, like a reprieve from the weight of everyone else's emotions.

Tori and Zayne were so aware of each other that every shift, every exhale or sound that came from one had the other reacting.

Zayne still had an ironclad grip on his emotions, but Tori was practically an open book. While I still could only see through that small crack in Zayne's emotions, I was definitely beginning to pick up on his social cue's as well. Anytime Tori sighed or yawned, his fingers would twitch. Her phone vibrated against the leather seat of the sedan, and when she answered a call from her dad, Zayne's entire body went stiff.

After a few moments, he turned his eyes to the passing forest and spoke.

"That reminds me of something my father would always say." He mused, and though his voice was thoughtful, that cold edge still remained.

"Never reveal your full hand."

We stewed in his words for the next twenty-five minutes. Had we been fools to trust Zayne? Sure, he had willingly stepped into a vehicle with us—but here we were, driving to some unknown location with the hopes of getting Alec back. Was Zayne revealing his full hand? No, I highly doubted that.

By the time we turned into a run-down neighborhood with more abandoned houses than livable ones, I had made my decision. I had told myself hundreds of times that the twins were worth risking everything for, and now I needed to back those words up.

The houses had the structure and design to have looked really nice, nicer than anything I had ever lived in. It was clear funds dried up because some houses lacked small things like paint or a front porch, while others were missing windows, and doors.

I would walk into this completely blind, trusting someone who has every reason to put me in chains, because Alec and Kade are my only true weaknesses.

“Where are we going?” I asked Kade, who had passed the neighborhood altogether.

“We’re going to the next street over. There’s a heavily wooded area in between the two, which we can use as cover to get into the house.” Zayne responded before Kade had the chance, which I suppose made sense. This was his plan after all.

“Wouldn’t Marcus put wolves in the forest?” I asked a bit confused.

“As I said previously, I gathered as much information as I could on this place.” Zayne said harshly, which made both Kade, Tori and I narrow our eyes. For just a moment, I wished Zayne could feel emotions, because he’d see how close he just came to becoming roadkill. While Zayne was a complete a*****e and snob, he was actually fairly intelligent and quickly tried to rectify his mistake. “This place isn’t supposed to exist. He’s placed men inside the house, and some in a neighboring one, nothing more. Anything else would draw attention. Too many different scents lingering around.”

“Mm, I feel as though I’m qualified to give you advice, since I am on Aurora’s good side.” Tori’s tone was sickly sweet, and I knew that meant trouble. The tension between them was steadily growing, especially now, forced in such a small space together. I was practically drowning in Kade’s scent, and knew that any inkling of desire from me would set off his own. Though I couldn’t tell exactly what Zayne felt, I knew he had to be affected by her presence. Tori continued without missing a beat, smirking at him through the mirror. “She’s going to take your dad’s place on the High Table and knock your a*s down a peg. You might want to be just a bit more respectful.”

Zayne’s icy eyes turned hard as he glared at Tori. With his golden hair and baby blue eyes, his expression clashed with his looks. A guy like him wasn’t meant to brood and grimace, it gave him a sort of rough edge to his beauty.

Just as Zayne opened his mouth to start what I’m sure would be a huge argument, Kade pulled into the pot hole ridden driveway of one of the abandoned houses. This driveway wrapped around the house, leading straight to the back. It would provide us cover for the sedan, which looked out of place in a neighborhood this decrepit.

The actual garage was nothing more than a hollow shell of rotted wooden planks and poorly done cement. Still, we pulled up to the lopsided structure and parked. Judging from the markers in the ground, there was supposed to be a fence surrounding the backyard. It was just another unfinished thing in this neighborhood.

It was an easy ten-minute trek through the small forest that separated the neighborhoods backyards. We stopped a few feet from the forest line, peering at a row of abandoned houses.

There was one at the center that seemed just a bit more put together than the others. There were sheets covering the windows, like make-shift c*****s. Another positive note was that the house actually had a door. As my eyes scanned a few more houses down, I noticed nearly the same thing. Two houses that looked just a hint nicer than the others.

“There’s two houses. One has Alec, the other is where the guards stay. It’s inconspicuous, and keeps them from traveling back and forth.” Zayne pointed out the two houses, “The one at the center has Alec. Ava and I are going to the house with the guards, we’ll incapacitate them while the three of you scope out the house that has Alec. There will be guards, so you need to make sure you’re not seen. Do not go inside the house, not until Ava and I come back.”

“So, I’m supposed to trust you with my life?” Tori scoffed, her fiery curls shimmering in the morning light. “Not a d**n chance, Novak.”

“There has to be someone there with Ava. Someone strong enough to protect her.” Zayne snarled back, his eyes narrowing on Tori’s rigid frame.

“I’ll go with Ava.” Kade spoke up surprising even me. He barely glanced at Zayne as he said, “You can go with Aurora and Tori.”

‘You do know this could end horribly with those two paired together, right?’ I told Kade, letting my thoughts mesh with his own. Both he and Alec were like a constant stream in my mind. I could tap into their thoughts at any point if I chose. Since he had been taken, I hadn’t been able to feel Alec’s stream of thoughts. It made sense—Zayne had said they would’ve kept Alec sedated.

‘I have faith Zayne cares enough about his life to pull this off.’ Kade’s thoughts had an angry edge, but he managed to hold it together for Alec

and I. ‘He’ll try to resist the mate-bond, and he will fail. It could still end badly, but there’s no point in walking on eggshells around them.’

‘I suppose it would be nice to see her chew him out again.’ I sighed, resigning to my fate.

“Ava, get those headphones out.” Zayne huffed, clearly trying to reign in his patience. Once her headphones were finally put away, and she was back in reality, Zayne went over the plan. “Kade and Ava will call when they’re leaving the packhouse. We’ll have about twenty minutes to get Alec and get out.”

“I’ll try and give us more time if I can, but I can’t exert myself too hard.” Ava chirped, pulling a stick of gum from her pocket. She certainly looked older than a teenager, but still carried that air of not taking anything too seriously. She let out a laugh, “Not going to be very helpful if I’m all comatose myself!”

“Ava, focus.” Zayne commented under his breath, as though he had done this countless times before. His eyes darted up to Kade momentarily, “Keep her on track. She gets distracted easily.”

“Will do.” Kade nodded bluntly.

“Over dramatic, much?” Ava snorted, narrowing her heavily lined eyes. They were blended and smoky in a way that showed she had incredible talent. It was a far cry from the choppy blended look I had once tried when I was fourteen. “I miss one guy and it’s—“

“Like I said, keep her on track.” Zayne bit out through clenched teeth. He passed Kade one of those disposable phones and continued, “Use this to keep in contact. We’ll let you know of any guards we see.”

“And what about our faces?” Tori asked, her typically friendly voice was hard and calloused. “Unless Ava can erase memories, we can’t let them see our faces.”

“I’ve got that bit covered. Seem’s like I’m here to do most of the work.” She quipped, throwing her comment in Zayne’s face. Ava rummaged through the bag at her hip and pulled out five pieces of black cloth.

“Really?” Tori chuckled, holding up the scrap of fabric. They were your typical burglar’s masks, with the eye and mouth holes.

“They do in a pinch, always keep one on me.” Ava winked, blowing a mint-green bubble before popping it with her teeth.

The house that held Alec also had a driveway that wrapped around the house. There was a backyard, with an actual fence that reached about halfway before stopping altogether. There was also a concrete foundation for a porch out front, with crappy wooden stairs leading up to the base.

I was anxious now, practically twitching and shaking as we neared closer and closer. My soul knew what my body and mind couldn’t figure out. I could feel Alec nearby. Even though I couldn’t feel that connection between us, I knew he was here. I was sure I could feel the thud of his heart even as we stalked silently across the dewy grass. Perhaps I was just hearing things, but I clung to the hope that I would see him again, that he wouldn’t be torn from me before we could truly have a life with one another.

“It’s alright.” Tori whispered, placing a hand on my back. “I know you’re getting a bit antsy, but we’re going to get him.”

‘I’m beginning to regret leaving you.’ Kade’s sigh sounded in my head, ‘Say the word and I’ll turn right around.’

‘No, just finish what we came here to do. I can keep it together, I promise.’ I assured him, sending a bit of warmth and courage his way.

“Judging from the extra glazed look in your eye, I’d say Kade just dropped in.” She giggled, the first real laugh I’ve heard from her since she had met her mate.

My head snapped up, towards said mate. Every muscle in his body seemed to lock in place as our eyes met, and it was like we had a conversation through gaze alone.

My eyes said, ‘I know what you just felt. You can’t deny it, and you can’t write it off.’

His eyes were dark, and held the promise of a thousand meaningless threats that failed to instill even an ounce of fear within me. Not that Zayne Novak wasn’t worth fearing, but I trusted my mates and their family implicitly.

“Extra glazed?” I asked, cocking an eyebrow at her.

I didn’t change the subject for Zayne’s sake, but for Alec’s. The three of us needed to focus, and wait until Ava finishes whatever it is she does.

We crept up to the front of the house, sticking low as we walked towards the backyard. Sitting in a partially finished garage was a rather new looking SUV. There was a large hole in the backyard, square in size, and what looked to be the start of an inground swimming pool.

A sliding glass door sat out back, and we were all careful to avoid being seen by anyone lurking. We kept low, waiting and waiting until my insides twisted with anxiety.

When the dull buzz of the phone vibrating sounded, I let out a little huff of relief.

“Ava’s finished, they’re on the way.” Zayne murmured to the two of us, his eyes scanning the house as we all crouched low.

It was then I actually noticed what he was wearing. Every single time I had seen him, he wore a tailored suit. This was the first and only time I had ever seen him in a pair of pants and a simple long sleeve t-shirt. While I’m sure his t-shirts are three times the price of my own, they looked ordinary. It was another jarring, strange thing in comparison to his bitter personality.

Ten minutes later, we could hear as Ava and Kade approached.

Ava’s pale skin was a bit red, and her eyes looked somewhat dilated. Her clothes were ruffled, and her hair a bit messy. Whatever her abilities were, they took a physical toll.

‘What is her ability?’ I asked Kade, just a tad curious considering she’s the second white wolf I’ve met.

‘You’ll have to wait and see.’ Kade’s response was instant, and full of amusement.

“There’s a bathroom window low to the ground. That’s the best way in.” Zayne said in a sharp voice, nodding towards the side of the house.

We managed to creep past the sliding glass door, towards the other side of the house. Kade, Ava, and I had just walked out of sight, around the corner of the house, when the sliding glass door slammed open.

A gasp threatened to leave my lips, but I managed to clamp them shut in time. The three of us flattened ourselves against the house, our hearts pounding in sync. Even Ava's faux relaxed demeanor shattered at the thought of truly getting caught—even she knew the risks.

Tori's emotions were the last thing I expected to feel, but what was even stranger was that they weren't negative emotions. She felt surprised, and safe, even if she was still furious and hurt.

I couldn't dissect her emotions even if I wanted to, because the moment the glass door opened, a gust of air emerged from the house. Stale cigarettes, mold, cheap beer, takeout food, and the stench of body odor. In the mix of that cluster of scents was one I recognized—one that was partially my own.

"Alec." I gasped, leaving my place against the wall to follow his scent.

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"You can't, not yet." Kade hissed, wrapping his arm around my waist to fasten me against his torso.

This was the first I had felt from him since he was taken, and now the bond between us was pulling me forward.

I only stopped squirming when I noticed Tori's red face, and how she was currently backed up against Zayne Novak. The two of them were flattened against the house. I didn't miss how his arm was wrapped around his waist, his fingers just an inch above her shirt line. His other hand still rested over her mouth, an attempt to silence her when the guard had come out to investigate. Her heart sounded like a distant helicopter, mirroring the sound of Zayne's.

“Are you alright?” I asked her, when both Kade and Zayne finally let us go.

“I’m fine.” She huffed under her breath, which was a good enough answer for me at the moment.

“Guys, I got the window open.” Ava’s sudden outburst made me jump, and instinctively place a hand against my chest. Ava sauntered up to the four of us, seemingly clueless to what had just happened. “I got it open while you guys were—busy.”

Zayne went through the window first, before helping Tori and I through. Ava was next, and then Kade.

I was surprised that Zayne could actually get his hands d***y, but that in no way changed my opinion about the man. His styled hair and tailored suits made him seem neat and untouchable. This was the side of Zayne that little got to see, I suspected. The side that got his hands d***y—the side that had helped to free countless white wolves. Zayne Novak wasn’t black or white, but various shades of grey.

He helped the white wolves in his father’s clutches, the ones that would go unnoticed. He even helped Naveah and Isaac escape with their child, something Marcus was bound to notice. Yet, even with those good deeds, he remains at his father’s side. I’ll always be a bit biased though, considering he rejected my best-friend.

The bathroom we currently stood in was small. It fit the five of us, but just barely. The tile on the floor was cracked, and the toilet stained from years of dust and grime.

“There’s three in the living room.” Zayne murmured to us, wedging the door open just a millimeter. “You’ll have one chance before they rush you, Ava.”

“I got this.” Ava nodded confidently, plucking the headphone from her ear to wrap the chord around her neck.

Just as Ava maneuvered through the small bathroom to the door, Zayne leaned in close. It was impossible not to hear what he was telling her, though I knew the words weren’t meant for our ears.

“Do not s***w up and leave me to tell your parents they lost another kid.” He said, his voice hard but not cruel.

Ava gave him a long look before nodding. She then gripped the doorknob in her hand, her knuckles white around the tarnished metal. She inched the bathroom door open and slid outside. Melted into the hard planes of Kade’s torso, I peered through the slim crack in the door.

The three men in the living room were sitting at a cheap foldout table. A deck of cards was scattered amongst numerous bottles of beer. There were a few plastic plates with half-eaten pizza on them, all of which looked at least a day old. A small television in the corner of the room played an old football rerun. All three of the men had that large build of most werewolves, even if they weren’t overtly muscular.

Ava stood just at the beginning of the hall, only feet away from where the men sat. The speaker chatting away on the tv was the only thing covering the sound of her beating heart.

I could tell the moment the men registered her scent, and knew that someone had broken into the house. One by one, they all stiffened. They

were trying to feign nonchalance, so Ava could continue believing she hadn't yet been caught.

Ava anticipated that, and flung her arms out at her sides.

One of the men was just about to stand from his chair, but froze mid-way. Three thuds sounded as the two slumped from their chairs, and the third tumbled to the floor.

“Did she k**l them?” I asked, wide-eyed.

Even this far in the world of werewolves, violence still surprised me. I tried not to think of what I had done to Desmond, and instead forced myself to think about Alec.

“No, she didn't k**l them.” Zayne said flatly, opening the door even though he hadn't seen Ava complete the job. Clearly, he had some faith in her. “Ava's young, so her abilities are still growing. All we know is they have something to do with the mind. She's able to knock just about anyone out for at least half an hour. Resisting her abilities isn't about being physically strong, but mentally.”

Sure enough, all three men were face first into the half-finished carpet of the living room.

“Easy.” Ava shrugged, nudging one of the unconscious men with the tip of her boot. “Big muscles, small brains.”

“There's going to be more in here.” Zayne warned her, scowling at the man on the floor. “Let's hope they thought nothing of the noise.”

“I can’t prevent everything.” Ava rolled her eyes, gesturing dramatically for the four of us to step out of the cramped bathroom. “Besides, I like the way it sounds when they fall.”

We searched the floor of the house, through the moldy kitchen with its leaking roof, and the dining room the guards used as a sleeping area. Once we were positive there were no more guards on the lower half of the house, we each crept upstairs.

Zayne remained close to Ava. I wasn’t sure if it were some strange protective side of him, or if he truly didn’t feel like telling her parents she had been k****d.

I could smell the men before I saw them. One of the upstairs showers was running, crackling and spewing out water that smelled just a bit strange. I figured that shower was a blessing. Nothing like being stuck in a rundown house with ten men and a broken shower. With the stench of mold alone, it was a wonder they smelled anything in here.

“I’ll stay posted at the bathroom while you guys keep going. Make sure there’s no more guards then come back for this one.” Tori suggested with a shrug, “I’ll let you guys know if he gets out, but with the rate that water’s coming out, I’d be surprised if he finished within the next ten minutes.”

Kade paused before turning his eyes on Zayne. Deep within the depths of Kade’s eyes, there was a certain disappointment there. Even with Kade’s abrasive personality, he likes Tori. She was practically impossible not to get along with. To see his mate’s best-friend suffering from such a shithead, it didn’t settle well with any of us.

“Stay with her.” Kade told Zayne, his gravelly voice even harsher than usual.

I could see the challenge in Kade's eyes, and knew that soon Kade wouldn't hold back from getting his hands on Zayne. Zayne seemed to sense the same thing, but refused to back down. I've been beginning to call it an Alpha's arrogance, but it seemed to be the one universal trait they all had in common.

Zayne's seafoam eyes darkened to that of stormy skies, where Kade's hardened to onyx. Tori seemed to sense the same thing as I, even without the ability to feel emotions.

"You two can finish this later, because right now is probably the worst moment for this conversation." I snapped at the two of them, not bothering to tell either one to let it go. They were both too stubborn to drop their absolute hatred of one another. I turned and locked eyes with a seething Kade, which would have been terrifying if I knew he wouldn't ever harm me. "We need to find your brother, and no matter how satisfying this fight would be, it's not going to help us get Alec back."

Kade's anger wasn't easily extinguished. That fire simply retreated, still burning within the depths of him. For now, though, his focus was redirected.

"Let's go." Kade grunted, placing a gentle hand at my back as we left Tori and Zayne, continuing down the hall.

Kade shadowed Ava and I as we continued onward, still protecting her as Zayne would. We could hear the dull murmur of voices further down the hall and in one of the rooms. At one point, we had crouch low to avoid a gaping hole in the wall. Through there, I could make out at least four more men.

We stopped just as the hallway ended in a right turn. At the end of that hallway was a door, with four men sitting around it. Another fold out

plastic table had been set up, with beer cans and fast-food wrappers scattered on top. These men were like the others, their guard completely down.

I could understand why they would believe we'd never find this place. It technically existed under the name of Desmond Deville, who was rotting wherever Jasper Fox had put him. The thought still churned my stomach, a side effect I wasn't sure would ever fade. If it weren't for Zayne's information, would we ever have found this place? Could Garrett, Julian, or the twin's resources have discovered this?

"Four?" Ava muttered under her breath, "Man, he needs to take me out for practice more. I'm never going to get stronger if I can't flex my abilities a little."

She stepped out from behind the corner at the very last moment, her arms stretched out at her sides. The men never even had time to glance her way before their eyes rolled and their bodies slumped to the floor.

Ava swayed for a moment, but caught herself against the wall. She frowned and waved Kade away as he came over to help.

"I'll be fine. Just haven't used my abilities on that many people before." She huffed, straightening herself and smoothing out her skirt. "I'm going to knock that last guy out, then fetch Zayne and Tori."

Ava stalked off down the hall, and I turned my attention on the door that sat ahead.

My heart was thundering now, not from the adrenaline, but from the dull scent that still lingered in the hallway. I took deep breaths of it, my chest aching as I remembered the night he had been taken. I could feel the tether connecting the three of us, and right now it was guiding me

forward. To the door at the end of the hall, where Alec's scent was strongest.

I would have stumbled forward if it weren't for Kade's reassuring arm around my waist, guiding me forward and over the unconscious guards.

'Can you feel him?' Kade asked, his voice unusually low.

'I can.' I nodded, without a single trace of doubt in my voice. 'He might be unconscious, but he's alive.'

'I can feel him too.' Kade admitted, just a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

As Kade gripped the doorknob with steady fingers, I sucked in a harsh breath. The hinges creaked and groaned, rusted from being unused. The bedroom was clearly meant to be the master, and was free of all furniture apart from a bed.

On that bed, with an IV in his arm, was Alec.

Rage burned within me at the sight of him. He had clearly lost weight, and was being fed through some kind of tube. There were dark circles under his eyes, his hair messy and greasy, but he was alive. I could hear the strong thud of his heart, and knew it would play in my ears for a long time to come.

I stood there for a few seconds, tracing my eyes over every inch of him. My finger's twitched when I found the spot where his dimple was, a few inches from the corner of his lips. For once, I couldn't focus on the emotions of the people around me. All I could feel was my endless guilt, smothering me like a thick quilt.

We would get him out of here, and he would never look like this again. I reminded myself of this over and over again, until the pain lessened enough for me to breathe.

“I can get these tubes out of him.” I could hear Tori’s voice from far away, drifting closer with each beat of Alec’s heart. Her nervous chuckle was close by, “Dad taught me something useful after all.”

‘Breathe, sweetheart.’ Kade’s thoughts trickled in with my own, pulling me from the abyss I had nearly fallen into. ‘I know what you’re thinking, and none of this is your fault. You couldn’t hide yourself from the world—it wouldn’t have lasted, and it wasn’t what was best for you. Eventually, Marcus would have found out about you. We were created for each other, because one mate isn’t enough to protect you. What Alec just went through—we would both endure it if it kept you safe.’

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The only thing that kept me from erupting into a revenge fueled rage was the fact that we still needed to get Alec out of here.

Once Tori removed all of the tubes, including the steady drip of sedatives that kept him comatose, his eyelashes had barely fluttered. It would be some time before he actually came to, but all that mattered was that he was finally home.

Both Zayne and Kade supported Alec, draping on of his arms over their shoulders.

As we readied to get the h**l out of here, I couldn’t help but stop and place my hand against Alec’s face. He had thick stubble coating his chin and jaw, the same onyx color as his hair. As I trailed my fingers down his face, I could feel that wall holding back my emotions quiver.

Alright, let's get out of here." I exhaled, pulling away from Alec with what I'm sure was a pained expression on my face.

If I stayed here any longer, seeing the physical effects of what they had done to him, I wasn't sure there would be a house standing. I turned my back on Alec, and crept from the room.

We moved a bit slower with Alec in tow, but the slower pace helped us remain quiet. We drifted through the top part of the house, to the stairs that were a complete safety hazard. We avoided the massive hole in the dry wall that exposed us to the street in front of the house.

We were walking through the living room, towards the back door, when something caused me to stop.

Tori, who had been walking beside me, stopped as well. Ava was taking up the back, making sure all the guards were still passed out.

"What's wrong?" Kade asked immediately, his eyes scanning the room.

There were six of us, including me. I could feel all six of our emotions, though Alec's were dull and watery in his d**g induced state. What had caused me to stop was the seventh set of emotions I felt.

I blinked a few times and eyed the unconscious bodies on the floor. The two men were still slumped on the floor.

"Weren't there three men on the—"

Everything seemed to slow as the third man appeared from around the corner. I stood only inches from him, far too close to act so quickly. I first felt the roughness of his arm as he wrapped it around my shoulders. Then, I could feel the sharp pinpricks his lengthened nails left in my skin.

My pulse thundered under his fingers, a frantic tune of mistakes, second chances, and whispered prayers. I knew that our one option at survival meant surrendering, but I couldn't force the words past my lips. Even if it meant surviving, I wouldn't choose to become someone's weapon.

Kade went completely still, his eyes honed on the man that held my life in his hands. Zayne, with actual worry in his eyes, supported Alec's full weight so Kade could step forward. A low growl worked its way from his lips. The sound made my sweat turn cold, because I knew by the guard's emotions, that he saw Kade's reaction as a challenge.

Just as I readied myself to tell Kade to lunge, a dreadful idea crossed my mind. It was one laced with temptation, but I was just desperate enough to try it.

Before I had the chance to tryout my plan, Ava began to fling her arms out.

The air was ripped from my lungs faster than I could blink. I was pressed against this nameless guard, the sick stench of his body odor assaulting my nose. His hand was wrapped around my throat now, and the tips of his nails were piercing my skin hard enough to drawblood. A small trickle ran down my neck, itching as it dried onto my skin.

"Don't f*****g think about it!" The guard snarled at Ava, grasping my throat even harder to prove his point.

I wasn't sure if it were the strangled croak that left my lips, or the guards demand, but Ava slowly lowered her arms and lowered her head. The guard eyed us frantically, his fear and hatred meshing into one big blob.

Really, Ava's action hadn't been completely useless. The guard was holding me even tighter now. My back was pressed up against his chest, and his b**e fingers touched the hollow of my throat.

I had initially promised myself never to use my soul devouring abilities again, but wolves were very different from humans. Thalia couldn't understand why I would amputate a part of myself, like willingly losing an arm or leg. Wolves were predator's, who embraced every dark aspect of themselves. While I was far from a ruthless, cold-blooded, k****r; 'Thalia was right, I couldn't cut off a part of myself.

I wasn't sure if I could replicate what I had done to Desmond and his men. I had been running on pure adrenaline at the time—not abject fear, as I am now.

Either way, I needed to be precise.

If I took in a huge gust without k*****g him, I'd lose my life. Whoever this guard was, his reflexes were fast. His thumb tapped against the side of my neck, following the beat of my thundering pulse.

The physical contact made things easier. Through his emotions I could feel the shimmering heat of his soul. The power that throbbed and pulsed where mortal eyes couldn't see.

My instincts told me to drink greedily, to take the power that's been given to me. I had to fight, fight myself to keep from going into a frenzy. I reached out and brushed against that power, sinking my metaphorical claws just a few millimeters into it.

I tried not to let my pulse convey the relief I felt when a trickle of strength and power began to seep into my weary bones. The guard let out a grunt, which made my pulse thunder even higher at the thought of being caught.

“Stand down.” The guard snarled at Kade, who had been inching closer with every passing second. Kade’s eyes were lit cruelly, filled to the brim with carnal anticipation. If this man k****d me—Kade would eviscerate him. “I’ve already called back-up. Your b***h’s magic didn’t work on me.”

My strength was building now, so I widened that hole which allowed his life source to flow into me. A heavy shudder wracked his entire body, jolting the claws that were currently in my neck.

Kade leaned forward like he was going to lunge, but froze when he caught sight of my eyes.

“Don’t move!” I threw my thoughts at him with all the force I had, begging him to stand down.

Once the guard had stilled, he wobbled on his feet.

“What—what the f**k are you doing to me?!” He rasped, and I tore open the barrier that kept me from devouring his strength.

One rough pull of his soul—all that I could take with one inhale.

I felt my body expand with the inhale, and the boundaries of my abilities stretch and groan.

The moment all of that power settled within me, I let it loose in one blast. A ring of pure energy left my body and sent the drained guard soaring across the room.

I wobbled on my legs, finally free from the guard’s tight grip around my throat. Now that his hand was gone—I should be able to breathe. My

hands flew up to my throat, and were instantly coated in the thick warmth that was my lifeblood.

Kade rushed forwards just as I began to fall, catching me before my head could hit the floor.

Everything seemed to blur as I watched the scene unfold. Zayne and Ava hovered over me, both pale-faced and wide eyed. Kade was saying something to me, pressing on my neck wound while trying not to cut off my air.

I only seemed to tune back in when Tori dropped to her knees in front of me and took my face in her hands. All of the sounds and smells—they hit me at once.

Ava was muttering to herself, shaking her head. Kade was frantically trying to stop the bleeding, telling me over and over again that I would heal. He knew that I had expended all of my energy throwing the guard off of me. I had nothing left to give.

“Heal yourself!”^c Tori shouted in my face; her shrill voice pierced my ears. I understood what she was saying, but I couldn’t force myself to form a response. I couldn’t feed from her—I wasn’t even sure I’d be able to stop. She muttered a curse and cocked back her hand before striking me in the face. I’m sure she hadn’t hit as hard as I made it out to be—but it caught my attention. I blinked a few times and stared at her, feeling numb and floaty. “Feed off my soul and heal yourself, Aurora!”

Kade’s eyes darted over to Tori, desperate and wishing he could force me to feed himself. Somehow, I knew that my soul-eating abilities wouldn’t work on Alec or Kade. We were all pieces of the same soul, so feeding on them was like feeding on myself. Kade knew this as well, which is why he hadn’t offered himself up.

“Don’t you f*****g dare.” Zayne snarled, charging forwards.

His eyes flashed dangerously as they burned holes in the back of Tori’s head, but she wasn’t paying attention to him.

“Do it!” Tori shouted at me, her voice cracking as she gave me another shake.

“No.” Zayne snapped, his voice resolute. His eyes were on me this time, bright and furious. ” Take what you need from me, Aurora. I would, however, like to request that you leave me alive.”

I had no control as my magic lashed out and sunk its claws into Zayne Novak. It’s like it had been waiting for him to offer, and took without abandon as adrenaline fueled our will to survive.

Zayne stiffened first, and a look of discomfort settled on his face. His skin paled and his body swayed before collapsing to his knees in front of me.

Tori inched away from him, a conflicted look on her face. Her fingers trembled, and she brought them into her chest as though she were tempted to reach out and touch him. I noticed she made her decision when her eyes hardened, and she moved even further away from where Zayne crouched.

Warmth flooded me, chasing away the cold and fogginess that crept at the edges of my vision. I could feel pressure and some pain as the wound in my neck finally began to heal. I felt each individual fiber of flesh knitting itself together, fueled by Zayne Novak’s life force.

I slashed through my connection to Zayne the moment I was healed, even though all of my instincts were telling me to bleed him dry. I was healed, but far from being at my fullest strength.

As I stopped feeding from Zayne, and we locked eyes, I realized I had just outed myself to the second most dangerous person in the werewolf world. Not only did Jasper Fox know I was a soul-eater, but Marcus Novak's son now knew as well.

“We need to get out of here.” Zayne grumbled, forcing himself into a standing position. He wobbled for a moment, and I couldn't help but notice the way Tori's eyes darted over his shaking frame. “If he's really called back-up, it won't take them long to get here.”

Somehow, the six of us managed to escape the house and make the trek back through the small patch of forest and to the sedan we had parked earlier.

Zayne sat in the passenger, while Alec was seated between Tori and I. Ava was in the very back, nodding her head to whatever song was blasting through her headphones. I wanted to ask Zayne more about her, but none of us had been in a talking mood since leaving the house.

I had been keeping a close eye on Zayne since feeding off of him. His skin had gone from sickly and translucent to a semi-healthy shade within half an hour after nearly draining him. He was still weak, that I could tell from the way he grimaced and rubbed at his temples. It seemed as long as I didn't drain someone entirely, they could survive after I've fed from them.

“I'm willing to bet that there's the back-up that guard was talking about.” Kade commented, nodding towards the other side of the highway, Six identical looking black SUVs sped in a uniform line. I placed my head against Alec's shoulder and was grateful for the tint on our vehicle.

In the midst of everything that's happened, I had completely forgotten we weren't supposed to have left the hotel—just as we weren't supposed to

have rescued Alec from Marcus Novak's greedy clutches. We needed to keep our activities a secret, which also meant keeping Alec hidden away in the suite.

With the help of his white wolf companions, Zayne managed to get us back up to our suite without being detected. He was obviously reluctant giving up any of his secrets, but did let it slip that he has a few friends in place as employee's here in the hotel, which explained our backdoor entrance.

Kade had just helped Alec inside the suite when Zayne turned and gave me a long look, one that made me feel a bit dissected and exposed.

He paid Tori no mind, but he couldn't erase what had happened here today. Their bond was stronger now, just from those simple interactions.

"My father already suspects that you might be a soul-eater, but once he knows for sure, he will stop at absolutely nothing to own you." He grimaced, and turned as if to walk away. I could sense his hesitation, just like I could practically see the unsaid words hovering over his lips. He let out a small sigh, one so quiet most would have missed it. "Should things go bad tomorrow, you'll need to have an escape plan ready."

Torn between two worlds, born and bred in the shadows, Zayne Novak turned on his heel and vanished down the hall.