

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 21

Chapter 21 He's Lucky

We leave the next morning.

In all honesty, I can't believe I like this better than the break. I like the forestry all around, the constantly changing scenery. And the lack of hormonal males.

Days jump by and as time pa**es, Luke gets more and more snappy.

"Stop wasting time, Hazel, get up!" I hear a hard voice

"Shut up," I mumble as I push myself up from my sleeping bag

Grumbling, he all but yanks up his stuff and gives me a low-key glare. Ignoring him, I pack my stuff and we start walking again. Luke silently and with the speed of a cheetah, me munching on biscuits and following as fast as

possible.

"Slow down, will you?" I finally say, my breakfast long finished

"Keep up, will you?"

I put up with him for another hour before my patience reaches its limit.

"You're being lazy." Luke snaps at me

"No," I cross my arms "You're being irrational. We cant run our way towards the finish line."

“Hazel,” he grits out “stop arguing. We’re going on. Now.”

Okay, Elise, you know what happens when both people start acting like idiots. You have to be the mature one right now.

“Luke,” I say calmly “We need a little break, just a breather. Then we’ll go on, yeah?”

“I don’t want a break,”

“What we want isn’t always what we need.” I give him a look

I hold his stormy gaze with my steady one. Luke works his jaw, his eyes narrowed a millimeter as he stares at me. I don’t back down.

“Fine.” He finally grits out

With a sigh of relief, I lean against a tree. Maturity; one thousand, Luke; nine hundred ninety-nine.

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“I’m going to go make sure the perimeter is clear,” Luke says before disappearing behind the trees

Goddess, can’t he sit still? Rolling my eyes, I sit down and take a deep breath of the fresh air. A few moments later, I pull my gun from the waistband of my jeans and check the ammunition. How did I forget to reload this?

I make my way towards the weapon bag and shuffle through it, looking for one of the ammunition boxes. I

stumble upon a small plastic bag, curiously, I pick it up and see what's inside.

"Huh," I take out one of the gla** bottles inside and observe the fluid inside. I pull the cork out and take a sniff.

Horrified, I pull away from the contents of the bottle. Wolfsbane.

"What are you doing?" I whirl around, Luke is standing a foot away from me

His eyes flicker to the bottle in my hands, when he looks at me again, his face is set in a hard glare.

"Didn't I tell you not to go through my things?" he snaps, s*****ing the bottle and bag from my hands

"Is that..." I hesitate "Is that wolfsbane?"

Luke's shoulders stiffen as I say that, he doesn't answer me, simply puts back his things and zips up the bag.

"The coast is clear, we're moving on." He says

Luke starts walking, I stare at his back in sheer disbelief before I jog up to him.

"You didn't answer me," I say "What's in those bottles?"

"You seem to have figured that out on your own,"

"Why do have wolfsbane?"

"I have my reasons,"

I jog a little faster and come up in front of him, causing him to stop. Luke gives me an irritated look, I offer him my steeliest glance.

“All the participants have their wolves locked up,” I say “I don’t think we have any chance of using that on rouges.

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What are your reasons then ?”

“Drop it, Hazel.” He walks past me

I spin around swiftly grab his arm. Luke’s eyes snap towards me, darker than usual, the storm more intense.

“Tell me, Luke.”

“Hazel,” a low growl of warning leaves his throat

I narrow my eyes at him “Why won’t you just tell me? What’s so secretive about—

“Will you just mind your own damn business for once?” Luke rips his arm away from me, I flinch at his harsh tone “I have been tolerating you and your childish behavior for longer than any sane being should be forced to. You keep complaining, you don’t listen to me and you have no sense of privacy. On top of all that, you dare to demand answers from me?”

I almost feel myself shrinking back. I feel my throat getting dry, a lump already forming in it. I open my mouth, to apologize? To tell him he’s not an awesome partner either and keeps triggering me on being an omega? I would never figure that out since Luke beats me to it.

“I pity the man who would have to spend the rest of his days with you,”
he looks at me like I’m a bug under his shoe

“he’s lucky to have escaped you for this long.”

My thoughts vanish in a puff of smoke. People say we are honest about
our feelings when we’re angry. So that’s what

Luke Winters thinks about me.

In my head, I find a whole speech that could make him regret saying
those words, make him guilty. But when I open my mouth, only a few
words tumble out.

“We should get going.”

Almost taken aback, Luke stares at me for a moment, cold silence wraps
around us. Then he turns around and starts walking. I follow behind him,
keeping my eyes on the ground. I don’t want to trip now.

You’re not worth my words, Winters. I ignore the dull burn behind my
eyes. And I’m not in a habit to waste myself on the unworthy.

...

Two days.

It has been two days since I last spoke to Luke other than ‘Yes.’ ‘No.’
‘You decide.’ I’ve spent the majority of my time thinking about mom,
Carlos, and the jobs I can get after leaving the pack. Mom was saving up
some money for my ‘wedding’ when I meet my mate. Now that that’s out
of the picture, we can use it to rent a room or maybe an apartment after
we leave.

Luke has been more antsy than usual. Many times, I notice him glance at me, almost as if he wants to say something, but he never does. Not that it will make a difference anyway.

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“It’s your turn to keep watch,” Luke says while we eat salted cord for dinner

I nod, counting in my mind the money I can save up if I take two jobs. I don’t go to any inst**ute and with my werewolf stamina, I can easily manage.

“Hazel,” Luke says, stressing the nickname, I don’t look at him “Did you hear me?”

“Yes,” I say calmly

Finishing my food, I stand up and lean against a tree, arms crossed across my chest. I can almost feel Luke’s gaze on my back before he opens his sleeping bag and shuffles inside.

I don’t say goodnight.

I look up at the starry sky, the almost full moon. My mind wanders to everything, nothing.

He’s lucky to have escaped you for this long.

My mate won’t think that.... Would he?

I shake my head. Seriously, Elise? After years of taking taunts from your pack, you’ll let this snob’s comments rattle you?

But somehow, his words make me feel a twist in my chest, a bitter taste in my mouth. After so long, I thought... he would not think of me as so little anymore.

Stop it, I tell myself fiercely, Luke is an a**hole. You know you're beautiful, smart, kind and maybe you're a bit of a lunatic sometimes, you're still amazing. Don't let him get to your head.

I wonder a little away from our campsite. Maybe it was for the best that I heard Luke say all that. Maybe I was getting a bit carried away, thinking an Alpha could ever respect an Omega.

Pain finds beauty a reliable disguise.

Well, at least he was right about something.

A hand closes around my mouth, an arm wraps around me, holding me prisoner.

I thrash around wildly, wriggling my fingers to reach my gun but the lack of breath makes my chest cave in, black spots appear in front of my eyes.

"Sorry, love," a voice reaches me from far away "But as you said, we are opponents."

And everything fades away.

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 22

Chapter 22 All paid

My heavy eyes open in the dark, my head dizzy.

“What the...” I try to lift my hands but feel them bound together in front of me.

“Ah, you’re awake,” a newly familiar voice says

My head snaps towards the source and I see a tall figure with sandy blond hair and dark brown eyes.

“Adrian?” my eyes widen, the words from before rush to my head “What the hell are you doing?”

With a small chuckle, he crouches down so we’re on eye level. My eyes adjust to the dark and I can just make out his smirk.

“Nothing personal, Elise,” he says, bemused “But your partner is a pain in the a**. Taking him down is necessary.”

I narrow my eyes at him “And how do you plan on doing that?”

“By kidnapping you, of course,” he says waving a hand at me “He’ll come for you— hell, any man would, and when he does, he won’t be going back.”

I school my features in perfect calm, holding my breath so it wouldn’t come out as shallow intakes. No, no, don’t panic. Do not panic! Panic makes you stupid, stupid gets you killed!

“What about me?” I ask

“We’d leave you alone,” a new voice says, my eyes snap up to see Ryan against a tree “You can wait in one place until the Hunt is over, then you can go back.”

I stare at him for a moment, indignity sparks a fire in me, fueled by two days of pent-up words.

“Excuse me?” I glare at them “You think I’m not a threat? That you can leave me here?”

“What?” Adrian raises his brows

“Don’t ‘what?’ me!” I snap “I’m perfectly capable of coming back for revenge! I might not look much, but I’m pretty damn dangerous!”

“I don’t follow,” Adrian looks at Ryan for help

“Do you want us to kill you?” Ryan asks me, his brows knotted

Those words snap me out of my angry haze. Right...

“Well,” I clear my throat “you don’t have to think about that. Luke won’t come for me.”

Adrian shakes his head with a smile “That’s the oldest trick in the book, love.”

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“Fine, don’t believe me,” I lean back against the tree I’m sitting by “But he hates my guts, he can’t stand the sight of me. He’ll probably thank the stars that I’m gone and be on his merry way.”

For a moment, they both go quiet and I realize, it’s not just my amazing acting skills that they consider my words, it’s the conviction, the truth in them.

Adrian and Ryan exchange a look, then Ryan says “Werther he likes you or not, it’s on his pride now. He will come.”

“Hmm,” I put on a thinking expression, ignoring the bitter taste in my mouth “Now that you put it like that... maybe he will come after all.”

“That’s what we thought,” Adrian says before he stands up “Now you sit tight while we plan on how to take the moron down.”

“Moron... that’s one thing I agree with you on,” I nod “Luke is an a**.”

“Always was,” Adrian says “When he came to our pack to train for two months, he wouldn’t even talk to be like I’m his age. He was always talking to my father and can you imagine, my father never told me what the hell they talked about!”

“I can understand,” I nod solemnly “If you need any help planning this trip for him, feel free to ask me.”

“Why would you help us?” Ryan asks sus***iously

“Well, you two said that I can go free,” I say calmly “And besides, Luke is insufferable. You two will do me a favor by taking him down.”

Adrian grins “I knew there was a reason I like you so much.”

I smile back “Don’t mention it. So, what are you guys planning?”

Adrian takes out his map but before he could come towards me, Ryan stops him and they start talking in quick, quiet words. Damn you, you moderately smart person! Just let your stupid, impulsive Alpha do all the deciding!

“But she’s t*****,” Adrian’s voice reaches me in a bare whisper “She can’t possibly be harmful. Look at her, so small and helpless.”

For probably the first time in my life, being short, female and omega is helping me out. Nevertheless, I feel my jaw clench when he says that.

Just wait, I’ll show you how helpless I am.

After a few more minutes, Adrian walks towards me, map in hand. He sits down and lays it open, for a moment I have to blink at the spotless paper. Luke’s map is full of lines and crosses and little notes.

“We are here,” Adrian says, pointing at a spot about two miles from where Luke and I had camped, “we told your partner to meet us here,” he moves his finger towards the waterfall about a kilometer away.

“We are planning on shooting just as he arrives, he won’t be expecting it,” Ryan adds in grudgingly

I purse my lips “That’s a great plan but... I don’t think it’ll work.”

Adrian raises an eyebrow “So much faith in that a**hole?”

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“No,” I shake my head “It’s too obvious. Luke probably won’t even come from a place open to the eye. If he got anywhere close to you two...”

I shudder. Adrian and Ryan exchange a glance.

“But you know what will take him by surprise?” I say “An underground trap.”

“A what?” Ryan says

I roll my eyes “Dig a hole, cover it with leaves and stuff.”

“And what about the fact that he can come out?” Adrian crosses his arms

“He won’t.” I click my tongue “He’s claustrophobic.”

This secures their interest, Ryan comes and sits by my side as well. I suppress a grin. Perfect.

With my bound hands, I slid the map towards me and point to a spot near the waterfall “You can dig the trap here, if you guys put me just in his line of sight, I’ll tell him I ran away. When he comes for me, bam! He’ll be done for! Too afraid to do anything.”

“You, love,” Adrian puts his arm around me and presses a kiss to my cheek “Are amazing. I can’t believe Luke can’t appreciate such a treasure.”

“Well,” I bat my lashes at him “You’re getting rid of him for me, aren’t you?”

“Promise.” He smiles at me, then leans forward so his lips brush against my ear “Maybe you should come with us, love, you might find me more agreeable than your current partner.”

I move away from him and give him a little smile. I’d have to wash my ear with acid now.

“We should get going,” Ryan says “The sooner we start, the better.”

So we start forward, me walking between Adrian and Ryan. I test my binds a bit, I can't possibly break them. They took my gun as well, so I have nothing but a brain to work with.

Once we reach the decided spot, Adrian and Ryan start digging. For hunting purposes, Adrian and Ryan had a net with them, made of barb-covered wires. They're planning on putting that on Luke when he falls in the pit.

Since they don't have proper digging gear, the poor souls were working with daggers. I wondered if I should tell them

they should break a thick branch, sharpen its edge like a spear and use that.

I decide against it.

Alright time to get rid of these binds.

...

"You think a girl can be the Alpha Supreme? If I decide to finish the Hunt and win, can I be the Alpha Supreme? It would be so much fun! Hurry up guys, the sun might be rising any moment now! Don't you want to catch Luke? If you guys win, what's the first thing you'd do? If it were me, I'd make it a rule to respect omegas. But since I have no intention of continuing this Hunt, maybe you could do that for me?"

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Ryan grips his head in his hands, Adrian drags a hand down his face.

"I have three-year-old triplets," Ryan grumbles "and the three of them aren't half as annoying as you."

“Aww,” I say “That’s so cute. What are their names? Are they boys or girls? What’s their mummy’s name? Seriously

Ryan, I never knew you would be such a family guy—

“Is there any way to shut her up?” Adrian looks at the sky

“I’m hungry,” I pout “and I’m talking to distract myself.”

“Fine!” Adrian says as he reaches for one of their bags “You can eat! Just for the love of all that is holy, shut up!”

“But how will I eat?” I ask innocently, holding up my hands

He slashes through the ropes with the knife he was digging with. I flex my wrists, both red but it’ll be gone in a while.

“Thank you,” I shove a cracker in my mouth “Go on, help your beta. Luke might be up by now.”

Adrian and Ryan continue to labor away, disappearing inside the hole. I slowly stand to my feet and peak around,

gauging the best route when I see the net.

A smile curves at my lips as I walk towards it and carefully pick it up, the noise of the waterfall giving me cover as I reach the hole.

“Hey, guys?” I look down

They look up and Ryan says “What are you—

I drop the net, the heavy stones at the weight of the side it down and the barbs will be making sure they don’t get out anytime soon.

“You b****!” Adrian glares at me, struggling with the net “You’ll pay for this!”

“Here,” I blow him an air kiss and wink “All paid.”

Chuckling to myself, shoving my hands in the pockets of my shorts, whistling, I walk away.

Who says you need a man to save you?

...

Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight Chapter 23

Chapter 23 My partner

✧ Luke’s POV ✧

The moment my eyes open, I feel the overwhelming pain in my head, as if it’s about to explode into bits.

The effect of the wolfsbane dose I took last night before sleeping wears off and my senses return. The fire has died down, leaving a pile of embers and ash. My eyes go across our campsite, searching.

I take a sniff of the air, her scent is too faint. The next moment, I’m on my feet walking towards the tree she was standing against. I notice a piece of paper stuck to it with a knife. I tug it off and unfold it.

If you want your little w**** back, come by the waterfall. Take your sweet time. We’ll be sure to take ours with her.

I stare at the note, mind, and face equally blank. The scent of it is vaguely familiar. Woodsmen.

A low growl escapes my throat as my hand curls in a fist, crumpling the note. The pain in my head recedes as white-hot rage consumes my mind. No, he wouldn't dare touch her.

His infuriating grinning face from our time in the lodge flashes in my head, making my finger elongate.

Adrian Woodsmen is going to regret ever thinking about taking her from under my nose.

...

The sound of the waterfall reaches me way before I see it, deafeningly loud to my hyperactive senses. I catch a whiff of her scent— like gardenia flowers and rain and I start towards it.

When I see the waterfall, my eyes quickly scan the place. Her scent is strong but she's not here. My lips curl in a snarl and growl claws at my throat as barely suppressed anger tries to surface.

Then I catch two other scents along with the coppery tang of blood.

In a moment of hot rage and instinct, I almost think of going straight out there but then stop. Damn it, Winters. Get your mind together. Do you think it'll be so easy?

I alter my course, swiftly going through the trees so I have a view of the clearing from afar. I see two men near a hope, a net nearby.

“When I get my hands on that b****,” Woodsmen is seething with anger
“I'm going to snap her pretty little neck.”

Without thinking, without caring my hands find their way towards the guns and two loud bangs! Echo above the sound of the waterfall.

Woodsmen crumple to the ground with a scream, clutching his side, his beta holding his bleeding arm.

My feet move forward, I feel my lips pull in a snarl as I see Woodsmen's face. The next moment, my hands are at his shirt front, holding him up to the ground.

"Where is she?" My voice reverberates with a growl

"Winters," his brown eyes dart in every direction "She was just here, I swear—

I turn him around and hold him against a tree, my hands tighten at his shirt enough to make his face grown red with breathlessness. I feel something in my snapping, raw anger taking over any rationality I had left.

"I'm not a patient man, Woodsmen," I narrow my eyes

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"We had her right here," he croaks out, trying to take off my hand "we'd just opened her bounds. Elise—

"Don't you dare," My voice sounds foreign to my ears— the growl of an outraged animal "Say her name."

"I don't know where she is!" he rasps, his struggles slowing down but the panic on his face grows

"Why don't you try to remember?" I say calmly— too calmly "Take your sweet time, or I will take mine in skinning you alive."

I'm not sure if more from blood loss or panic do his eyes roll back and his body goes limp. I let go and turn to his beta, my patience reduced to nothing at this point.

I haul him up, not caring about the fur sprouting on my arms yet again, the elongation of my canines.

"What have you done to her?" My voice sounds rough to my ears

"Nothing!" he says "We didn't have to. She was helping us to plot this trap against you."

"Liar!" I say harshly

"You tell me, Winters?" He says, his voice strained "What did you do to make her want to get rid of you so badly?"

"Answer my question," I say "Or I'll forget that you have a mate and three children."

I see his dark eyes glint with fear before he swallows "She was right here, we'd opened her binds before we continued digging. She runs away."

I stare at him for a moment, my breath coming short and ragged. Despite the fear alight in his eyes, he holds my gaze.

I drop him down, already looking for a hint of her scent, where she could've gone.

"Believe it or not, Winters." His raspy voice reaches me "she hates you. And I'm sure it's not her fault."

Something about his words make me feel like someone had set my insides on fire. Despite myself, I turn around and my foot hits hard against his stomach.

“Hating me or not,” I growl lowly “She’s my partner. Keep that in your head.”

I turn back, my senses searching for a hint of her and I caught a faint whiff. The th***** of my heart and feet echoes in my head, pain overwhelming my senses and my head swimming with panic.

She could be anywhere, in any sort of danger and I wouldn’t be there to protect her. I wouldn’t be there because I’m the most stubborn man alive and I let her go. I didn’t trust her to understand what was happening to me.

Bewildered, I reach back to our campsite, probably because I must’ve walked in a circle, tracking her scent back to where it began.

With bare sherds of control left in me, I punch a tree, my split knuckles heal in an instant. The stem shakes leaves fall.

“Damn it,” I hold a hand to my forehead

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Where are you, Hazel ?

Would she even come back to me ? After all, I’ve put her through ? Or was she happier with Woodsmen ? At the lodge ?

Where people didn’t tell her to shut up or be quick or anything that would hurt her. Where I wasn’t her only option.

I try to swallow the lump in my parched throat, once I find her, I will fix this. I'll tell her everything she needs to know.

"You shouldn't have taken me for granted." A soft voice reaches me

I close my eyes and breath through my nose. Great, now these pre-effects and panic are driving me mad. I can hear her voice in my head, feel her scent around me.

"I hope you've learned a lesson from this," the soft voice says, closer now

Something touches my shoulder, my eyes snap open and I whirl around.

Golden eyes stare back at me, as bright as ever.

"Elise," I can't quantize the relief that crashes over me like a heavy wave
"You..."

I step forward, taking her face in my hands, not a hint of anyone else's scent on her, not a scratch.

Almost mindlessly, I put my forehead against hers, taking a deep breath, the intoxicating scent of gardenia flowers and rain soothing my nerves. Her beautiful face contorts in confusion, pink lips slightly parted. She's here.

"Luke," she says, her voice soft and confused

The pain in my head dims to nonexistent, my falling mind comes back together and the overwhelming emotions step aside. I remember what I was saying.

"You idiot!" I hiss out

My arms wrap around her in a vice-tight hold, feeling her heartbeat in sync with mine. Fast, irregular.

“What the hell were you thinking?” I ask, my voice hard but my hold on her doesn’t falter “Why didn’t you wait for me? Something could’ve happened to you!”

I feel her push me away. An irritated growl fights to escape, but I hold it back and let her go.

Hazel steps back, out of my reach, her face unreadable but her eyes spewing out fire. The words that leave her mouth almost make me stumble.

“I didn’t know if you’d come.”

“Of course I would come,” I stare at her in disbelief “How could you think otherwise?”

She shrugs and walks past me, out of its own volition, my hand s*****es her wrist.

“You didn’t think I’d come for you?” I ask, feeling a twist in my chest

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“Why would you, Luke?” She gives me a glance over her shoulder “I’m a liability, aren’t I? A complaining, ungrateful brat who’s a blight to you. Why would you come for me?”

She pulls her hand away, I instantly feel the difference. She gives me a humorless smile, one that makes it hard for me to swallow.

“Hell, according to you, my mate wouldn’t come for me.”

“Hazel, I...” words wither away on my tongue, a feeling I hadn’t ever felt taking over me. It takes me a moment to realize what it is.

Shame.

She doesn’t wait for me to continue and turns to pack her things “We should get going. Oh and I snagged their food supply bag, it’ll come in handy later. At least now I don’t have to worry about you calling me a resource s***er.”

Words wrench themselves out of my mouth without permission.

“I’m sorry.”

She stops in her tracks. Slowly, unsurely, she turns to look at me again.

“What did you just say?” she asks, eyebrows furrowed

I swallow my pride and ego and take a step towards her, reaching for her hand. For support? To make sure she doesn’t run away? Both?

“I apologize that I took you for granted.” I, Alpha Luke Winters, who has never bowed to anyone, not even fate or destiny, bow my head at her “I apologize for every idiotic thing I’ve done and said. You’re not a liability, Hazel. You never were.”

My heightened senses hear the catch in her breath, I look up at her again, searching her gaze for a hint of what she’s feeling. But her eyes are unreadable as her face, behind the bubbly childish nature, this girl is made of steel.

Goddess, I’ve never felt so small before another soul, let alone a girl.

Finally, the steel armor slips aside. She smiles at me, a real smile, I feel drawn towards her.

Slap!

Blinking, my hand reaches up to touch my stinging cheek.

“Now we’re even,” Hazel says calmly “Come on, we should get going.”

With that, she starts packing her things. Despite what she just did, even though she just slapped her Alpha, I can’t believe how relieved I am when she says;

“Do you want to know what happened?” she asks, eyes alight with excitement “How I made my brilliant escape?”

My lips tug upwards “By all means, continue.”

Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight Chapter 24

Chapter 24 The beast

It’s a full moon tonight.

I was beyond surprised when Luke stopped just as the sun started setting.

I glance warily at his face. He looks pale, the scars on his face more pronounced. Even the smallest sound seems to put him on the edge.

“Luke, are you alright?” I ask carefully

“I...” he hesitates for a moment “I need to tell you something.”

My brows pull together and I nod, waiting for him to continue. Luke goes through his clothes bag and pulls something out, my eyes widen.

A silver chain hangs from his hands with a manacle and a padlock.

Luke holds out a silver key for me, I step back. What the hell? Silver should've burned him, and it's most definitely going to burn me!

"Seriously, Hazel?" He gives me a look "Silver bullets didn't burn you, you think this would?"

"Yeah, but..." I blink in confusion "Why didn't they?"

"Our wolves are locked," Luke says, taking my hand and giving me the key "It wouldn't hurt unless you manage to

dig it in your flesh."

I swallow "Why do you have this?"

"I'm going to put the manacle on my wrist, and then lock the chain around a tree. You're going to keep the key."

"Why?"

Luke takes a breath "I'm going to shift tonight."

"What?" I stare at him blankly "But Korra locked our wolves, you just said so."

A shadow crosses his face "That wouldn't matter in my case."

"Luke," my throat feels dry "What is going on?"

“Just promise me,” he leans down and puts his hands on my shoulders
“Whatever you see, whatever you hear, you
won’t come near me.”

“I—

“Promise me, Hazel.”

The urgency in his voice makes my stomach turn unpleasantly. I let out a shaky breath.

“Alright.” I nod

“Good.” Luke exhales as he pulls away and runs a hand through his hair

“But why are we doing this?” I ask yet again “Why do you need to chain yourself?”

“I will tell you,” Luke says “Just know that when I shift, I’m not myself. I will tear apart anything in my reach.

Literally.”

Confusion and questions cloud my mind but taking into consideration his look, I think it better to simply nod.

I watch Luke pace around from my place near the fire, the silver key held tightly in my palm. Soon enough darkness falls over the place.

Luke puts the manacle around his wrist and picks up the chain. I expected him to just put it around a tree but he starts walking.

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“Where are you going?” I get on my feet

“I’m not going to be near the campsite.” He says before he starts walking again

“Why?” I ask, following behind him “You told me the chain is enchanted, it won’t break no matter what.”

I see his shoulders stiffen “I don’t want to take any chances.”

Finally, he stops by a big oak tree and puts the chain around it before locking it. Luke’s eyes slide to mine. I’m taken aback by how dark they are.

“I’m going to be fine,” He says “Just go back to camp and don’t come here.”

“Luke,” I almost whine “I don’t like this.”

His lips tug upward just slightly “Why? I thought you’d like me tied to a tree.”

“Are you going to make that kind of joke right now?” I cross my arms and give him a look

He opens his mouth to say something but cuts himself off with a hiss of pain, his hands going up to hold his head. I

step forward, to do Goddess knows what, but Luke holds up a hand— or rather, claw.

“Don’t,” his voice is strained

“Luke, I’m not leaving you like this.” I give him a look

“You gave me your word—

The moonlight shines through the thick shade of trees, feral growl tears through his throat, and his hand’s fist in his hair, shaking his head as if trying to stay conscious.

“Oh moon,” my eyes widen as I step closer “Are you—

“Hazel, go,” Luke growls out

Anger flares through me “No.”

His head snaps to face me and I take a step back. Obsidian eyes stare back at me, pits of endless rage and fury. Lethal canines elongate from his mouth, lips curled in a snarl.

“Now!” His growl reverberates through the air

I hesitate, then I turn around and run towards the camp as fast as possible. Swallowing the lump in my throat, I stare at the path I just came from. After a while, I sink and hold my knees to my chest.

What is happening to Luke? Why is the shifting despite Korra’s spell? Is that why he had wolfsbane? To keep himself from shifting?

Even if he does shift, why is he dangerous?

A loud howl shatters my thoughts. I jump a little, holding myself tighter. The sound of something rattling a tree reaches my ears, followed by loud, guttural howls.

The look on his face flashes in my head, so wild and primitive. That was not Luke, so what was it?

I get to my feet, the weight of the silver key heavy in my pocket.

This is a bad idea, I take a step forward, he told you not to go. I keep walking.

Slowly, quietly, occasionally flinching at the loud howls, I near the tree Luke chained himself to.

Just a look, a tiny peak and I'll know what the hell is going on. If he's okay or not.

I shuffle closer and press my back against a nearby tree, the howling stops. I hear something sniff the still air. A tree rattles again, the sound of chains clinking against each other makes my heart jump to my throat.

Don't be such a ninny, Elise! He's just another Lycan, just take a look and you'll realize it's nothing to be afraid of!

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With a deep breath, I will myself turn.

A series of deafening growls make me stop in my place. This was a horrible idea!

Okay, there's no going back now. Just turn, take a look and run away as fast as you can. The chain won't break.

Mustering up every bit of courage in my bones, I turn around.

My eyes travel up the beast that stands a few feet away. A dark manifestation of nightmares, obsidian eyes outraged and wild.

Another loud howl. The clinking of chains. The tree moves vigorously as if about to tear off its roots. I feel like someone has s***ed the life out of my legs and fall back, a scream fights its way out of my mouth. I hold my hands up as though they would protect me.

Nothing happens.

Slowly, I open my tightly closed eyes to see an arm extended towards me, long pointed claws almost close enough to touch my foot.

I quickly scramble away, my breaths tremble. Luke— the beast, pulls his arm away with a whimper, the sound so different from the guttural howls I'd just heard.

Trying to swallow the lump in my dry throat, I shakily get to my feet. He reaches for me again, making me yelp, the chain stops short just a foot away from me. He growls lowly, shaking his manacled wrist and the tree along with it.

I turn around, only to hear another loud growl, the furious cry of a wounded animal. The tree shakes again. I whip my

head around, watch in horror as the tree sways dangerously.

“Stop!”

The word wrenches its way out of my mouth, unintentionally, instinctively.

He stops.

I watch in confusion as he flexes his arm towards me yet again, another whimper reaches my ears.

“You,” I hesitate “You just want company?”

He doesn't understand. Nevertheless, I walk towards a nearby tree, slowly, keeping my eyes on him, and sit down against it.

The beast watches me warily for a while, then finally settles down, his stormy eyes trained on me. So familiar, completely unknown.

Animalistic.

When in Lycan or wolf form, Lycanthropes can understand everything that's happening, the animal part of us has retreated a lot in the past century.

But looking at the hairy creature in front of me, I feel like I'm near a brutal military dog.

Impossibly, a chuckle escapes me. Those words probably describe Luke best; Military dog.

A low growl reaches my ears, I look at the beast, expecting it to start thrashing around to get free again but he's only staring at me, almost... pleased?

Goddess, I'm going mad.

“Luke, you exaggerated,” I put my chin in my hands and smile a little “You're not all that bad like this.”

He tries to reach for me again, gently this time, as if he doesn't want to scare me. The chain stops him again. He gives it a hard tug, his lips curl in a snarl, displaying razor-sharp teeth. When he looks at me again, he whimpers a little.

He looks so... lonely.

My heart aches a little, even surprising me. Maybe he just wants company, someone who's not afraid of him.

I stand to my feet, his shoulders stiffen, probably thinking I'm running away again.

Which is what you should do! The voice of reason in my head says. This is madness, Luke said he'd rip apart anything in his path!

Just a little step closer, maybe he'd be a bit comforted. I take a step forward, then another.

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The beast lunges for me and the next moment I feel myself being yanked forward and crushed against something.

Alarms start ringing in my head. This was a bad idea, a stupid idea.

My body goes rigid from shock, screams die at my tongue and my heart leaps to my throat but the beast is too busy to notice as he wraps me in his arms and loud howls rock through him to me.

I'm about to die I'm about to die I'm about to die

A wet nose pressed against my neck and the beast takes a deep, deep breath. A growl rumbles through him and I shake with it.

He hasn't... I'm still... I'm alive!

I need to get the hell away before he changes his mind.

"L-Luke," I say, struggling to put some distance between me his big, furry head

He presses me closer still, almost suffocating me in his arms. Is that how he plans to do it? By crushing me to mush?

Like how snakes do to their victims?

No. I'm not dying just yet, and not due to my stupid sympathetic nature.

But seriously universe! This is what I get for being nice? Imminent death?

Okay, deep breaths Elise, you can do this. With a herculean effort, I free one of my arms and cautiously, praying not to get killed, scratch him behind the ear.

A soft, almost purr-like growl reaches my ears. Slowly, his hold eases enough to let me breathe. The beast raises his head and drops his chin on my head, holding me like some favorite toy.

"Luke," I try to push his arms away only to stop a moment later when a threatening growl meets me. Perfect.

A roughly padded claw brushes against my cheek, a nose is pressed in my hair. More deep breaths. Both from me and the beast. Dear moon, what the hell have I gotten myself into?

Okay, he seems to like me. Do I just need to distract him enough to get away, maybe get him to sleep?

Swallowing my fear, I slowly pull my head away and turn it to look at him. His obsidian eyes are impossibly tender when he meets my gaze, the storm of rage now calm. He doesn't look half as scary as he did a while ago.

Cautiously, I reach up a hand and trace the scars on his muzzle. He leans into my palm and a little flower of warmth opens in my chest.

“You’re not going to kill me?” I ask quietly, tracing the scars on his face, acutely aware he can rip me to pieces at any moment “Even if you are, please reconsider.”

He whimpers a little and leans towards me so his muzzle presses to my hair.

“You’re not very much like Luke, are you?” I can’t believe the chuckle that leaves my mouth “And you’re not quite a beast either.”

I shift a little in his hold, this time he lets me “You’re like a complete Lycan, but I’m not going to call you that so... Wolfie?”

He snorts through his nose, I feel myself smile a little. In his senses or not, he’s still Luke.

“Don’t sound so disappointed,” I pat his furry arm “That’s all the creativity I can muster right now.”

My panic dims down and I feel the tension in my muscles escape. Goddess, he’s so warm and furry. A yawn escapes me.

Luke— or maybe I should just call him Wolfie tucks me under his head again, for a moment I think I should try to escape somehow, he’s still pretty much a wild animal.

But... somewhere in my heart, I feel sure that he won’t hurt me. Slowly, steadily, despite all my cautions, I feel darkness seep into my vision and I fall asleep. The last thoughts that swirl in my head is something along the lines of;

Good moon, I really should get my head checked.

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Eclipse born

I wake up in a strange positing, I can feel my back against the rough bark of a tree but my head against something else, and something warm is wrapped around my neck, holding me gently.

My eyes flutter open as sunlight tickles my skin, I see the trees and shrubs around.

Strange, where did the fire go? Why the hell am I not in my sleeping bag?

With clouds of confusion in my head, I look at the human limb around my neck. The events of last night flood in my head. Oh...

Carefully unwrapping Luke's arm from around me, I pull back, my eyes fall on his face. Goddess, he looks exhausted.

Mindlessly, my eyes travel down to his very bare front and before they could go further down, the realization hits me hard.

I jump to my feet and sprint back towards the camp. Once back, I slap my hands on my burning cheeks. Oh my moon, oh my moon, oh my f***ing moon. Thank universe I didn't see anything! I'd have died from embarra**ment at the spot!

Why the hell didn't he have clothes on?!

Mostly when werewolves or Lycans shift, they take off their clothes or rip them apart. Since no one wants to shift back in their birth suit, packs arrange a witch to enchant some clothes on us. So when we shift back, we can save our decency.

Wait...

My hand falls on my pocket, feeling the silver key.

Do I have to go back to give him this?!

Unbidden, blood rushes to my face. I shake my head vigorously. No way am I going there.

But if I don't go, how the hell will Luke be unlocked?! The chain is unbreakable!

With a groan, I bump my forehead against a tree. Why my universe?

Okay, I can do this, the moment I see a speck of him, I'll throw the key and run away. Yeah, I can do this.

Pumping myself up with motivation, I start towards the spot where Luke is. Keeping my eyes as close as possible without tripping and quite possibly cracking my skull against a rock. I see a hint of wavy hair, a shade of brown so

dark it's almost black.

"Luke?" I call from behind a tree

A moment later, a raspy voice reaches me "The key, Hazel."

I huff. a**hole.

I toss the key in his direction and breathe a sigh of relief. Only, it's cut short by a familiar voice.

"You threw it too far."

Something between a whine and a groan leaves my mouth as I stomp my foot in annoyance.

"Well, I'm not getting it," I say

"Oh, and I can spend my life chained to a tree." Comes the snappy reply

"Don't be so pessimistic, Luke," I chide him "Maybe some lucky lady will find you."

A low growl reaches my ears, a laugh escapes me.

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"Get me that damn key, Hazel!" Luke says

"First you tell me, why the hell aren't you wearing anything?"

"Enchanted clothes don't work on me."

"What are you? Anti-magic?"

"No. I'm annoyed." Luke's voice reaches me, hard as ever "Now stop this nonsense and give me the key."

"Ask nicely."

"What?"

“You heard me,” I smile to myself “Ask me nicely, or we might as well rest for a day.”

“Hazel, I’m not in a mood for this.”

“Fine,” I shrug even though he can’t see me “I’m going back.”

I take a few steps forward, humming to myself.

“Wait!” he sounds almost desperate, I bite my lip not to laugh

“Yes?” I ask innocently

He takes a deep breath “Please get me the key.”

“What did you say, Luke?” I ask like the innocent soul I am “I didn’t quite catch it.”

More deep breaths, then he says a bit loudly, his voice slightly terse;

“Hazel, will you be kind enough to get me that key? Please?”

Smiling contently, I turn around and start walking with my eyes towards the sky. I see Luke’s head from my

peripheral.

“What are you doing?” he says “The key is on the ground!”

“Oh, right,” I close my eyes “Where is it again?”

“I can’t believe I’m doing this,” Luke mutters before saying “Two steps on your left.”

I take two steps to the left and crouch down on all fours, hands searching the earth.

“A little forward.” I crawl forward and hit my face against something hard, like a tree

“Ouch!” I rub my nose before saying in an accusing tone “You did that on purpose!”

“Why would I?” a hint of amusement leaks in his voice “Just at the base of this tree.”

My hands search around and touch something cool. I snatch the key and stand on my feet.

“I’m tossing it,” I say

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“No!” Luke says quickly “Just walk towards me and hold it out.”

I walk in the direction of his voice and hold out the key. Warm, callous fingers brush against mine as he takes the key, causing them to tingle slightly. The sound of a padlock opening reaches me, then the sound of a chain rattling.

“Now go and wear something,” I say, my tone more authoritative than I intended “I’m going to wait here.”

“Fine.” The sound of his footsteps gradually becomes distant and I let out a breath I wasn’t sure I was holding

Well, you can’t blame me, my mother raised me to be a demure maiden. Though I didn’t turn out the way she wanted,

I did catch some of her lessons.

A few minutes later, someone touches my shoulder. My eyes fly open and I see Luke standing near me, thankfully clothed.

“Thank Goddess,” I say as we start walking again

Luke raises his brows “Since when are you so concerned about decency?”

I narrow my eyes at him “Since always.”

We reach the campsite and I see that Luke already packed everything. He opens his food bag and tosses an apple to me, taking one himself.

“Come on, we have to get going.” He says

“Wait,” I grab his arm

Luke turns to me, an eyebrow arched. I let go of his arm and cross my own across my chest.

“You promised me an explanation.” I level him with a steely look

Luke keep staring at me for a few moments. He looks so tired as if he’s been breaking rocks. The way he was looking like when I had knocked at his room’s door so many nights ago in our pack mansion.

It had been a full moon the night before.

Finally, he sighs “You’re not going to leave it?”

I shake my head firmly.

Luke drops his bags and surprises me as he takes my hand and pulls me towards the soft patch of earth I was sitting on last night. We sit down. Luke doesn't say anything, simply traces the lines on my palm, causing a strange sort of tingly feeling to rise my skin. I think of pulling it away but then let it be.

Luke glances at me from under his lashes. For a moment I feel like something has stolen the breath from my lungs.

The sunlight filters through the trees, catching his eyes like the deep blue ocean. He looks almost anxious.

I internally shake myself. Luke Winters? Anxious? No way in hell.

"Well?" I'm surprised at the softness of my voice

"Hazel," Luke tightens his hold on my hand, shifting closer to me

"Whatever I'm about to tell you, should never reach anyone else. Understood?"

Pulling my brows together, I nod. Luke lets out a breath.

"I was born on an eclipse."

I s*** in a sharp breath, my eyes widen.

Lycanthropes born on an eclipse never survive. They die just a few minutes after birth.

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"But," I stumble on my words "That's impossible! You- You're the strongest Lycan I've ever seen!"

After last night... after I'd seen him almost pull that huge oak tree from its roots just by a tug...

Luke turns his eyes to my palm again, tracing the lines almost mindlessly.

"My mother was very malnourished, it was a miracle she survived childbirth," he says "She couldn't have survived again, that was clear. There would've been no leader of our pack after my father. In their desperation to save my life, they were willing to do anything."

His finger stops its track on my palm, Luke looks up at me.

"They called Korra."

Realization dawns on me. She'd recognized him at the starting line.

I swallow "What did she do?"

"Over the centuries, our primal nature has receded to almost nothing." Luke says "Lycanthropes born on an eclipse can't survive in this age, but they could before."

Luke lets go of my hand, silence hangs in the still air.

"She made mine strong enough to survive."

"But last night," I saw you "I heard the growls and the rattling. What was that?"

"That's where it went wrong," Luke heaves a heavy sigh "It was alright in the start, everything was... normal. But as time pa**ed, around the full moon, my primal nature heightened. It got worse when I shifted at 11."

I stare at him blankly. Lycans usually shift at 13, werewolves at 16. It's almost impossible to shift before that and if someone does, they usually die of the pain.

"I'd slept early due to how panicked I was feeling," Luke says "and I woke up in the forest near the pack mansion, blood on my hands and the body of a dead animal at my feet.

"My Father called Korra again and she told us that somehow, my animal nature was still growing stronger," Luke runs a hand through his hair, pushing it back from his forehead "When it got worse still, she gave my Father that chain to lock me up every full moon night."

I pull my knees to my chest and wrap my arms around them.

"So this will just go on?" I ask quietly, trying not to think of how painful it must be "There's no end to it?"

A shadow flickers across his face as he stands up "There is."

I tighten my hold on myself "That is?"

"If this goes on, my animalistic side will overtake the human one."

Luke turns around and starts towards where he dropped the bags "And when that happens, I'll just be another monster to be killed."

My heart twists horribly in my chest, my throat tightens.

"There's no cure?"

Luke glances at me over his shoulder "That's why I'm on the Hunt, to get a cure."

And another time today, the realization hits me. The Alpha Supreme's will is unbreakable. That's what's driving him, that's why he's always looking for ways to ensure his victory.

"Come on," I stand up from my spot and dust my clothes "Let's go win this thing."

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Mind readers

Days melted into nights and my memory only stores all of it as a haze of walking, arguing, and more walking.

The forest was getting thicker, the trees and vines blocking our path—it's not even a path actually, just a zig-zag go through. So I guess it's our fault for doing this, not theirs.

"Goddess, this is infuriating," I grumble as I push vines out of my view and stagger behind Luke

How the hell can he walk through here?

"Stop grumbling and focus," He calls back "The roots are protruding out of the ground."

"What's next? Apes throwing rocks at us?"

"I doubt it. The forest was cleared of most animals for the Hunt."

I roll my eyes but don't say anything, as I do so, my gaze lands on a bright red feather ball on one of the lower branches of a tree.

"Aww, just look at that adorable— eek!"

My foot catches in something and I lose my balance, falling towards the earth, I clench my eyes to brace myself for the fall but before that could happen, something pulls me back upright.

Luke doesn't let go of my arms even when I've straightened, causing a tingly feeling where his skin touches mine.

Does he feel that too? Am I being hormonal? Is it the air?

"I told you to be careful," He says, nodding his chin towards the ground where a root was protruding out

"I got distracted," I pull away from him, unable to bear the tingles

But when I attempt to do that, a sharp pain up my ankle causes me to stop with a hiss. I lift my foot and to my horror, see a bruise winking at me.

Luke steadies me again, furrowing his eyebrows he stares at my ankle that's already starting to swell "Do you think you can walk?"

I give him a look "I'm going to pretend you didn't say that."

"But we can stop here," he looks at our surroundings

"Oh yes, I can float in the air."

"Hazel, let me think."

"No really, just watch," I close my eyes and strike a yoga pose by connecting my thumbs and forefingers "Oom—

work damn thing— oom."

With a sigh, Luke lets go of me, I wobble and lean against a tree. He simply turns his back at me before crouching down.

“Are you...” I stare at his back in disbelief “Are you going to give me a back ride?”

“If you’re done processing that, hurry up,” he says, his voice irked

I bite my bottom lip not to grin like an idiot. Who knew I’d see the day Alpha Luke Winters gives me a back ride?

But like the decent little girl I am, I simply climb on and don’t tease him. See? Generosity.

Luke stands up, with a slight squeal of surprise, I put my arms around his neck, my legs already wrapped around his waist.

“Goddess, are you trying to choke me?” Luke says “And what do you eat?”

For a moment I think of tightening my arms around his neck. I don’t weigh that much! What would he do if he had a

male companion?

“I eat whatever the hell you eat,” I huff “And it’s not much.”

“Thankfully,”

I really should strangle him.

Luke starts walking, all four bags held in his hands. The man is made of steel, I’m telling you.

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Or cursed.

I shake those thoughts out of my head and focus on the scenery. With a jolt, I realize how high I am. Everything looks so different from up here. Like the sunlight is a little closer, the lower boughs of trees are within reach. The uneven earth is far below.

Thankfully, we reach a clearer area so the tree vines aren't slapping our faces anymore.

This is so much better than walking. Luke might complain but he doesn't seem tired. A mischievous giggle escapes

my mouth.

"What are you up to?" Luke asks suspiciously

"Luke, if I sprain my ankle every day, will you carry me all the time?" I ask cheekily

"No, I'd make you crawl."

"Better savor this then," mindlessly I lower my chin

My skin brushes against his hair and my eyes widen.

"Oh my moon," I straighten instantly "How the hell is your hair so soft?"

"Better genes,"

I ignore his remark "It's probably softer than mine!"

I unwrap one arm from around his neck and brush my fingers through his hair. Oh moon, I need to know what

conditioner this man uses.

“What are you doing?” Luke snaps, his shoulders stiffen and he comes to halt

“What?” I ask in confusion

“Stop being distracting, Hazel.”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that.”

“Then I’m afraid I can’t carry you anymore.”

I fake gasp “You wouldn’t,”

Luke turns his head just the slightest bit, barely enough to let me have a glimpse of his dark blue eyes.

“Is that a challenge?”

Somehow I know it’ll be really bad if I say yes. So I simply gesture to zip my mouth.

The barest smirk crosses his face “That’s what I thought.”

I huff silently. Arrogant a**hole.

Though my back aches, I keep myself straight, avoiding any more physical contact than necessary. Then I feel a little sting on my neck.

“Ouch,” I say under my breath

My hand reaches towards my neck, prepared to ward off a mosquito but brushes against something else.

I pluck it out and stare wide-eyed at the needle that comes into my view.
More like the trone of a wild plant.

“Luke,” I say, feeling my head starting to spin

“I told you not to disturb me, Hazel.”

I wave the needle in front of his eyes, he stops.

“What the...” Luke takes it from my hand

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“It struck me,” I blink several times, Luke’s several heads come in and out of focus

“What?” Luke unwraps my arms from around his neck and I step down on one leg

I sway on my feet— or foot, holding onto him for support “I don’t feel so good.”

“Hazel, what do you mean it struck you?” Luke asks

I open my mouth but only a big yawn comes out. Before I could speak again, three similar needles strike Luke in the neck and arm.

“Just like that,” I mumble

And I pa** out.

...

Muffled voices reach my ears, not making sense. My eyes feel like they’re weighted down by tons of sand. With a herculean effort, I pry my

eyes open. My blurry view clears the outline of the roof above my head and it comes into focus.

Wait, roof?

Though my limbs feel sluggish, I turn my head to take in my surroundings. A bare room with no window. I try to move my hands but feel them tied at my back. Goddess, not this again.

It takes me a moment to realize the worst part of this situation.

Where's Luke?!

Panic settles in my stomach and I force my legs to work and stand up. with a hiss, I realize my ankle is still swollen.

It means it hasn't been long.

I limp towards the door and press my ear to it. I don't hear anything but muffled voices.

Should I call out? Is Luke even here? Who else is?

Don't be dumb, Elise. If you make any sound whoever your captors will know you're up. what are you going to do then?

I worry my bottom lip, raking my head for any idea to get the hell out.

My captors are mind readers since the next moment, the door clicks open, I stumble away from it.

Two hooded figures stride in and grab me by the arms.

“Whoa, hey,” I say as they start dragging me out “Into manhandling much?”

They don’t answer me. I squint my eyes to fight the bright light as we go outside. My eyes adjust to the brightness and I realize we’re in a small hall, dark hooded figures all around.

“Are you going to sacrifice me now?” my eyes become the size of the moon “Trust me that’s a bad idea. I haven’t been a very pious soul. And I’m a wolf. You should try a goat or something.”

“Well, well,” a feminine voice reaches my ears “Isn’t she a chatty one?”

My eyes snap towards a figure with a blood-red cloak, sticking out like a sour thumb in the parade of black.

With a manicured, pale hand, the woman tugs off the hood, and I stare at her in disbelief. That’s probably the most gorgeous woman I’ve ever seen in my life.

Coming from someone as straight as a pole, that’s something.

“A little girl,” the woman c***s her head, her rippling black hair follows the movement “I’m surprised. I thought this was a men’s game.”

“What can I say,” I try to ignore the bad vibe coming from her “I’m a feminist.”

The woman turns to the hooded figure to her left “Where’s the other one?”

“My apologies, my Lady,” the man bows so deep I think he’s going to topple off “He was being... problematic. And you forbade us to use magic on them. He’s still in the containing room.”

With a rush of relief, I realize they're talking about Luke. If he's being difficult, it means he's okay.

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"Hmm," the woman taps a finger to her sharp chin "Very well. I'll deal with him."

She gestures at the hooded figures holding me before she starts walking and they drag me after her, my ankle throbbing painfully.

Soon enough, we reach one of the other doors in the hallway, the thick metal door dented as if someone's been hitting

it with a hammer from the inside.

A loud metallic bang! reaches my ears and another dent forms on the metal. I cringe. No, not a hammer.

"Settle down!" one of the hooded figures yells "Our leader wants to talk to you!"

A moment of silence passes, hesitantly, the man unlocks the thick metal door. The woman in red strides inside and

I'm shoved in as well.

It takes me a moment to take in the sight in front of me.

Luke is sitting on a chair, arms crossed across his chest, booted feet on the table in front of him. As if he's not a prisoner here but a gang leader who has come to collect his share of the scrub.

The moment his gaze meets mine, he stands up, eyeing the two figures holding me.

The woman in red walks up to him, her grey eyes go up and down his frame appreciatively. She c***s her head thoughtfully.

“I hear you were being a handful for my guards, Alpha.” She says

Luke keeps his eyes on her for a moment. Then his lips curve up in a slow charming smirk.

“I’m not used to obeying,” he swiftly takes her hand in his and presses a kiss to her knuckles “But if you had come, I think things would’ve been smoother.”

I stare at him, mouth hanging open as the woman laughs in a soft, highbrow way.

“Quite the charmer, aren’t you?” She arches a perfect brow

“Alpha Luke Winters at your service,” Luke’s smirk turns into a smile “You must be Rebecca Everette.”

Wait, he knows her?!

“You’ve heard of me?” Rebecca asks, mildly surprised

“Of course,” Luke shrugs modestly “I knew that if I come across a devilishly beautiful woman on this Hunt, it’ll be you.”

Rebecca pulls her hand away and gives him a playful shove “You don’t look so bad either Alpha.”

“Miss Everette, Rebecca if I may?” Luke asks politely “If we are going to talk, I’d prefer it somewhere where my companion is not tied and the room is bright enough to illuminate your features perfectly.”

“Hmm,” Rebecca’s eyes slid across his face and come to mine. She looks at Luke again and smiles “Of course.”

“Lead the way,” Luke gestures towards the door

Rebecca walks past me towards the door and Luke follows, ignoring me like I don’t exist. That bloody b*****.

My guards help me limp outside as well. Someone had brought our bags into the hall. I breathe a sigh of relief. Whoever these people are, I think they’re letting us go.

“Let me take care of that for you,” Rebecca pulls out a stick from her cloak, grey quartz gleaming at the base, and waves it

Our luggage catches fire and before my very eyes, reduces to nothing.

My wide eyes meet Luke’s. His face is unreadable, but I notice the tension in his shoulders.

Rebecca slides her arms around his “Now we can talk without worrying about you leaving.”

She smiles at him, like a tigress baring her teeth prettily. What she says next tells me they do not mind readers after all.

“Welcome to the witch’s den.”

Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Werewolf crazy

I glare at the two people sitting on the sofa in front of me.

Rebecca laughs again as if Luke just said the funniest thing in the world, while all he said is;

“So you were planning to kill us?”

“It’s part of the Hunt,” She waves a dismissive hand “But I’ve changed my mind now.”

She runs a single finger through his hair and Luke smiles at her. The b***** smiled! He was snapping at me all the damn time!

I huff and cross my arms. My eyes run over the lounge we’re sitting in an attempt to ignore them. A calendar hangs from the high roof, the furniture is a charade of white, gold, and red. The cookies that were put on the table in front of us are gone, leaving only the crumbs as a sign that they were ever there.

The spectacular work was due to yours truly, since Luke was busy charming Rebecca and she was busy pretending to not be interested while her hands seemed to think otherwise.

See who the b***** is here ?

“Even Darcie was better than you,” I mutter to myself

“Come, I’ll show you to your room,” Rebecca takes Luke’s hand and stands up “You must be exhausted.”

With a nod, he stands up and lets her guide him towards the spiral stairs. Both ignoring me. If I could growl right now,

I would. Gritting my teeth, I quickly follow after them. The only thing I appreciate about being here is that they healed my ankle.

Rebecca is the leader of the witch coven that lives in this part of the forest and they're paid by the Alpha

Supreme to help in making the Hunt all the more bloody. Isn't he a kind guy?

We reach a brightly lit hallway on the second floor. The witches and warlocks give way as Rebecca passes through.

It's the sort of respect Lycanthropes give to their Alphas.

Why the hell are all the leaders so shitty?

She stops by a room at the far left.

"I hope you'll be comfortable." Rebecca bats her dark lashes at Luke "If you want anything, my room is just to the right."

"I'll be sure to keep that in mind." Luke winks

Luke Winters just winked at her. No, that's just crazy, impossible! Maybe there was something in his eye?

Then why is he bloody smirking?

I clear my throat loudly, causing the two love birds to finally acknowledge my existence. I cross my arms, shifting my weight on one foot.

"And where is my room?" I raise an eyebrow

"Oh," Rebecca looks taken aback "I'm sorry, but the other guest rooms are being repainted. Maybe we can adjust you somewhere in the lounge?"

“Don’t worry yourself on her behalf,” Luke says “She can share a room with me.”

Rebecca suddenly realizes she has made a mistake and quickly tries to make amends.

“Now that I think of it,” she says as though trying to remember “Maybe we do have a room on the third floor. Come on...”

She trails off and stares at me, I offer her a sarcastic smile “Elise.”

She nods before she gestures me to follow. My eyes meet Luke’s once, waiting for some sort of explanation but all he says is;

“Stay alert.” Before he disappears into his room

I stay rooted to my spot as the door closes, feeling a little twist in my heart.

That’s it? no explanation, no apology? Shaking my head, I try to swallow the lump in my throat and turn to jog after

Rebecca who’s already at the next staircase.

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We walk silent and soon enough we reach the third floor but Rebecca doesn’t stop there and turns to the next staircase. Furrowing my brows in confusion, I follow behind. We stop when the stairs end at a door in the roof.

Rebecca opens it and climbs inside.

When I peek my head up, I realize where we are. The attic.

“Hmm, you could adjust here.” Rebecca says “I’ll tell someone to put a mattress here.”

I stare at her, fighting the urge to bash her head against the wall. Cool it, Elise, this woman is in charge here. Just breathe.

So I try my best to smile even though I know it’ll probably only be a grimace as I say;

“Thank you.”

“Always welcome to help those less blessed than me,” She tosses her mane of black hair over her shoulders

She walks past me and starts climbing down when something hits my head.

“Wait!” She looks over her shoulder, almost bored “What about the bathroom?”

“The third floor is for the servants, anyone would be glad to let you borrow.” She walks away

B. r. e. a. t. h. e.

“Why are you getting so worked up?” I mumble to myself, rubbing my temple “You’ve endured worst. Stop being such a brat.”

Though my sour mood doesn’t subside much, I try to focus on the bright side as I push away all the stuff in the attic towards a corner. The big circular window on the east looks over the whole forest from such height, it looks tiny. My

the head doesn’t bump against the roof despite its slant due to my short frame.

I find a broom and quickly dust off the floor when someone knocks on the door on the floor.

I open it to come face to face with a boy about my age. His big violet eyes stare at me, curiosity obvious on his features.

“Yes?” I inquire

“Are you Elise?” he blinks animatedly

My lips tug upward “That’s me.”

“Ms. Everette asked to drop off a mattress here for you,” he says

The only problem we face, it that the door is too small for the mattress. So we do the obvious.

“A little more,” I wheeze out, throwing my whole weight trying to squeeze the mattress

The boy, Filipe, squeezes it from his side and gives it a shove upward. I fall on my behind from the impact of it flipping to its original shape as it pops up.

“We did it!” I grin, breathing heavily

“Thank Merlin,” Filipe comes up and lays flat on his back, an arm over his eyes

“Why can’t you use magic in here again?” I ask

“Ms. Everette has forbidden it unless necessary.” He says, sitting up

His violet eyes roam the attic before meeting my gaze, he smiles, a surprisingly charming dimple on his left cheek.

“You cleaned up nice,” Filipe says

“Nothing an omega couldn’t pull off,” I get up and dust my clothes, I nod towards the mattress “Help me put in in place?”

Filipe gets up as well “Of course.”

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He helps me lay it near the window. I observe the tainted gla**, mindlessly brushing my fingers on it when I feel someone’s gaze on me. I look back and catch Filipe’s stare. His cheeks turn pink.

“I didn’t mean to stare,” he holds up his hands in universal surrender “It just, I’ve never met a werewolf who wasn’t,

you know, dead or trying to kill us.”

I shrug with a small smile “That’s fine. I’ve never met a warlock before either.”

“So,” Filipe rocks on the heels of his feet “You want to look around and maybe answer a few questions I have?”

“Why the hell not?” I grin brightly

...

We spend the next two hours going around the coven mansion and the area around it.

First, we stay at the mansion as I answer all of Filipe’s quires wholeheartedly, laughing at how ridiculous most were.

“Do you hate vegetarians?”

“Do werewolves shed hair in wolf form?”

“Do you hear a voice in your head?”

“Do mated werewolves make out all the time?”

“Do you die single if you don’t find your mate?”

After sating his curiosity, we go out of the mansion. There were a few houses here and there, meant to accommodate some of the more powerful witches or warlocks. I observe the place keenly, keeping in mind every detail Filipe tells me when I spot a small warehouse-type building beside the meeting hall we were kept in.

“What’s in there?” I ask

“Mostly random stuff,” Filipe shrugs “Some stuff from the other competitors we captured.”

“Others?” my throat goes dry

Filipe shifts uncomfortable on his feet “Look Elise, nothing personal. It’s just how this thing goes.”

I shake my head “It’s fine. I think your leader won’t hurt us.”

“Tell you what,” Filipe looks sideways as if making sure no one’s near, then he leans forward to whisper “Ms.

Everette is a little werewolf crazy.”

“What do you mean?” I furrow my brows

“She adores how loyal and possessive they are towards loved ones.”

Filipe shakes his head like a disappointed doctor

“Then why didn’t she keep alive the werewolves she caught before us?”

I ask

“They weren’t too good looking,” Filipe says “Besides, your partner is quite the charmer.”

I wanted to snort. Charming? Please.

When we go back inside, I see the ‘charming’ Luke still charming Rebecca. I narrow my eyes at them, laughing and smiling in the lounge-like they have nothing better to do. I turn my face away and make my way toward the kitchens.

Goddess, I’m famished.

In the kitchen I see a woman humming to herself, waving a wand with a bright ruby at the base. Things float in the air.

I stare open-mouthed as a whisk mixes something in a bowl, a frying pan sizzles something that smells mouthwatering, the dishes arrange on a trolley.

As if sensing my presence, the woman looks over her shoulder, her bright amber eyes settle on me. She lowers her

wand and everything settle down gently, she smiles.

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“Hello, dear,” she says “Do you need something?”

I find myself returning her smile “Just wondering if I can get something to eat.”

“Of course, come in,” she ushers me inside “What would you like?”

“Anything really,” I exhale a laugh

She walks towards the fridge and fishes through it while I seat myself on the kitchen island. The plump woman with amber eyes hands me a tub of ice cream.

I look at it like it’s a gorgeous male model.

“Thank you!” I say as I take the tub of half-full mint and chocolate chip ice cream

“No need,” the woman gives me a sp*** “It’s rare to find anyone in the kitchen but myself.”

“I’m Elise, by the way.” I smile at her

“Nice to meet you,” she says as she waves her wand again, I notice a tiny thread of sliver slip out of it, holding everything up and making them move “My name is Martha Johns, head of the kitchen department.”

“Is there anything I can help with?” I ask, swallowing a mouthful of icecream

“I can handle it,” Martha says with a chuckle

As I watch her work, I can’t help the wave of homesickness that crashes over me. Sitting on the kitchen island as

Mom and Morgan made food since I’d always end up breaking something.

I suddenly feel less hungry.

I hear someone laughing, I look up at Rebecca as she enters, Luke following behind her.

“Martha, is everything ready?” She asks, underlying authority in her voice

“Everything is ready, My Lady,” Martha says, looking at the food trolley for any sign of imperfection

“Good,” Rebecca says “Luke and I will have dinner in my room.”

“Very well, My Lady,” Martha bows her head in a nod

I feel my grip on the ice cream tub tighten, my eyes narrow as Luke doesn't spare me a glance before leaving with her.

A familiar ache in my chest makes me curse under my breath.

Why am I feeling so, so... rejected? It's not like Luke, or any other guy for that matter, ever paid special attention to me other than when they want something. I know not to expect anyone to be kind or good to me for no motive but somehow, for some soon forsaken reason, this hurts.

“You like him.”

My eyes snap towards Martha. She's giving me a knowing smile, her eyes crinkled. I feel blood rush to my face.

“Werewolves have soul mates,” I mumble “We're not supposed to like others.”

“Werewolves have hearts too, don't they?”

“I don’t like Luke.” I shake my head “I’m just worried about getting out of here.”

Martha offers me a small shrug “As you say dear, but my eyes see something else.”

She takes the trolley out, leaving me alone in the kitchen with my pestering thoughts.

I look hard at the ice cream tub in my hands.

I do not like anyone. Especially not Luke Winters.

Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Spellbound

I always hated being a light sleeper. The slightest sound can shake my slumber. But you see I’m stubborn and so, I try to ignore the sounds and sleep again.

I shuffle in the sheets, ignoring the creaking of the wooden floor under someone’s feet.

Wait...

I open my eyes just a little, there’s no one in my line of sight. When my eyes move away a bit, they widen. I scramble away from the dark figure looming over me. I open my mouth to scream the whole mansion down but a hand closes around it, the feel of it is oddly familiar.

I smell him before I can make out his features. The scent of coffee and pine trees.

“Don’t scream,” Luke crouches down so we’re on eye level

I shove his hand away and glare at him.

“You almost gave me a heart attack!” I say in a furious whisper

My eyes adjust to the dark and I see Luke raising an eyebrow. For some reason, his being here is bothering me. After ignoring me the whole day, he thinks he can just come to me in the dark of the night? When no one can see him talking to me?

“What do you want?” I cross my arms

For a moment Luke stares at me, face unreadable and eyes thoughtful, then he settles down on the mattress, forming a dip in it.

“Well?” I narrow my eyes

“Everette said they didn’t burn the luggage of every team they captured,” he says “That means there’s still a map here somewhere. If we ever want to get out, we need the map.”

I raise my brows at him. Everette, huh? Not ‘Oh my beautiful love’? and he does want to get out of here. Interesting,

I thought he’d found himself a home.

I decide to be professional and think of what he just told me. Something clicks in my head.

“The warehouse,” I snap my fingers, “Filipe told me that’s where they’re keeping stuff they took from other competitors.”

Luke nods, but the sudden hardness of his features doesn't go unnoticed by me.

“And who is Filipe?”

Just as he says that the devil himself comes to me and whispers in my ear; ‘Time for payback.’

I smile shyly and lower my face, making a great show of tracing my finger along with the sheets.

“He helped me settle up here,” I say like the demure maiden I am “And he also gave me a tour around the mansion and the perimeter.”

I look up at Luke's constipated face with innocent, big eyes and a smile.

“He's nice to me,” I say

Briskly, Luke stands from his seat “Good to know you find admirers everywhere.”

He walks towards the door on the floor “You'll have to search the warehouse, I'll keep Everette distracted. Tell me if you find the map.”

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“What about everything else?” I ask “Food? Weapons?”

“I'll take care of that,” Luke opens the door but doesn't go down

“What is it?” I move out of bed and walk towards him

When I peek down, I realize what exactly it is. Two people in the hallway are practically devouring each other.

Goddess, at least get a room you two.

“If they saw me, we’re damned.” Luke closes the door

“Maybe they won’t notice?” I offer

Luke gives me a look. I spread out my hands and shrug, partial apology, partial confusion.

“You can just wait until they’re gone,” I say

“Everette said she’d come to ‘collect’ me for breakfast.” Luke gets up and goes towards the window “It’s almost dawn.”

He opens the tainted gla** and I shudder a bit as the cold air whips inside.

“You can’t possibly jump from here, can you?” I glance down at the earth far below

“Can’t I?” Luke says, his face calculating

“Well, even if you manage to have all of your limbs intact, what are you going to say to the guards near the front door?” I ask

“I’ll make something up,” Luke rolls his shoulders

I look away from him “Maybe you can say you went for a morning jog while they dozed off?”

From the corner of my eyes, I see a faint smile touch his lips “Not a bad idea.”

Something warm presses against my cheek, making breath hitch in my throat.

“Stay safe,” Luke’s lips brush against my skin

I dare to blink and he’s gone. I stick my head out of the window and stare down. Luke’s dusting off his clothes,

perfectly fine. I let out a breath of relief.

My cheek still tingles when I close the window, my face too warm for my liking. Stay safe, he said.

I shake my head. Get a grip, Elise! That’s all the things he says! Stay focused, stay alert, stay safe. It’s nothing to overthink!

I eat breakfast in the kitchen with Martha and afterward head towards the warehouse. Unluckily, there are too many people outside so I head back to the mansion. I don’t want to risk sus***ion.

The day pa**es as blur of talking to Filipe, trying to ignore just how much Luke and Rebecca flirt and helping

Martha is in the kitchen.

Thank moon I’m not going to be near when Luke finds his mate. I can’t bear people flirting so openly.

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People? Or just—

I cut off my train of thought. Nope. Not going to think stupid stuff.

Nearly at sunset, I head outside again, telling the guards I only want to take a walk around.

I casually walk towards the warehouse and take a moment to make sure no one is near. I push the big wooden door,

thanking the moon it's open. I close it behind me as I enter.

The warehouse resembles an old barn. Broken furniture, dry gra**, and dust covering everything and barrels of something I suspect to be grain. I look through the objects, narrowing my eyes to see better in the dim light.

I spot something in the farthest corner, behind an old settee with protruding springs. A few bags.

I hurriedly make my way towards them and start shuffling through. Men's clothes, food that's gone bad, and sleeping bags. No weapons. No map.

"Damn it," I shove back the shirt I had lifted

Something brushes against my hand as I do that. Something with a slight edge.

I pick it up again and fumble with the pocket, a tightly folded piece of paper comes in my hand. I quickly unfold it and a wave of relief crashes over me. A map.

I fold it again and shove it in the pocket of my shorts. When I stand up, ready to leave, the door opens. Biting my tongue not to curse, I crouch behind the settee again.

“Are you sure My Lady?” a male voice reaches me “Keeping the wolves here can cause us trouble with the Alpha

Supreme.”

“He won’t mind,” a very familiar feminine voice says “He just needs them not to win, he’s getting that.”

“You know best, My Lady but,” there’s a moment of hesitation “Why keep them here anyway?”

A moment of thick silence passes before a deadly low, a poisonously soft voice says;

“Hector, are you here to question me?”

“N-No, My Lady.”

“Luke is my guest,” Rebecca says “And after tonight, he’d be spellbound to be my guest forever.”

“What about the girl?”

“Once Luke is wrapped around my finger, we can get rid of her.”

I swallow hard. Spellbound? Is she planning on bewitching him? But magic doesn’t work on Luke. Will her spell work?

“Burn whatever we’d picked from the others,” Rebecca’s voice snaps me out of my thoughts “I don’t want any slip-ups.”

“Yes, My Lady”

The sound of heels th***** on the earth progressively becomes quieter before it vanishes completely.

A sigh reaches my ears “Merlin, give than women some brains.”

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I feel you, Hector.

Footsteps reach me again and I realize he’s coming here. To get rid of this stuff.

I swallow thickly. And maybe me too.

I look around, finding no way of escape in the tightly packed corner. The footsteps become louder. Okay, Elise, it’s now or never.

Instead of waiting for him to find me, I shoot to my feet and jump over the settee, coming face to face with a middle-aged man with bright red hair and equally red eyes.

“Hi,” I smile at his shocked face

And I punch him square in the jaw. Hector stumbles back, his wand flying out of his hand.

“What the hell are you—

What he was about to say, I’ll never know because the next moment I pick up the broken leg of a chair and bring it down on his head. His eyes roll back and he sinks to the floor. I wince.

“Sorry,” I mumble to his unconscious form “It was nothing personal.”

For a moment, I consider simply leaving but then glance at Hector. He's bound to wake up sooner or later and if he told Rebecca what I did, which he definitely will, I'm dead meat.

I take out the clothes from the bags I was going through a few minutes ago and shred them to bind and gag him.

Goddess, forgive me. This Hunt is making me do stuff I don't want to.

"Sorry again," I whisper as I turn around and go out the door, closing it behind

I quickly make my way towards the mansion and just as I enter the lounge, I see Rebecca lying atop Luke on the couch. His eyes meet mine and I give a minute nod before heading for the kitchen, ignoring the sour taste in my mouth.

A few moments later, Luke comes into the empty kitchen.

"Did you find it?" he asks in a hushed voice

"Yes," I nod, watching his eyes gain a sparkle "But a man saw me. He's temporarily... occupied. But we need to hurry."

Luke nods "you're room, tonight."

"Luke, I think Rebecca—

Speak of the devil, she waltzes inside just then. Her eyes flicked from me to Luke.

"Dinner's in our room," She says, sliding her hand in his

Our room? Our room?!

Luke gives her a charming smile before he nods and they both walk out. But before she leaves, Rebecca turns around and smirks at me. It makes a cold feeling settled in my stomach.

After tonight, he'd be spellbound to be my guest forever.

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Better a bitch than a whore

✧ Luke's POV ✧

Everette leads me to her room and after dinner, she excuses herself to go and change.

I sit on the bed, calculating if everything's ready. Only a few hours from now, Hazel and I will be out of their territory and on our way.

The bathroom door clicks open, and I have to refrain from raising my brows at the sight in front of me.

This is one desperate woman. That is my first thought when I see her in lingerie. The second is that I need to get out of here.

She walks towards me, or maybe stalk would be a better word. Her manicured hands come down on my neck as she settles her behind on my lap, batting her lashes at me.

"I'm just so tired," Trust me, I am as well.

I make my lips tug upward and c*** my head to a side "For someone very tired, you look ravishing."

Rebecca drags a hand through my hair and smiles at me. Unbidden, the memory of someone else's hand in my hair forces its way into my mind.

Hazel's hand had been smaller, gentler but it made me feel as if someone had set up a small shock machine on my head. I had dismissed it, thinking it's because I haven't let any woman touch me like that. But this doesn't make me

feel anything, simply five fingers moving through my hair.

"I want an escape," She leans forward, lips hovering over mine

"I'm sure anyone with eyes will do anything for you," I say

The corner of her mouth lifts "You know any?"

"I've heard many men from your coven would die to have a moment with you," I say smoothly

My hands slide up her back towards her shoulder blades, searching for the pressure points to numb her arms. If she can't use her wand, we can slip away easily.

"Like this Filipe I've heard of," I say, leaning in just a little

She laughs at that "I know a lot of them to have a soft spot for me, but Filipe isn't one of them. He doesn't swing that way."

Good.

"Don't talk about others," she says softly "Tell me what you would do for me?"

The faintest sound of the door opening makes my shoulders tense. A familiar scent hovers towards me, I have to force myself not to break eyes contact with Rebecca. From my peripheral, I see someone take silent, determined steps forward and—

A loud metallic bang! rings in the air as a frying pan slam on Rebecca's head.

Rebecca falls off my lap with a yelp of pain. Her grey eyes narrow at the short female holding a frying pan like a lethal weapon.

“You b****!” Rebecca shoots to her feet

“Better a b**** than a w****,” Hazel slams the frying pan straight on her face

Rebecca's eyes roll to the back of her head, her nose bleeding profusely as she collapses on the ground.

I watch wide-eyed with my mouth hanging open, mind blank with shock.

“Oh my moon,” Hazel turns to me, brows furrowed in concern “Luke, can you hear me? Are you alright?”

She touches my cheek and I feel a jolt in my spine. My mind snaps back to reality.

“What have you done?” I stand up, gesturing at the unconscious witch on the floor “Everyone must've heard that sound.”

Hazel blinks at me, her golden eyes confused “You... You're not under a spell?”

“What?” I raise an eyebrow

“When I was in the warehouse, she was saying to someone that you’re going to be spellbound by her...” She trails

off, her eyes fall on Rebecca’s attire “Oh.”

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I don’t know if I should laugh at her innocence or slam my head against the wall.

“Yes, dimwit,” I narrow my eyes “You just announced to the whole house that something’s going on.”

“Wait,” Hazel narrows her own eyes at me “So you weren’t under a spell, and still you— that is so gross!”

My back straightens, the note of accusation in her voice doesn’t go unnoticed “If you’ve forgotten, I’m a gentleman.”

She scoffs, waving the frying pan in the witch’s direction “Doesn’t look like it.”

“I was going to disable her, we would’ve left after that.”

She glances at the unconscious witch, then her eyes flicker to me, sus***ion evident in them.

“Luke?” she makes a face

I feel a muscle in my jaw jump “Get your mind of the gutter, will you?”

“I didn’t say anything.”

I open my mouth to give her a piece of mind when the door knocks. Oh f***.

“Ah-oh,” Hazel glances at the door and then at me

I pull my shirt over my hand and ruffle my hair. I hold out the shirt towards Hazel, who mindlessly takes it, red tainting her face.

If the situation was different, I would’ve smirked.

I open the door just slightly, the girl outside quickly averts her eyes.

“Err, sorry to disturbed you sir but we heard a sound,” she says awkwardly

“Try to ignore the sounds, will ya?” I say in a raspy voice

“Of course, Sir.” She quickly turns around and walks away

With a silent breath of relief, I close the door and turn around only to have my shirt thrown straight into my face.

“Try to ignore the sounds, will ya?” Hazel mocks me

“Shut up,” I give her a look “Go to my room, you’ll find a duffle bag there. Throw it down the window.”

Giving me one final glare, she walks past me and out of the room. I let out a breath I didn’t even know I was holding.

Looking down at the shirt in my hands, I can’t help the upward tug of my lips.

Now, do you know what it was like for me at the lodge?

Quickly pulling the shirt back on, I open the window in Everette's room and neatly jump down. Soon enough, a bag hits my head. Still haven't taken out your anger, Hazel?

I put the bag on the ground and direct my eyes towards my room's window.

"Jump down," I say as quietly as possible

Even from here, I can see the hesitation on her face "Cant we go through the door?"

"The guards, remember?"

Hazel bits her bottom lips hard. Goddess, I need her to stop doing that before she tears off the skin.

"What are you waiting for?" I say

"I, I can't jump from here," Hazel says, I can guess what it must be costing her to admit there's something she cants do

"Hazel, I will catch you," I open my arms and take a few steps forward
"Just trust me."

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"I," she looks back at the room she's in, then at me, a hint of fear on her features

"For the love of the moon, Hazel," I roll my eyes "Just jump—

Something lands in my arms. Instinctively, I hold on to it as two arms wrap around my neck. Wide golden eyes stare back at me, I can almost hear Hazel's fast heartbeat, feel her short breaths on my face.

“Luke,” don’t say my name like that

Despite myself, I lean forward “Yes?”

In three little words, she snaps my mind back in place.

“Put me down.”

Briskly, I put her to her feet and grab the bag.

“The map?” I ask her, silently she reaches into her pocket and hands me a thickly folded paper

The spotless paper that comes in front of my eyes is almost an insult to this Hunt. Regardless, it’s a map.

“We’ll have to get out of their territory before they have a chance to find us,” I tell her “Once we’re out, they cant follow.”

Hazel nods, focusing on her steps for once, rather than talking. I don’t know if it’s because she doesn’t want to sprain her ankle again or if she just doesn’t want to talk to me.

What is wrong with you, Winters? Stop acting like a teenager.

We keep walking and moving until finally, Hazel breaks her vow of silence and I hear the too familiar words.

“When will we stop?”

Why do I have this ridiculous urge to smile?

I look at my watch, it’s about two hours in the morning, one more mile to go before we’re out of their territory. I turn my eyes to Hazel, at her tired features. As if on cue, her mouth opens in a perfect O to yawn.

When Everette wakes up, if she hasn't already, she wouldn't let this insult go easily.

"We have one more mile to go, then we can stop," I say

"Oh come on," Hazel puffs up her cheeks "What difference would one little mile make?"

"It's going to ensure our survival." And your safety

I take her hand in mine, ignoring the tingles that erupt across my skin, and start walking, almost dragging her along.

If I have to choose between comfort and safety, the choice would be pretty obvious. Comfort won't matter to you if you're dead.

We walk on silently, her hand clasped in mine, fingers interlocked. Finally, we cross the boundary of their territory,

Hazel bumps in my back before stumbling away and attempting to straighten herself, her expression one of supreme sleepiness.

"Are you dead yet?" she yawns again "Because I feel dead."

"Yes, it's time to lay in the grave."

"By all means, let's not waste any more time."

I'd managed to gather some food, two guns, a box of ammunition, some medical supplies, and a blanket. Though the limited supplies are bound to cause problems later, I'm too tired to worry about them right now.

When I pull the blanket out and turn to where Hazel was standing, I find myself staring into the air. my eyes dart around and a moment later, I

spot her curled up against a tree. Goddess, this girl wouldn't wait for anything when it comes to sleep.

"Hazel," I crouch down and shake her shoulder

"Fo away," she mumbles her version of what I suppose was meant to be 'Go away'

"You're going to catch a cold," I say, shaking her again "Or get s***ed dry by mosquitoes."

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Grumbling, she opens her eyes and pushes herself just enough to let me dr*** the blanket around her.

"And you?" she raises a sleepy brow

"I'm going to keep watch," I stand up again

I turn around but before I could take a step forward, something closes around my hand, electricity cackles through me. I whip my head back, hooded golden eyes stare back at me.

"Stay."

My heart should not be beating so hard. Let go of her hand, a part of my mind yells at me. Hold it tighter, some

forbidden part of me argues.

"Who's going to keep guard?" I ask

"We've just crossed their territory," she tugs at my hand "There won't be any traps in such a condensed space."

She has a point. I look around, focusing if I can hear anything. The perimeter should be safe for another few kilometers.

Another tug on my hand.

Without giving it a second thought, I settle down beside her. Hazel flops a part of the blanket towards me, before I could tell her it's not necessary, she slides closer and leans her head against my shoulder.

Words evaporate on my tongue, everything in my mind goes haywire.

"Just relax," A soft voice whispers to me "I didn't know a proud Alpha can't handle sharing a blanket."

More from the challenge than from being vexed, I slide my arm around her shoulders and pull her closer so her head rests against my chest. The scent of Gardenia flowers and rain cascades over to me, her frame small against mine.

"I think you've seen enough proof of what I can handle," I say, my voice quiet in the fragile silence

Her shoulders tense, just a little and if we weren't so close, I doubt I would've noticed it.

"Were you interested in her?" she asks quietly

I turn my head the slightest bit so I can take a look at her face, the soft sweep of her jaw, the pouty shape of her lips, doe eyes closed and long lashes brushing against her cheeks. Her features are slack from exhaustion, somehow beautiful still, a crease between her golden-brown eyebrows. I want to brush it away with my fingers.

I straighten my neck "I've seen better."

“So you’ve had relations with other women?”

“No.”

“You’re saving yourself for your mate?”

This time I openly turn my face towards her, Hazel lifts her head from my chest, her eyes meet mine. Like big, golden mirrors— bright, clear with the slightest flecks of darker brown. Both of us have flirted with others, both of us have done it for our reasons.

“Are you?” I ask, raising an eyebrow

“Yes.” She doesn’t hesitate before answering

“You didn’t find him. What if you never do?”

Hazel puts her head back against my chest, eyes closed, breaths even. She could probably hear my heart beating.

“Then maybe I will find someone else.” She said softly

The silence that follows tells me she’s already asleep. Against my better judgment, I rest my cheek on her head and close my eyes, her words still echoing in my mind.

And after a long, long time, I find something I thought I’ll never have again;

Peaceful sleep.

Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Crazy Ex

We're cursed with rain the next morning.

Luke doesn't surrender to nature this time and since it's not raining cats and dogs, we continue walking.

"Tell me again why we have to keep going?" I say, steadying myself against a tree before I slip on the muddy ground

"We're still closer to the witch territory than I'd like us to be," Luke says
"Our food supplies are limited and so are weapons. We have to hurry."

Oh, and did I mention that the only clothes we are wearing are the only ones we have? Yay witches.

"Damn that witch," I mutter "Did she have to burn all that? One of my favorite shirts was in there!"

"Maybe it would sting less if you weren't so jealous of Everette."

I pause while taking a step forward, my head snaps upward "What?"

Luke gives me a cool glance over his shoulder "You were reeking of jealousy, Hazel."

"I'm not jealous of anyone!" I snap at him, both of us have stopped walking "And the only thing that reeked was her crappy perfume."

"Just admit it, you were jealous."

I open my mouth to fire another sharp reply but then close my mouth. I shrug with an indifferent face.

"Fine," I say calmly "I'm as jealous of her as you are of Ethan."

In a flash, Luke's cool demeanor is wiped off from his face and onto mine. His jaw tightens and his eyes narrow a fraction.

"I am not jealous of anyone," he says "Especially not that pup."

"Pup?" I raise an eyebrow "What are you? Fifty-five?"

"Twenty-three," Luke gives me a measured look "Parks is barely older than you."

I let out a dreamy sigh "And yet he's been handling a pack for so many years."

I do an internal happy dance when a muscle in Luke's jaw twitches. Take that! Only a moment later, he wipes away his expression and takes a deep breath.

"With continual support from us," Luke looks down at me from under his nose "Most of the defense plans sent to

Parks were made by me."

My expression falters "Oh."

"And if you're done making assumptions, let's go." Luke glances at the darkening sky before starting to walk again

"You started it," I mutter under my breath before following him

We keep up a fast pace and though I wanted to complain, I didn't. Ever since Luke told me the real reason why he's hell-bent on winning no matter what, I've made it my business to be as cooperative as possible.

Besides, the little detail that I will be free of my damn pack doesn't hurt either.

Rain starts getting heavier and I feel my boots being swallowed by the moist earth, our pace slows down— partially due to the darkness, partially due to the earth.

“We'll have to stop,” Luke says with an irritated sigh

“Here?” I look around the muddy forest “I'm pretty sure I don't want to be covered in leeches.”

“We can climb,” Luke takes into consideration the tall trees

“Alright,” I squint my eyes to see the trees ahead “But something bigger than these, I don't want to hear you yelping

if your branch breaks.”

“I'm not the clumsy one here.”

I walk past him, keeping my eyes on one big tree a few feet away, it should provide enough shelter and stability for the night.

“I hope that blanket isn't wet because if it isn't, I'm taking—

My scream interrupts my next words as ground slips from under my feet but unlike what I had expected, I don't fall on the earth, rather it swallows me.

In a distance, I hear someone shout my name. a moment later, I fall on the wet earth bed.

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“Bloody hell?” I push myself up with one hand, rubbing my cheek with the other

Something crashes on me, knocking out the breath from my lungs. Over the haze of pain, the scent of coffee and pine

trees waves over to me.

“Goddess, are you alright?” Luke quickly gets off me and helps me up

“A six-foot-something man just squashed me into the earth, but I’m perfectly fine.” I give him a shaky grin

I look up at the opening from where raindrops fall, a patch of dark sky visibly.

“What is this?” I look around the small cave we’d landed in

“I have no idea,” Luke says “Nor do I care to find out.”

“Too bad, Winters.” A perfectly feminine voice purrs from above

A moment later, Rebecca looks down the rabbit hole, wearing the same red cloak I’d seen her in days ago.

“You might want to know where you spent your last moments.” She grins, the expression causes my stomach to roil

“Goodbye.”

With a wave of her wand, the opening starts to close before my eyes.

“No!” I leap forward but a moment later, I’m tugged back as rocks start to fall through the Earth, blocking any path that was left

“Luke, let go!” I trash against him

“Calm down, will you?” Luke finally lets me go when the rocks stop coming

He walks over to where the entrance was, his face calculating.

“Let’s see,” Luke rolls his shoulders, I see his fingers turn to claws

Calm down, Elise. I will my heart to stop beating so fast. The walls are not closing in on you, got it? everything is going to be okay. You’re not alone here, Luke is with you. You two can figure this out.

Luke pushes aside boulder after boulder, I stay quiet, air harsh against my dry throat. Finally, I see the path clear a bit, a silver of hope enters my heart.

Only to come crashing down with another wave of boulders. I hadn’t even screamed when Luke already moved out of the way.

Panting, he staggers back so we’re standing side by side. The silence in the cave thickens and stretches. Finally,

Luke’s gaze meets mine and for the first time, I see something in them that scares me.

Uncertainty.

I swallow “Maybe she’s still out there, keeping up the spell.”

After a moment, Luke nods “The spell will wear out eventually. We’ll just have to wait a while.”

A while later, he tries again. And again. And again. For hours, Luke—and me as well, try to pry the boulders away from the entrance. Panting, both of us slide down against the earthen wall of the cave. I'm not sure if my clothes are

still wet from rain or sweat.

“Okay,” Luke huffs out “Either she’s still out there, or this spell is supposed to be this way.”

“That’s one crazy ex,” I crack a smile, breathing heavily

The corner of his mouth tugs up “To think we weren’t together.”

I feel a breathy giggle bubbling up to my mouth “Darcie would’ve done the same.”

“What can I say?” This time Luke smiles openly “I have a way of making women go mad.”

Ignoring the aching muscles, parched throats, and the looming certainty of death, we both laugh.

“They’re mad, to begin with,” I say with a lighthearted smile

“So are all the guys infatuated with you,” Luke says

I huff “No one’s infatuated with me. They’re all just lustful morons.”

Luke stares at me for a moment longer than necessary “Are you so sure?”

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I pull my legs to my chest and wrap my arms around them, for a moment words seem lost to me.

“You know, in high school,” I don’t know why I say what I say, the words just seem to wrench themselves out of my mouth “Guys from our pack used to make bets about me. Who would fool the difficult omega first?”

I lean my head back, small cynical smile tugs at my lips.

“I was young then, dumb and idiotic. Thinking I can be like others, like well-respected people. Important.” I say, reminiscence clouding my head

“Carlos told me about the bets before my first date,” I shake my head at my past stupidity. Naivety. “I cried my eyes out, but I didn’t go. Maybe that’s when we became best friends.”

I turn my face to Luke again and shrug “Slowly, surely, I’ve tested every guy who’s been nice to me. And no one was ever truly interested.”

Luke watched me with his stormy blue gaze, as if seeing me for the first time, but he doesn’t say anything. A part of me was disappointed, but every other part of me was glad he didn’t try to offer sympathy.

“I’m glad though,” I say genuinely “It would’ve been fruitless when our mates would get involved.”

“You always talk about your mate, a man you have no idea about.” Luke says “What if he isn’t the way you want him to? What if he has had relations with a lot of others?”

“I can only hope he isn’t like that,” I say, though a string of uncomfortableness coils around my heart. Then I grin at him “Even if he is, I’m going to change his player ways.”

For a moment we hold each others' gazes, I feel my face starting to warm up. Goddess, what am I doing? I'm telling

Luke, of all the people, about my past and my future hopes. This Hunt is getting to my head.

"What about you?" I perk up "Don't you want to find your mate?"

The comfortable air vanishes in an instant, Luke straightens, his features turn into taut blankness.

"No."

My eyes widen "Why?"

Luke turns his face away from me "Somewhere in this world, a girl might be thinking about her mate the way you are. I doubt she's hoping him to be a half-monster, on the path of becoming a full one."

I stare at him blankly, unsure of what to do. Lay a comforting hand on his arm? Tell him she wouldn't think that?

Instead, I do what I can do.

"You're not a monster," I say, Luke, snorts disbelievingly. I press on "And you're not going to be one. We are going to win this Hunt, and you're going to leash the beast back and everything will be better."

"How can you think like that?" Luke shakes his head

"With my brain?"

"How can you hope for all that when we're stuck in a hole, out of options?" he gestures at the boulders

“Hope is the only thing that has kept me going,” I say “I believe it will even now.”

In the dark, moist, uncomfortably small space of the cave, I feel the air shifting around us, weighed down by something I can't quite understand. Luke leans closer to me, I feel his warm breath on my face, causing my throat to parch in a very new way.

“I hope you're right, Hazel.” He brushes his fingers across my cheek

The tip of his nose touches mine and I feel my eyes flutter shut.

“Me too,” I whisper “Because I didn't survive everything else only to die in a watery ditch.”

Suddenly, the warm hand against my cheek and the breath on my face is gone. I open my eyes and blink.

Luke has pulled away from me, staring wide-eyed at somewhere in oblivion.

“Watery ditch,” he murmurs

“Umm, Luke?” I ask hesitantly “Are you okay?”

“Of course!” he s*****es up our bag and starts rummaging through it “Why didn't I think of it before?”

He pulls out our slightly drenched map and lays it on the earth. I squint my eyes to see properly.

“We were here,” Luke points out our location at the map “And only a few feet away, there's supposed to be a lake.”

My eyes widen, the realization hits me hard “We must be close to it!”

“And if we dig in that direction, we can get out.” Luke says, a dazzling grin on his face “You’re a genius Hazel, a bloody genius.”

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“This genius wants to get the hell out,” I quickly get to my feet

Luke walks towards the other side of our one-room large cave and puts his ear to the wall, probably trying to hear the water. Soon, he stops at one place and points directly above it.

“We need to dig there,” He says “I’m guessing we’re almost under the edge.”

“But you can’t reach it, neither can I,” I say, my brows furrowed

“I might have an idea.”

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“Hold still!”

I balance my feet on Luke’s shoulders, my palms flat against the cool earth above me.

“I am holding still,” Luke snaps “Hurry up!”

Right. I hold the gun with the muzzle in my hand and slam its b*** at the earth. The moist earth offers little resistance, but even though I’ve already dug a hole, I can’t be sure if we’re close. Soon enough, I’ve dug a hole so high I can barely reach it anymore.

“Are you sure?” I ask Luke yet again

“Yes,” he says “Keep digging.”

“I can’t reach it,” I huff out “It’s too high.”

“Try, Hazel.” Luke says, a hint of urgency leaks in his voice “You can do it. or rather, you have no other choice.”

I try to reach It but curse my short height, I cant!

I suppress the scream of frustration that builds in my throat. I raise the gun again but stop. An idea hits my head.

Click!

“Hazel, what are you—

Bang! Bang!

A heavy spray of water makes me fall off Luke’s shoulders and land roughly on my back, but when I sit back up, I don’t care about the pain. A wide grin comes on my face as the water streams down the hole, already pooling at our feet.

“We did it!” I squeal as Luke pulls me upright

“Almost,” Luke slings the bag across his neck and shoulder “Hold on,”

The water carries us up and up. Luke meets my gaze and I nod, already moving towards the water gushing out of the drain I made.

I plunge upwards, fighting the heavy current. My eyes clench themselves shut and though the hole isn't too big, I manage to shove myself up, breath already limited in my lungs.

I open my eyes a little, searching the dark waters for Luke, but then the dreadful realization hits me.

The hole is too small for him.

Reaching towards the vacuum, my arms look around blindly and then I feel it, the warm tingly feeling I get whenever our skin contact. I pull him up, probably detaching his arm, and pull again.

Water tries to rush into my mouth, my lungs beg for anything to put inside. Then the thing I was pulling is suddenly pulling me upward.

When we break through the surface, an uproar of sounds reaches me, my hungry lungs steal all the air they can.

Luke and I swim to the bank and flop on our backs, breathing heavily. The clouds have disappeared, leaving a chunk of the moon in the clear sky.

Finally, our breaths even out. I turn my face toward Luke at the same time as he does toward me.

"We're alive," I say "We're bloody alive!"

"Come on," Luke pushes himself up "I don't want to be anywhere near water."

I take his offered hand and get up.

"Let's get the hell away from here."

