

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 36

Chapter 36 What we always do

“You made all this for us?”

The dining table is laden with food. The plates set and chairs set. Mac n’ cheese, sandwiches, tea and coffee, omelets, fruit salad and pancakes.

“Of course,” I smile brightly “We deserve a little appreciation for coming all this way, don’t we?”

Alpha Hugo and his beta, Johnathan exchange a look before the Alpha smiles at me.

“You’re right, Milady,” he says, then pulls out a chair for me “But you must join us.”

I hold back a relieved sigh at his compliance.

“Why not?” I smile and I sit down. I glance around the table “Everyone? Should we start?”

Ethan sits down across me, Tyler seats himself as well. Alpha Brennan and his companion, Warrior Isaac also join us.

The lunch goes smooth as b***er until someone decides to be smart.

“Where is Alpha Luke?” Alpha Hugo asks

Thank universe I planned this. With a sigh, I lean back in my chair, a gla** of juice held in my hand as

though it’s wine.

“Luke and I,” my eyes flicker to Ethan for a moment “We argued. He was being difficult for no reason.”

Alpha Hugo keeps looking at me for a moment, then at Ethan before saying “I see.”

The poor soul, he’s probably thinking our team coordination isn’t strong. Well... it’s not exactly a lie but when both of us want to win so badly, we can put our differences aside.

After lunch, Ethan accompanies me back to my room, awkward silence stretches between us until we reach the door of my room.

“Elise,” my hand stops at the handle

I turn to look at Ethan again, he’s staring straight at me, a determined gleam in his eyes.

“Just so you know,” he says, without breaking the eye contact, takes my hand in his, giving it a gentle squeeze, “I

think you did the right thing. You stood up for yourself against all those higher ranks.”

He cups the side of my face and I blush like an idiot. Ethan’s features soften in a smile, his eyes clear as the sky.

“I admire you,” he says softly

“Heart-touching.”

I jump away from Ethan, face burning from embarrassment.

Luke’s unimpressed, slightly pissed face enters my vision. He’s standing with his hands behind his back, towering over Ethan by a good few inches, looking like some military general staring at a bug under his shoe.

“But I’m afraid you will have to put a leash on your feelings, Parks.” He says coldly “I have something to discuss with my partner.”

Ethan works his jaw hard, his eyes narrowed at Luke “Very well.”

But when he turns to me, he leans forward and presses a kiss on my cheek, leaving me frozen with surprise.

“I will see you in the evening, Elise.” He says before turning around and leaving

I blink, trying to piece together what just happened when Luke steers me away to his room, his face oddly taut. He

slams the door shut once we’re inside, snapping me out of my thoughts

“Did you find a map?” I ask, getting my bearings together

“No,” Luke growls lowly “And I don’t think we will.”

My brows knit together “Why?”

Luke holds my gaze, his own reflecting a hint of discontent.

“Everyone’s maps are missing.”

My eyes widen, panic swirls in my head like a rough tide.

“Or at least it appears to be that way.” Luke says “I checked every inch of all of theirs’ rooms.”

“What are we going to do?” I ask, horrified

“What we always do,” He tells me “Find a way out.”

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“How though?” I ask “What if whoever took it has already gotten rid of them? Burned them? Ripped them to shed?

Ate them?!”

Luke drags a hand down his face, rubbing his jaw “I’m thinking.”

Silence falls around us as both of us rake our heads.

“Can you make a copy? You’ve looked at it a thousand times.”

“I can only make out our path, not the traps.” Luke says “With the new map we had, it was already hard enough to avoid them.”

I worry my bottom lip “We need help.”

“What?”

I level Luke with a steely glance “We need to ally, somehow get someone to help us.”

Luke crosses his arms “Why would they?”

“Everyone is about to be shoved down the same hole,” I say “They won’t have a choice.”

“Who do you suggest?” Luke says “Parks and his beta, Anderson?”

I nod blatantly “Ethan will help, I know he would.”

“Because of you?”

I give Luke an applauded glance “Excuse me?”

“I see the way he looks at you, Hazel.” Luke says a muscle in his cheek twitches “Hell, he makes a great show of it.”

For a moment I consider hitting him on the head for being so idiotic. Alright, maybe Ethan likes me but I'm dead sure he considers the Hunt more important.

I keep my eyes on Luke, trying and failing to piece together why he's so irritated about it.

With a sigh, I walk over to him. Unthinking, my hand reaches up to rest against his cheek.

"What is wrong?" I ask, my brows furrowed "So Ethan likes me, why does it matter?"

"And you?" Luke asks "Do you like him?"

"I told you, he's my friend," I say, dropping my hand from his cheek

Luke catches my hand in his own, searching my face "That's all?"

I can't help the laugh that escapes me while taking in his worried look as if I'm about to proclaim my undying love for someone I barely know.

"Yes, that's all," I say, chuckling

Luke doesn't find it mildly amusing. He stares straight at me, I hold his gaze, patiently waiting for him to confirm that I'm not about to elope into Ethan's waiting arms.

Finally, Luke's shoulders relax, he lets go of my hand only to hold my face in both of his. His forehead falls against my own, making me stare at him, wide-eyed.

Luke takes a deep, deep breath "Good."

For some reason, my heart flutters in my chest, my skin tingling. I like it. I like how his hands feel on my face, how his scent is enveloping me, how I can see every angle of his face. Something tugs at my heart, a desire to be

closer still.

Then Luke straightens, letting go of me "Let's go make some deals."

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"We don't have our map either," Tyler says, eyes wide in shock

Luke and I are currently in Ethan's room, telling them to check if they have their map since we can't find ours.

"Oh Goddess," I pretend to be horror-struck

"That confirms it," Luke says "We've been ambushed."

"By whom?" Ethan says "This is neutral territory."

"All the more chance to get us to lower our guard," Luke says

"We need to report this," Ethan says

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Luke raises his eyebrow at him "What proof do we have that someone stole our maps? By complaining, we will only be pointing fingers at the Alpha Supreme's hospitality. I cant see how that ends well."

"I might know what to do." Tyler says, surprising us all "Stone was telling me about shifting our weapons and some things to the top floor of the main castle building. Somethings regarding the hunt from the Alpha Supreme's main office."

"It might have this year's Hunt map!" I say

"Or it might not." Luke pops my bubble of optimism "But it's our best bet."

Just then, the door knocks, and a maid comes in. she offers us a small bow before saying;

"The party is about to start, we request all of you to come to the main castle building."

She turns to focus her eyes on me "Come with me, Ms. Attwood, we need to get you ready."

I look down at my attire "I am ready. This should be enough, right?"

"Nonsense, Miss." She takes my arms and starts pulling me forward "Come along."

An arm wraps around my waist and tugs me back, making her hands fall off me.

"I will be at her room to pick her up," Luke says, his voice mildly threatening "How long until you're done?"

The maid swallows thickly "Not long. Only a few hours—

"Thirty minutes."

"T-Thirty minutes?" the maid squeaks out, her green eyes the size of the moon

"Is that a problem?" Luke growls lowly

"N-No." the maid shutters, then turns to look at me in a whole new light "Come along, Miss."

She hurries out of the door. I look at Luke, trying to hold back my smile as I give him an unimpressed glance.

"You want me to look hideous, don't you?" I ask

"I'm just speaking logic, Hazel." He says "It shouldn't take you more than thirty minutes to shower and get dressed.

You don't need makeup, you don't need jewelry. Why waste time?"

"Miss Attwood?" the maid peeks in again "Hurry, please."

"Coming," I say, unwrapping Luke's arm from around me and hurriedly follow her

Gloria, as the maid told me her name, helped me get ready in record time, and just as thirty minutes were over, a very familiar bossy Alpha entered my room, ready to beat someone into pulp.

"I'm alive," I say, getting up from in front of the dresser "You can stop glaring."

"This is what my neutral face looks like,"

I can't help but laugh a little. Since when did Luke become funny? I have no idea. Maybe it's just the fact that I have nothing better to laugh about and my nerves are skyrocketing.

"I thought this was middle thing," he says, raising an eyebrow at my dress

"Gloria said I'd be more comfortable in this," I soothe the non-existent creases on the pale gold dress I'm wearing

I walk over to him, trying not to trip on my heels. Luke is dressed simply in a plain white shirt, dark jeans, and a jacket. Hmm, I wonder why they had us dressed in modern clothes.

"And the fact that I look hell-hot doesn't bother either." I give him a bright smile

"You're certainly easy on the eyes," I expect Luke to offer me his arm but instead he wraps an arm around my waist and starts walking "A little too much."

“What now?” I ask, trying to ignore how my heart beats faster due to our proximity “How do we reach the top floor?”

“Tyler is up to that,” Luke says “He’s going to check if there’s anything useful there.”

“And if there is?” I ask, we descend a staircase and I feel my eyes widen

“Then we take back what’s been taken from us.”

Clary was right when she said there’s a party here. The ballroom in front of me has been converted into some kind of club. Lights flashing, music pulsing, the smell of alcohol already thick in the air.

I feel Luke tense beside me “Stay close.”

I open my mouth to tell him to stop being such an old man and let me have some fun when I see Ethan walking over to us.

“Anything new?” Luke asks him, I notice how his hold on me tightens. Jealously alert!

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Ethan notices it as well, but says nothing about it “There are guards at the floor entrance.”

“Couldn’t he have taken them out?” Luke’s eyes narrow

“Five armed men against one who can’t even access his wolf?” Ethan gives him a hard look “by all means, Winters.

You can go and try.”

Luke’s eyes flicker to me for a bare second. I take his arm off my waist. There are better things to do than keeping an eye on me.

“You go ahead,” I say “I can handle myself.”

Luke looks around the club like a ballroom, determination embedded in his voice when he says; “I’m not leaving you here.”

“You can’t be thinking of taking her up there,” Ethan says

Luke narrows his eyes, glaring daggers at him as he takes a step forward but I act before he could start a brawl.

Of their own volition, my feet hold themselves up on their toes, my hands wrapped around Luke's arm and my lips fall on his cheek.

"I can handle a party," I say in his ear, over the blasting music "And you can handle five armed men. Let's both do what we do best."

I let go of him, grinning at his surprised face, and then promptly make my way through the crowd.

Time to have some fun.

I reach the DJ and manage to get a word in his ear. He grins at me, his teeth too bright against his tan skin before he puts on my song.

"Elise!" Ethan barely catches up to me

"Come on!" I grab his arm and drag him to the dance floor

"You want to dance right now?" he asks, a surprised laugh follows

"You can't expect me to face certain doom without having a little fun," I laugh

"And the fact that your partner is on his way to get beaten up doesn't bother you?"

I huff "Luke is probably going to do all the beating there."

"You think so?" Ethan raises an eyebrow

I shake my head and grin "I know so."

For a short while, we stay on the dance floor but then the stupid heels start hurting my feet. Ethan and I walk over to the food tables and I slump down in a chair, taking off my heels.

I look at the entrance, eyebrows furrowed.

"What's taking so long?" Ethan says what was thinking

"Maybe we should check," I say, getting to my bare feet

"You stay here," Ethan says "I'll go and see."

"But—

"Stay put, Elise." And he's gone

I stomp my foot on the marble floor before I promptly sit back down in my chair. Yeah, just leave me here to be eaten up by worry!

“Elise!” I look up to see Clary

“Hey,” I smile at her “What’s up?”

“Nothing much,” Clary shrugs “Want to hang out with us?”

“Us?” I raise my eyebrow

As if on cue, three other girls come there. One of them, a girl with a blond pixie cut smiles at me warmly.

“You must be Elise,” she says “Clary told us about you. We’re going over to the poolside, wanna join us?”

“There’s a pool?!” I stare at them wide-eyed

Clary grins “I’ll take that as yes.”

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 37

Chapter 37 In the end

✧ Luke’s POV ✧

I see her disappear in the crowd, my skin still tingling where she touched it.

As much as I trust Hazel, I don’t trust anyone else with her. but she’s right, we need to act fast lest we lose our only chance.

With a deep breath, I turn my gaze to Parks, making sure to put every bit of authority in my soul in that look.

Considering the irritated gleam in his eyes, I suppose it’s working.

“Keep your eyes on her,” I say, my voice hard even to my ears “And I’ll be keeping mine on you.”

“Are you so sure I need to be watched, Winters?” he crosses his arms “I’m not the untamed one here.”

A growl claws at my throat to let it out, I can almost feel my fingers elongating. The beast hasn’t had a dose of

wolfsbane in a long while and it's eager to break through the chains of restraint.

"You shouldn't even be allowed on this Hunt." Parks says, scorn obvious in his tone "Let alone with Elise as your

companion."

My hands are itching to close around something.

"You're the biggest threat to her—

Unbidden, my hand reaches out to grab him by the shirt front. I relish the flicker of unadulterated fear that crosses his face, even if for a second.

"So you know what I might become," I say slowly, my voice rough around the edges like a jagged knife "What I am capable of doing, still you're standing here, spewing out b*****. I must say Parks, you're a bigger idiot than I gave you credit for."

I let go of him, he staggers back. Instantly, he straightens himself, loathing clear on his face.

"Stay in your limits, Pup." I look down at him "The next time I have to remind you wouldn't be so painless."

I turn around, willing the beast to recede. I need to get it together, we need to escape this place before any more

'incidents' decide to happen. I need to get Hazel out of here.

My fingers turn back to normal, reason takes over instinct as I go farther away from the noise in the ballroom.

I find Anderson in the middle of a staircase.

"Where are you going?" he asks, raising an eyebrow at me

"To get to that damn office," I say

"You can be thinking of taking all the guards out." Anderson says "Even if you somehow do, there's no saying the map is there."

"Just the fact that there are five guards outside one door leads me to think it's there."

"Look, Winters," he says "As much as I would love to punch someone in the face given our situation, we need to think this through."

I cross my arms across my chest “I’m listening.”

“If we take out the guards,” he says “They see our faces, they will report as just as they get the chance. Even with the

map, both of our teams will be disqualified for compromising neutral territory.”

As much as I hate to admit it, he’s right. We need a plan, a diversion.

“Let’s have a look at the battleground.” I walk past him to the upper floor, Anderson follows behind silently

We reach the top floor and peek in the hallway Anderson points out. Five guards, two near the big double door, two across from them, one at the other end of the hallway. Armed with rifles, their wolves are probably ready for action.

We move away, out of earshot before he says “Well? What do you suggest?”

“We need a distraction.”

“I don’t see your partner anywhere.”

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I narrow my eyes, his lip tug upwards “Calm down, Winters. I’m saying she’s usually more than ready for this type of thing.”

“Keep your words clear when you talk to me,” About her “You might end up regretting talking in riddles, Anderson.”

I turn around the information about the guards in my head, a**essing it from every angle. My mind takes each

obstacle, searching for potential solutions.

“Follow my lead.”

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I meet Anderson’s eyes across the hallway and nod. He slams down a vase on the granite floor. I see one of the guards move forward and spin towards the corridor I’m standing in.

I cross the hallway and glance out of the other ending, where the solitary guard is standing. I can faintly make out the conversation Anderson is having with the guard, doing a surprisingly good imitation of a drunk guest.

I grab the guard by his throat and yank him towards me. Instantly, I hold him in a headlock. He struggles for a moment, then his body goes limp. I let him down and grab his gun, hoping Anderson has managed to do the same.

The first shot rings.

Anderson's made his move.

The next moment gunshots ring in the air, bullets ricochet everywhere and in theory, the sounds should not reach the

the ground floor over the loud sounds of music.

I take out the two guards near the door, Anderson takes out the other one across them.

The smell of blood hangs heavy in the air, I pick up a stray bullet. Not silver. They should survive easily.

Anderson and I pull down the handkerchiefs from our faces, the ones we lifted from a nearby room, and he tries to pull the door open.

"Locked." He throws his hands up

I look down at the rifle in his hands, we could certainly shoot the lockout but that would leave too much to open. I

don't want every other team to have access to the maps too— that is, if they are in here.

Before either of us could think of a better solution, a familiar face comes into view.

Parks glances at the unconscious guards for a moment, then at the door.

"Didn't find the map?" he asks

Anderson shakes his head "The door's locked."

"Where's Hazel?" I ask

"I told her to stay back at the party."

"You what?" I glare at him, eyes narrowed

"You wanted me to bring her here?" He motions to our surrounding

"I told you to keep an eye on her, damnit!" I shove him aside and start towards the stairs

"Why are you over-reacting?" Parks says from behind me, I hear his and Anderson's footsteps behind me "What can happen to her there?"

"Anything." You don't know her as I do

I take a sharp turn towards the ballroom, music bustling through the air. the smell of alcohol heavily mixed with perfumes makes it harder to find her scent.

"Look around," I say to the other two "Whoever finds her waits for the others at the entrance."

I don't wait for an answer and start walking through the crowd. Goddess, she could be anywhere, and knowing her, it's probably in some kind of problem.

My eyes scan the ma** of bodies fruitlessly. I get out of the crowds and search the sidelines. Where are you? Almost about to turn away, I spot a door at the farther ending of the ballroom. I try to open it and it gives away easily.

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A narrow hallway enters my vision and I sense it then; the faint trail of gardenia flowers and rain. Why the hell should she come here?

My mind instantly conjures up the worst possibilities as I sprint through the hallway, faint sounds reach my ear, and I

see a speck of light at the far end.

When I come out, my eyes take in the detail of the place. A gilded room, high curtains of the windows, sofas and

showpieces littered across the marble floor but in the major space of the room is taken up by a pool, the steaming water fogs the air.

A laugh reaches my ears and my snaps in the direction of the sound.

I find her sitting in a group of boys and girls, legs hanging in the water, a gla** held loosely in her hand as she throws

her head back and laughs again.

I make my way towards her, relieved, irritated, angry.

How could she be here, without telling anyone, when the situation is so dire? Didn't she think how worried I'd be for her?

But as I got closer, I realize how sloppy her movements are, how drawling her voice is. Oh moon, no. Not right now—

Hazy, golden eyes lift to my face and a breathtaking smile greet me. I halt in my steps for a moment.

“Luke!” Hazel waves at me animatedly

The three boys and two girls around her turn to look at me as well, their gazes ranging from confused to annoyed to lusty.

Hazel stands up from her place but before she could walk over to me and quite possibly fall due to her state, I reach her.

She throws her arms around me “You’re alive!”

I tell myself to keep in mind my anger, my annoyance. To tell her just how stupid it was to come here and on top of that, getting drunk, but all that floats away but just seeing that she’s alright.

I sigh. Goddess, this girl makes me act strange.

Wrapping my arms around her, I straighten her slouched frame “Why wouldn’t I be alive?”

She looks up at me with doe hazel eyes, eyebrows furrowed “Didn’t you go on some dangerous mission? I was waiting for you, but you didn’t come back. In the end, I had to get myself some happy juice.”

“Come on,” I say “We’re going back now.”

I expected her to retaliate but Hazel surprised me by nodding, I shift my hold on her so my arm is around her

shoulders and I hold her hand with my other.

“Elise,” One of the girls says “You should stay for a while. Won’t introduce us to your friend?”

Hazel gasps, tipsily turning around to look at her “I almost forgot!”

“This is Luke, my partner in crime.” She says “Luke, these are the nice people who didn’t let me get bored or worried. Clary, Emily, Cameron, Freddie and, what was it again? Oh and Zander.”

“That’s all the introduction you’ll give us?” Emily says, eyeing me like candy. The girl is lucky she’s drunk

otherwise, the look on my face would probably hurt “What else is your partner like?”

“Sorry Em,” Hazel says apologetically “That information is confidential. Bye!”

She turns to me “Aren’t we going?”

We’d almost crossed the room when she stops a look of realization on her face “My shoes!”

I look down at her feet, only now realizing she’s not wearing her shoes. Hazel looks across the room before she

points out a sofa where she’d probably taken them off.

“You go,” she tells me “I’ll just be back real quick.”

“I’m coming with you.” I’m not letting you out of my sight again

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“Then don’t bother me by saying hurry up!” Hazel says “Putting on shoes is a concentrating task.”

I roll my eyes despite the upward tilt of my lips. Hazel promptly sits down on the sofa and starts putting her shoes on.

Or that’s what I think this is.

“Get on!” she mutters, yanking the shoe on her foot “What is wrong with you things? You were fitting so well a while ago.”

“Maybe that has something to do with putting on the wrong one, Hazel.”

She huffs and flips her hair over her shoulder “I know which shoe goes in which foot. Maybe I just need to clear my head.”

She grabs a box of mint from a side table and tosses two in her mouth “Right, now I can fix this.”

She again fails to distinguish between the left and right shoe. I pinch the bridge of my nose and let out a breath. We don’t have time for this.

I crouch down and take the shoes from her, her skin is cold from sitting in the water.

Hazel giggles as I slid the shoes on her feet, I look up at her, eyebrow raised.

“This is like Cinderella,” she says “but you’re better looking than the prince.”

Unbidden, a thought hits my head. I should not be thinking about this, I should be thinking about how to open that door, I should be thinking that those guards might wake up and all of this would be for nothing but still the words

wretch themselves out of my mouth;

“What am I like?”

“That’s confidential information.”

“Why so?” I ask, somehow my hand finds its way towards hers, holding it gently

Lycans are naturally stronger than werewolves, and I can easily bruise a Lycan with a bit of force. I always have to be careful while holding her, the barest bit of pressure would hurt her. It’s like handling gla**.

The gla** might cut more than it breaks.

“I had to spend more than a month staying with you day and night to gather this information,” Hazel says

“Well, it is about me,” I say, my voice almost soft “I have the right to know.”

“If you put it that way...” Hazel looks around, then ushers me closer, leaning down herself

Her face is inches from mine, featured schooled into perfect seriousness.

“You’re snappy, and bossy and demanding.” She says I can almost feel my facial muscles wanting to form a scowl “And you never look up from that damned map.

“And you can beat anyone up without a second thought. You only ever think about this Hunt and do anything to win, even if that means flirting with a witch.”

I didn’t think of myself as so dishonorable.

“But,” Hazel brushes her fingers across my cheek, her golden eyes following their movement “You’re different to me... you don’t say what you don’t mean, you don’t do what you don’t want to. You may act indifferent, but you care. In protecting me, respecting me, treating me like an equal, you show me that you care.”

She pulls her hand away, a little laugh escapes her. I stare in confusion, wondering why the sudden change in mood.

"I wonder how long it will last," She says with a shake of her head

"My care for you?" I ask, she nods "Why?"

"People tend to back away and leave when they realize I have emotions other than happy or optimistic." She says

"You think I'm like those people?"

When she looks at me again, her smile is almost sad, almost longing.

"Darling, in the end, they all leave."

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 38

Chapter 38 The most lethal one

Elise's POV

My good angle pats my cheek, my bad angle facepalms herself.

"What are you telling him?!" she says, waving around her poker "That stuff's personal."

"Shut up," my good angle rebukes her "sometimes it's best to let the feels out."

But I'm not paying attention to them, my attention is focused on Luke. He's staring at me like I'm Hunt's map.

Priceless, something he never wants to lose.

He brushes my hair away from my face and leans forward. For some reason, I stay still, some kind of anticipation

holding me in place.

"You'll be surprised by how stubborn I can be, Hazel." He says

"That's an idiotic thing to be stubborn about."

"You make me act like an idiot."

A breath of laughter leaves my mouth "I must be a witch."

He's so close, if I move inch, my lips would brush against his. How would it feel? To let the walls crumble down?

"That you are, Hazel." Luke says "The most lethal one."

I feel my eyes flutter shut, his warm breath on my face.

Nothing happens.

The next moment, Luke tugs me up and starts walking towards the hallways that lead to... where does it lead to again? Oh well, seems like we'll just have to find out.

I look up at Luke, confused. Why does he look so tense? Why won't he look at me?

Loud sounds reach me and I realize we're back in the club.

"Oh my moon," I say, gripping Luke's arm "That's my favorite song!"

I take a step towards the dance floor, the lights blinding, but the next moment, Luke steers me away.

"We don't have time for dancing," He says "We need to go."

"Go where?" I give him a look. Why did I ever think he's nice?

"Oh thank moon," Two Ethans and Tylers walk over to us "I was afraid you'd never find her."

"Finally," I roll my eyes "Now that everyone's here, can anyone tell me what the hell is happening?"

The five of them ignore me. The twin Tylers turn to Luke and start talking about some unconscious guards the twins have locked in a room or something.

"Good," Luke says "We'll check up on that lock just after we drop her to her room."

"Her?" I blink fifty times "We have another girl in our team? Why didn't anyone tell me?"

"Why don't you meet her?" Luke says, starting to walk, taking me along "She's waiting in your room."

I nod, eager to meet this new arrival. Why didn't I notice before? Have these idiots been treating her like a damsel in distress too? Oh heavens, is she a damsel in distress? We won't get along if she is.

By the time we reach my room, Luke is practically dragging me. I don't mind it though, his arms feel nice around me.

So warm and strong.

"This girl will get herself crushed," my bad angle mutters

"I think its cute," my good angle says

"Go away you two," I mutter

"Us?" Twin Ethans ask in sync, looking at twin Tylers

"Not you four," I wave my hand dismissively "I'm talking to my angles, they're annoying."

"Hey," My bad angle scowls just like Luke

Luke sits me on the bed, I feel a wave of sleepiness crash over me.

"So, where's the new girl?" I look around the empty room. Is she in the bathroom?

"She'll be here shortly," Luke says to me "Why don't you sleep while she's not here?"

"Hmm," I put my finger on my chin "I am sleepy..."

"See?" Luke says "If you're sleepy while meeting her, it'll be really rude."

I nod. Luke is smart, he's probably right this one time.

I see the twin Ethans and Tylers go to the door and out, Luke follows them.

"You idiot!" my bad angel says "They're fooling you! leaving you behind!"

I bolt upright, the muddled words from Tyler and Luke's conversation come back to me.

"Hey!" I march up to Luke "You b*****! You think you can just leave me here?"

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He exchanges a look with Ethan and Tyler. Hmm, I guess I scared away their twins.

"Hazel, calm down." Luke says "You need to stay here."

"I won't!" I stomp my foot "I am not some little girl! I can handle myself."

"As you did at the party?" he crosses his arms

I glare at him “You don’t want me to repeat that it’s your fault I got the happy juice.”

“Elise, love,” Ethan puts his hands on my shoulders “It’s dangerous for you to go, please understand.”

“Oh shut up!” I step away from him “You three need to swallow your egos and include me in this plan.”

The door bursts open, a man comes in swaying on his feet. Everyone except for me tenses, Goddess these people need to relax.

The man at the door opens his mouth, blood comes out and drips from his chin. Then he falls, face first on the

floor, the hilt of a knife protruding from between his shoulder blades.

Luke crouches down in front of him and pulls the knife out, blood dripping from the sharp blade.

I stare wide-eyed at the corpse, faintly remembering who it is. Alpha Hugo.

“Elise, love, don’t look—

My eyes drift away from the corpse and towards Luke, towards the silhouette in the doorway

“Watch out!” words wretch their way out of my mouth

The next instant, Luke is tackling down the black-clad figure, his hand comes down, and a sickening thud! reaches my ears.

A riot of sounds reaches me, the next moment, I’m being dragged out of the room, Luke’s hand like a vice on my arm.

“Who was that?” Ethan is saying

Luke gives him a controlled glare “Someone trying to kill us.”

“Where are we going now?” I ask

“The castle’s top floor,” Tyler turns to a staircase “That’s where our maps and weapons are.”

The lights go out.

I bump into Luke as he halts to a stop. The moonlight from the windows illuminates little patches of the granite floor.

I see a black figure move through one of them.

A scream rips its way out of my mouth. There's a woosh! through the air, followed by a groan and a dull thud.

Luke grabs both my arms, I briefly wonder where his knife went, and opens a random door in the hallway. All of us shuffle in and I realize it's a broom's closet, barely big enough for us.

"I can hear them," Luke whispers "fifteen, maybe more."

"Then pray they don't open this door." Ethan whispers

I can't see anything in the dark, I'm almost squashed against the wall. The walls are so tight, unbidden memories assault my head.

"Really?" I'd asked Darcie "We're friends now?"

"Of course," she said, the other girls with her giggled "We're taking you to our secret headquarters right now."

I nodded, my thirteen-year-old head swimming with new pride. The beta's daughter was befriending me. I could imagine the sneers and glares going away. I could imagine my mom being proud that I'm finally getting along. She always told me this pack is our home, and I have to treat it as such.

"Now close your eyes, Elise." Darcie said, "Promise you won't open them, so we know you're trustworthy."

I nodded, determined to prove that I am trustworthy. They led me through the pack mansion and then stopped.

The next moment I have shoved away, my eyes flew open and I heard a door slamming shut. It was dark, so dark I couldn't make out my own hands.

"D-Darice?" I called, hands held out "What is going on?"

Roars of laughter reached me "This is where you belong, little b****."

"This-This isn't funny," I found a handle "Open the door!"

"Why?" Darcie asked from outside "We're putting you in a coffin, soon they're going to bury you six feet under."

I told myself she's lying, I told myself it couldn't be a coffin, but she was the beta's daughter. She could do that. They would bury me alive.

"Open the door!" I was screaming then, pounding hard at what I was desperately telling myself was a door

The walls were closing in on me, I couldn't breathe. The dark was overwhelming. Tears streamed down my face, but no one saw, no one heard my screams. The pack adults were off to a meeting. They couldn't hear me.

'Would it matter if they could?'

Those words settled like ice in my bones.

I screamed anyway, I cried anyway, I pounded the door anyways. I could feel my head getting heavy, my eyes

dropping, my heart pumping madly.

I numbly registered falling and the last thought in my head was;

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'This is not my home.'

Hours later, I would wake up in the packed medical room, my mom by my side, no one to believe that Darcie had locked me up. They thought I had somehow managed to lock myself.

Laying in a hospital wing, my mother's head laying on the mattress, her hand clutching mine. She believed me when I told her, but she couldn't do anything about it. I pretended to be asleep when she fell asleep crying.

That night I knew this isn't the life I want, these aren't the people I will live with.

I will find the happiness and freedom I deserve, we deserve. And if I'm not handed that, I will take it by force.'

I can hear my ragged breaths, I press a hand down my chest, trying to push out the air trapped in my lungs. I blink and blink and blink but I can't see anything. The dark will swallow me whole.

"Hazel," a voice is saying, so faint, so far away

"Open the door," I scream, a whimper escapes my mouth

“Elise, what—

I push through the barriers, trying to reach the handle. I need to get out. They’re going to bury me alive.

My hands graze the cool metal but before I could open it, something wraps around me and pull me back.

“Hazel, what are you doing?”

“Let me out,” I struggle against its hold, my voice raspy, “I said, let me out!”

Someone hisses “Attwood, this isn’t the time for this.”

“What is wrong with her?” a worried voice says, I cant see, I cant see, I can’t see who it is

Then I’ve turned around, something warm on my arms, like hands. I’m not alone.

“Hazel,” Hands-on my face. Warm breath on my skin. “Elise, what’s wrong?”

I know that voice, I rake my head to attach it to a face, an image.

“Luke,” I breathe out, my hands reach out blindly and I hold onto him desperately “Luke, get me out of here.”

“Hazel, I can’t.”

I hate the sharp sting behind my eyes, but it’s too dark. No one will see. People never see.

“I can hear them coming,” a voice hisses “Don’t make any sound!”

“Luke, I can’t s-stay here,” Who is this scared stranger speaking from my mouth?

“Please.”

“They’re here,” someone frantically whispers yells

I open my mouth to say something but Luke’s voice reaches me first.

“Don’t slap me for this,” I can feel the words being breathed on my lips “At least not in front of them.”

Then something warm pressed against my lips. Not a finger this time.

The thoughts in my head evaporate like water on red hot metal, the steam clouds my mind.

For some reason, my eyes fall shut and I can't see anything but the dark is not treating this time, it's secretive,

private. My mind shuts down and I can't think anything. I can only feel, feel, feel something warm and soft strangely moving against my lips, in a way that makes my heartbeat with the speed of a bullet train, makes my lungs forget how they work and my stomach fill with b***erflies.

And the oddest of it all, it makes my lips move in a rhythm.

I feel two arms wrap around me and lift me, my hands skillfully find their way around something before they travel into something soft like hair.

A growl rumbles through me. Strange, I'm not growling.

Then I hear something, so quiet I don't know if it was meant for me to hear;

"Mine."

For some reason, that word tugs at my madly beating heart, as if in agreement.

Someone coughs— Loudly.

The pressure against my lips is gone. My eyes flutter open, someone has opened the door to let the light in. My eyes meet dark blue ones looking up at me. I blink.

"How did you become so short?" I ask Luke

I feel my feet touch the ground again and Luke's height magically goes back to normal. I sway on my feet and hold onto him for support.

"Why do my legs feel like jelly?" I ask, eyebrows furrowed in confusion "Did I black out and drop on my face? Cuz I

feel my lips tingling."

Ethan doesn't answer me and keeps glaring at Luke, Tyler shifts on his feet, looking distinctly uncomfortable. Luke

simply clears his throat before asking;

"Are they gone?"

Ethan works his jaw hard, his poor teeth “Yes, quite a few minutes ago.”

I step away from Luke and stumble out of the small place. The lights are back on. I take a few deep breaths, but I

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already feel calmer. Maybe the strange blackout helped.

“Maybe they went away—

A gruff voice cuts me off;

“Get them!”

Then we’re running again, Luke suddenly halts to a stop. I register myself being given into Ethan’s arms.

“Go,” Luke says “I’ll hold them back, keep her safe.”

“Luke, what are you—

“Hazel, trust me,” Luke says “I need you to stay safe. I’ll be back before you know it.”

Loud footsteps echo in the empty hallway, Luke’s face gives away nothing since his words have slapped all the panic on mine.

“No,” I’m shaking my head “No, I’m not leaving you here!”

Luke turns to Ethan “Go, don’t turn back.”

With a nod, he swings me over his shoulder “Sorry, Elise. This isn’t a time to argue.”

“Wha— let me down!” I punch his back hard, he huffs a bit but keeps running “Let me go, you b*****!”

My head spins as he takes the stairs, my ribs aching as I struggle to slip from his hold. Then I’m suddenly put on my feet in front of a double door.

“How do we open this darn thing?” Tyler rattles the handles

I shake my numbing head, whatever this door leads to is safer than here. Luke said to stay safe. That b***** , when he comes back I’m going to strangle him with my bare hands. But I have to be alive for that.

I a**ess the lock, putting my eye on the keyhole. It cant be so hard.

"I need something like long needles," I say

"What?" Ethan says, his eyebrows raised "You can open it?"

"I used to pick locks all the time," I say "But I don't have my lockpicks."

"You what?"

"Have you gone deaf, Parks?"

I whirl around, Luke's coming up the stairs, his once white shirt now red with blood. His lip is bleeding, so is his brow, but if he can walk over to me so fast, he must be fine.

In a single swift movement, he pulls a pin out of my hair, then the next.

"Will this do?" He says, holding them for me

"It'll have to," I unfold their bends, making them into clumsy long metal picks

I get to work, my movements are not as precise as they should be. I can hear someone coming up the stairs.

"Hurry," Tyler says, I kick out in his direction without looking, the sudden 'Omph' tells me I hit him right

"Brace yourselves," Luke says as the footsteps get louder

Click!

"To be amazed by me," I shove the door open, everyone hurries in

Luke bolts the door, only moments later I hear people pounding on it.

"s***ter," Luke says, already moving towards a desk by the far wall "Look for the maps, weapons, anything useful."

All of us spread across the heavily packed room, shuffling through boxes and cartons, shelves, and showpieces.

The pounding on the door becomes strategized. They're coming at it all at once.

"Nothing," I say, shoving aside the last box against the wall I was searching, a hangover partially upon me

"I found something," Tyler says, he's holding up two belts, two revolvers in each of their's holdings "They're loaded."

"There's no map here," Ethan says, running a hand through his hair

The door moves violently, almost breaking off its hinges. I look down a window, in the pale moonlight, the earth is impossibly far. We just trapped ourselves.

"Luke?" I look at him, fear knocking at my mind's door, or maybe that's the hangover

Ethan and Tyler turn to look at him as well, but he's saying nothing, doing nothing as he stands over the desk, palms flat on the polished wooden top.

The door rattles again. It won't last long.

"We're done," Tyler says, his shoulders slumping

"Not yet we're not," Luke says he meets my eyes across the room, there's uncertainty in them, but also a promise.

"Turn off the lights."

And we're enveloped by darkness again.

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Forget manners

The door bursts open.

About eight men shuffle inside, rifles in their hands, black masks on their faces. The open door lets light into the darkroom.

I feel the revolver in my hand, testing my grip. I wait until all of them are inside, moving from between the maze of heavy shelves we made just after the door.

I hold up the revolver and pull the trigger to give the signal.

A loud rumble shakes the floor as all the shelves collapse on the black-clad figures. Luke, Ethan, and Tyler come out from over the heap of shelves, our ambushers groaning and struggling beneath the wood.

"Come on," Luke grabs my arm, racing down the hallways, we take a sharp turn towards the tower we were staying in

Luke bursts into his room, Ethan and Tyler turn towards their own. He yanks a bag out from under his bed and then without waiting for me, turns to my room.

“We need to get the hell out of here before they come back,” Luke says, opening my closet and stuffing clothes in the bag

“Wait, you knew?” I asked wide-eyed as he slings it over his shoulder

“I suspected,” he says “And I trust my instinct.”

“The exits must be locked,” Ethan says, as he and Tyler come inside “I saw guards moving there when we went to the party.”

“That won’t be a problem,” Luke says, he bolts the door of my room and strides towards the window

“We’re on the second floor,” he says, looking down “We should be able to make it.”

Tyler goes first, then Ethan. I bite my bottom lip hard, staring down at the ground hesitantly. Luke turns to me;

“Hazel, we have to go.” He puts a hand on my shoulder and squeezes

“I know,” I mumble, my fingernails dig in my palms

“Jump, I’ll be right after you.”

“What if I fall?”

Luke takes a breath as if it’s costing him to say; “Parks will catch you.”

I swallow thickly “What if he can’t?”

A beat of silence pa**es between us.

“If I go first,” Luke says, quietly “Will you trust me to catch you?”

I turn to look at him, his dark stormy gaze meets mine. Since when have I a**ociated this face with trust? Since when

have I started to believe the words spoken by this voice?

I take a shaky breath “You will catch me?”

Luke keeps staring at me for a moment, his face impa**ive granite.

He takes my hand in his and presses a kiss to my knuckles “I would never let you fall, Hazel.”

Someone pounds on the door, I jump away from Luke. He meets my eyes for a second, then leaps down from the window, landing neatly on his feet. Luke opens his arms for me, my heart jumps to my throat.

The pounding on the door intensifies. I look back at it, I look back at Luke.

Trust him, I close my eyes and sit on the windowsill, Just trust him, Elise.

The door slams open.

I jump.

The wind lifts my hand, gravity s***s me down and I brace myself for the fall, for the agony that will follow, for the broken bones and bruises.

Then the wind stops, my hair falls back down, my arms reach out instinctively to hold onto something for support but

I refuse to open my eyes.

“Elise,” A shiver goes down my spine, “I told you I won’t let you fall, Hazel.”

I open my eyes to find Luke staring down at me, the intensity of his gaze makes my heart squirm in place.

“Let’s get the hell out of here,” I say

The barest smile flickers across his face and he puts me to my feet, interlocking his fingers with mine.

“What now?” I ask “We don’t have the map.”

“I think I know where to go,” Ethan says “Follow me.”

We keep a fast pace, even though I’m wearing heels, I can walk just fine. It’s beyond me how they are so comfortable.

Probably magic.

My head starts pulsing with the hangover headache, my eyes dropping, my limbs telling me I have to sleep lest I pa** out.

“How further do we have to go?” I ask and repress a yawn

“Just a few miles,” Ethan glances at me “Are you alright?”

My back straightens, my face coming taut with focus and will “I’m fine.”

I can feel Luke’s eyes on me but I refuse to let him know I’m tired and my head is about to explode into bits. I won’t let these higher-ups think I’m a weak little girl.

We walk on and on, I can feel every single muscle in my body pulsing with strain. My jaw tightens as I push forward,

I’m sure if I stop for a moment, my legs will shake.

Come on, Elise! There’s only like what? A few miles to go? You can do this! Remember you will, your

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determination, your—

“Hazel,” a voice whispers in my ear

I yelp in surprise, jumping away from the source, my heel clad feet stumble in the uneven earth and I fall directly in

my behind.

I turn to him with a death glare “What the hell, Luke?”

He gives me a composed look and crosses his arms “I was going to tell you to walk carefully from here onwards.”

I narrow my eyes “Thank you so much.”

Before I could get up on my own, he takes my arms and stands me up, I sway a little on my feet. Crap! They’re all going to know I’m about to collapse.

“Did you hurt your ankle again?” Luke says before I could answer, he lets out an irritated sigh “How many times do

I need to tell you to be careful. We can’t stop right now.”

He stares at me for a moment, a thoughtful expression on his face. Then he looks up and murmurs; “I can’t believe

I’m doing this,”

He lets go and turns around, crouching down. I stare at him, applauded. Is he really... offering to carry me?

“Well?” a very familiar, hard, and impatient voice says “Will do you the honors?”

“Winters, if you don’t want to,” Ethan says “I would gladly help her.”

“No need,” I say with a dismissive wave of my hand “Luke made me fall so he will have to face the consequences.”

I thank my stars that this dress is not tight and I’m wearing black leggings, otherwise I’d have rather crawled than take a back ride. Our little crew starts walking again, I sigh in comfort, sleep starts taking a harder toll on my senses.

“I noticed what you did, Winters,” I whisper, mindlessly lowering my head so my cheek rests against Luke’s hair

He doesn’t answer for a few moments, I content myself with the fact that he wouldn’t. my eyes flutter shut, sleep

almost has me in its embrace when I hear him say;

“Good.”

...

“Hazel,” someone’s shaking my shoulder gently

I grunt and snuggle deeper in the soft surface, shooing the hand away.

“Hazel, get up.” That annoying hand is now caressing my cheek, but I don’t mind it “Or you’re not hungry?”

My eyes fly open, I see Luke standing over me he pulls back his hand.

“Now that you’ve mentioned food, maybe I can get up after all.” I push myself up the mattress

Wait, mattress?

I look around, only to realize we’re in a room. Not a very good room, mind you. the walls are cracked wood, the roof full of cobwebs, window panes so covered in dirt, they’re almost grey.

“Where are we?” I ask, sitting upon the plain, single bed

“Parks had information about a witch’s house in the forest,” Luke sits down beside me
“It’s abandoned for the Hunt.

They were heading here when they were ambushed, but stumbled upon that castle instead.”

I nod. No wonder this place looks like crap, it hasn't been cleaned in weeks.

I turn my eyes to Luke again “What now? What about our maps?”

“Parks and I are trying to recreate something at least fifty percent as accurate,” He says “It's shouldn't take long, we

can leave on our ways from tomorrow.”

Tomorrow. So, I have a day to get my s*** together. I fiddle with the sheets, embarra**ed out of my mind.

“So, umm,” I mumble “Thanks for not letting me get all of us killed.”

Luck c***s his head to a side, his brows pulled together “What?”

My face heats up. Crap, he didn't even remember, why did I have to say that?

“You know,” I shrug “In the closet.”

We're enveloped by thick silence. Goddess, why did I have to get drunk? I'd have handled it if I was sober.

I peek at Luke from under my lashes, he's staring straight at me. finally, he says;

“You don't have to thank me.”

I cant quantize the relief that crashes over me. I grin at him, feeling my sleepiness and embarra**ment lift completely.

“You don't want me to apologize to you, you don't want me to thank you,” I say merrily

“So you want me to

completely forget my manners around you?”

Luke stares at me for a moment longer than necessary, his eyes a shade darker “Yes.”

Then he seems to realize what he just said and clears his throat. Luke abruptly stands up, both of us ignore the tension in the room.

“Get yourself something to eat from the bag, change if you want you,” he says, walking toward the door

He stops in the doorway, then looks over his shoulder, so one of his eyes meets mine.

“In the closet,” he says carefully “Do you remember what happened?”

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I try to focus my thoughts. I remember my memories, I remember the panic, I remember Luke holding me and then...

then the door was open and the lights were back on.

“Not exactly,” I say, eyebrows furrowed “I didn’t pa** out, did I?”

Luke lets out a deep, deep breath, his shoulders fall momentarily “No. Nothing happened.”

Without another word, he goes out, closing the door behind.

I change out of the dress into a comfy shirt and shorts, suddenly glad that Clary had given me some of her clothes.

My heart sinks at the thought of her. Was Alpha Supreme’s pack on target too? Or was it just the participants?

Shaking those thoughts out of my head, I wash my face in a bowl of water in the bathroom. I’d have loved a shower but well, this isn’t a hotel, nor am I on a trip.

I munch on crackers, just finished eating a packet of nuts, as I go out of the room. The halls are equally dust-covered.

Soon enough I reach what appears to be the living room. White sheets are bundled in a corner, probably lifted from the furniture. Ethan, Tyler, and Luke are huddled over a big sheet of paper— moon knows where they got that from—

murmuring and making details.

“Good morning,” Ethan smiles at me “How are you feeling?”

“Hungover,” I smile back at him “But I’ll live.”

I sit down by Luke’s side, peering at what they’d made. I didn’t get a lot of glimpses of the map, but this looks quite

similar to it.

“Any idea who it was trying to kill us all?’ I ask as I finish my breakfast

Luke pulls out a paper from the pocket of his jacket “I received this early morning.”

I take it from him and unfold it to see elegant, curling writing;

The Alpha Supreme apologizes for the discomfort faced at the second checkpoint. One of the competing teams had managed to contact their pack and had them try to ambush the other teams. The culprits have been disqualified and will receive their punishments.

Wishing you the best,

Beta Superior,

Fredrick Lockhart

“How did you even receive this?” I ask raising an eyebrow

“It p***ed up in the air,” Ethan says “At least that’s how I got mine.”

“Magic,” Tyler says

I roll my eyes. Just how many witches are they paying to arrange this Hunt?

The rest of the day goes by with me making and taking tea excessively since I found a tin of that in the kitchen and

I’ve found my new pa**ion for making tea. The other three spend their day being ambitious nerds.

I cradle my eighth cup of tea in my hands and stand by a wide window, watching as the sun goes down.

Only a quarter of this Hunt left, and if we win— when we win, I’ll be free of that soon forsaken pack, far from

everyone who’s ever hurt me and mom.

And away from Carlos, Angelina and Morgan.

Away from Luke...

That thought makes my heart twist, my hold on the cup tightens. I never thought I’d live to see the day when the thought of leaving Luke Winters would upset me. But this is his fault.

For being nice to me, caring about me, protecting me, listening to my rants, and for giving me tingles by the barest

touch, he's entirely at fault.

"Hey,"

I turn sideways, blinking out of my thoughts. Ethan smiles at me, hands in his pockets.

"Hi," I say, almost sigh

Why did I want it to be Luke who would come to me right now?

"We're going our different ways tomorrow," he says, I nod "I just wanted you to know if you ever need help

adjusting, you can call on me without hesitation."

I stare at him wide-eyed "Really?"

Ethan nods seriously.

A smile curls up my lips "Thank you."

"You're welcome," he says warmly, then hesitates "Are you alright though? You seemed pretty stressed yesterday."

I take a sip of my tea, don't find it necessary to answer it for a moment. Then I looked up at him, my face dead serious.

"How many times," I ask slowly "Do I need to tell you that I'm not alright, Ethan?"

His face goes slack for a moment, then his features contorted in worry. I can't help myself.

I burst out laughing "I'm amazing, remember?"

Realization dawns on him, and he gives me an irritated look. I force myself to stop laughing, but the grin on my face

doesn't fall.

"Seriously, I'm okay," I say with a chuckle

"Do you," he hesitates again, looks at me with skeptical eyes "Do you remember what happened there? In the

closet?"

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I furrow my brows. Why does everyone keep asking that?

“Not really,” I say “Why do you ask? Is there something I should remember?”

Ethan keeps staring at me for a few moments, I feel an anxious turn in my stomach.

“Winters kissed you.”

I almost drop my cup “What?”

“To distract you maybe,” Ethan lets out a breath “Or so I hope.”

But I’m not listening to him, I’m starting wide-eyed somewhere in space, blurry memories trying to clear up in my head.

I can almost feel my heart rate shoot up.

That’s fine, I tell myself, I was about to get all of us killed. He had to distract me somehow. It’s just a kiss, nothing to fuss about.

But guilt coils like an iron fist around my heart. My first kiss. I’d been saving it for my mate, keeping it safe from the tons of lusty a**holes that just seem to be waiting for me to let my guard down.

But somewhere behind that guilt, there’s an even worst thought.

Better Luke than anyone else.

Maybe I’m guilty, but I’m not remorseful. My stomach turns horribly. Why am I not remorseful? I know he did what he had to, but I should be embarrassed, outraged, something other than this stupid guilt.

“I,” I fail to form words “I have to go.”

I turn around, only to have someone hold my wrist.

“Come with me.”

My head whips back, I stare wide-eyed at Ethan.

“What?” I ask, my voice high pitched with shock

He looks back at me, a steely glint of determination in his eyes.

“Luke is getting overly fond of you,” he says “it’s bound to cause problems— for both of you.”

I s***** my wrist away from him, a spark of anger shoves aside the other emotions swirling in my head.

“This is between me and Luke, Ethan.” I say, my voice dead of emotion “Stay out of it.”

“Elise, you don’t get it,” Ethan says “Luke isn’t safe to be around. He’s not stable.”

That spark of anger intensifies “Oh really? Do enlighten me, why so?”

Ethan opens his mouth to say something, closes it again, and works his jaw hard.

“It’s because he’s cursed?” I raised an eyebrow at him “Because he might turn into a beast and rip me into shreds?”

His eyes widen, I’m tempted to laugh. He did think I didn’t know that.

“Come on, Ethan,” I’m aware of the cruel note in my voice, he doesn’t deserve it, but he has no said in my life “One

the full moon has already pa**ed. You thought I wouldn’t know what I’m up against?”

“So you do know?” he says slowly, as if processing the words “And still you...”

I sigh. He thinks I’m some little girl in need of protection.

Protection from the man hellbent on keeping me safe.

I turn around, ready to go and fight down the turmoil of emotions in my head when I feel myself being sharply turned around. The cup slips from my hand and crashes on the floor, shattering in a thousand pieces.

“Why don’t you understand?” Ethan hisses, unfamiliar anger in his voice “You’re walking yourself into a death trap!”

“Ethan,” I say slowly, calmly “Let go of me.”

His hold on my arm tightens, I feel a dull sting on my skin “What is it about him that’s so special to you? Why can’t you see what he is?”

I grit my teeth together “Let go.”

He opens his mouth to spew out some crap again when someone rips him away from me. Luke’s holding Ethan by the shirt front, eyes narrowed in a glare.

“Didn’t I tell you to stay within your limits, Park?” He growls lowly

“Maybe you need a reminder of your own, Winters.” Ethan bites out

My mind comes in sharp focus, the tension in the air is almost palpable. Ethan’s immature behavior and my irritation aside, I really can’t have them fighting. Not right now. Not because of me.

“Luke,” I hold his arm, trying to pull it back “It’s fine, let’s just go.”

Luke glares at Ethan, then loosens his grip enough for Ethan to shove himself free of it. Luke takes my hand in his and looks down at our interlocked hands.

He freezes, his eyes glued down.

I see the tension that seeps in his frame, his hold on my hands tightens just a bit. Furrowing my brows, I look down.

To my absolute horror, a bruise glares at me where Ethan had grabbed my arm, the consequence of angry Lycans.

A low growl reaches my ears, the promise of outraged destruction makes my hairs stand.

This is not good. Not at all.

Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Bullet through my heart

Everything happens in slow motion then. I see Luke charge forward, Ethan’s wide, horrified eyes glued to my arm,

Luke’s hand pulls back and then his fist hits Ethan square in the face, blood gushes out of his nose.

My eyes fly to my mouth, holding back a gasp. My senses come back to me again.

Luke holds Ethan by the throat, slamming him against the wall. I see his feet dangling in the air.

“If you touch her again,” Luke growls, his lips curled in a feral snarl “I will rip you apart, limb to limb.”

He pulls his other arm back, pointed fingers fisted tightly. My eyes widen as I stare at him, petrified in place.

Ethan meets my eyes for a split second. I'm sorry, they seem to say. Luke's fist hits his face again. He doesn't retaliate. Oh, moon, Luke's going to kill him and Ethan's going to let him. Because of me.

"Stop!"

Luke's fist stops centimeters from Ethan's face. His eyes meet mine and instinct tells me to run as dark pools of stormy rage stare at me.

No, I tell myself, Luke wouldn't hurt me. I force my feet to move, reaching him almost carefully.

"Let him go," I raise my hand to lower his fist, he doesn't budge "Luke, please, this isn't you."

Luke keeps his gaze locked on mine for a moment, then I don't know what he sees on my face that makes his eyes clear, he drops his hands and steps away from Ethan.

Ethan collapses on the floor, breaking into a coughing fit. Big, ugly bruises on his pale neck. I almost step forward to help, but then stop. Now is not the time for this. I glance at Luke.

He looks away, his jaw clenched but his eyes aren't outraged anymore, just frustrated. To whom, I don't know.

Luke takes my hand in his with a gentleness I didn't imagine him to be capable of. We walk in silence towards our room. He guides me to the bed and I sit down as Luke shuffles through our bag.

He takes out a small gla** bottle and nods towards my arm. Without a word, I hold it out. Luke bends down on one knee and spreads the cool cream over the bruise. I sense the tension in his frame, his clenched jaw.

"Luke," I say softly, my hand already on its way to touch his cheek "I'm okay."

He lets out a breath, leaning into my palm, and looks up. I'm taken aback by the sole intensity of his gaze, a livid

storm in his blue eyes.

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"I'm going to kill him."

"He didn't mean it," I say quietly, dropping my hand from his face

“His intentions may go to blazes for all I care,” Luke growls out lowly

He turns his eyes to the fading bruise on my arm, holds my hand in his own, his grip gently rearing.

“This will never happen again,” Luke promises

Small smile tugs at my lips “You can’t protect me from everything, Luke.”

He looks up, his face is all angles of determination but his gaze softens when it meets mine as if staring at a precious treasure. He brushes my hair away, his warm hand slipping behind my neck. I feel the air around us shifting into something that makes my heart flutter madly.

“As long as I have breath in my lungs, I will protect you.”

His lips fall against my own.

Every sensible thought, every logic, every moral goes out of the window as my eyes flutter shut. What am I doing

What am I doing What am I doing?

My mind falls shut, my sense goes out of the window, but my heart beats hard, fast, overwhelmed as if giving me an answer.

What I want to, what I should’ve done long ago.

I feel Luke stand up, his knee forming a dip in the mattress against mine as he leans forward, his other arm slides around my waist, pulling me closer. In his arms is a strange sort of surety, a strange belonging in the way his lips move against mine.

Of their own volition, my hands slide into his hair and pull him down harder, letting out more emotions and frustration than I would ever admit.

Luke doesn’t seem to care about that, a low growl rumbles through him to me as he tilts my face, deepening the kiss. The dire need for air makes me tug at his hair. Grudgingly, he let go of my mouth, but I can’t catch my breath when

his lips start trailing my jaw, my neck.

My head is swimming with sensations I’ve never felt before as I drop my head back. His lips are a million degrees hot against my skin. I feel the remains of my breath hitch in my throat, his teeth scrapping my skin making a thrill of panic go through me.

Then his lips move, forming a searing word against my skin that slaps me right back into reality.

“Mine.”

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My eyes snap open, without thinking twice, I shove him away.

More from shock than from force, Luke stumbles away, his face flushed, pupils dilated. Silence descends on us, thick and heavy, only broken by my shallow breaths.

The realization of what just happened dawns on me. I sit still, wide eyes trained on the floor, unable to breathe.

What have I done?

“Hazel,” A warm hand touches my cheek “Elise, I—

I flinch away from Luke, a flash of something raw and primal crosses his face, pain as if I'd just stabbed him.

I swallow thickly, my throat parched like sandpaper “T-This wasn't, I didn't mean to— I'm sorry.”

Words wither away on my tongue, my eyes dart in every direction, I feel them burn with tears of frustration, guilt, and hurt. Thoughts swarm in my head, each making me guiltier than the last.

I've been getting too comfortable with a man who's not my mate. I let him kiss me. I kissed him back.

A part of me doesn't regret it.

A familiar deep voice pulls me out of my thoughts;

“I'm not sorry.”

My head snaps towards him, my vision blurry but I see Luke move towards me. Slowly, quietly he settles down next to me. He takes my face in his hands, so carefully, as if I'm spun of gla**.

“I want you.”

I think I have a bullet through my heart.

“Luke, no.” I’m shaking my head

“I want to mark you.” He says, looking straight into my eyes, my soul “I want to live my whole life with you by my side.”

I wish I had a bullet through my heart.

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“I want you to be mine.”

I pull away from him and stumble back. I’m shocked, petrified, frozen in time by the wrongness of this hour, this moment.

“That’s not possible,” I find my voice, a mere whisper

“Why?” Luke closes the distance between us, his eyes searching my own “Tell me the reason, the problem and I will fix it.”

My face crumples “This is against the law, against nature.”

I close my eyes and turn away from him. I want to shut him out, shut my heart out, shut my mind out, shut out everything in this whole universe. Benumb, simply exist and be teleported to a time when everything’s back to the way it should be.

Two familiar arms wrap around me from behind, holding me in an embrace that should not comfort me, but it does, it does and I hate it with every fiber of my being.

“Once I’m the Alpha Supreme, the law will bow to me,” Luke’s words caress my ear “Will you chose me then, Elise?”

“If I make sure no one can take you away from me?”

Some fragile barrier I’d put against the chaos in my head breaks. I turn around sharply in his hold, wrenching myself free of it.

“Can you change fate?” My words sound sharp to my ears “Can you fight the hate that will follow me to my grave after the filthy omega ‘traps’ the Alpha Supreme into being with her? Can you promise that when we stumble upon our true mates, we will not end up desiring them more?”

“Maybe you didn’t think my words through, Elise. I want you, wholly, completely.” Luke says, his face set in stone, stormy eyes determined more than ever “And for you, I will do whatever it takes.”

He holds out a hand for me.

“Be my reason to fight, and let me be yours.”

He’s standing three steps away from me but the distance is impossibly long. His eyes hold so much longing, so much hope it’s cutting through me. To know that I can never close this distance, that I can never rest my head against his chest, run my hand through his hair or bare my heart to him because he’s not mine and nor am I his, is like the strongest silver cuff holding me to the bottom of an ocean.

“I’m tired, Luke.” I whisper, the lies burn my tongue “I’m tired of fighting.”

The flash of unadulterated pain that crosses his face is forever burned in my memory. His fingers curl and he drops his hand, eyes firmly shut. When he opens them again, they’re blank, hard as stone.

“Very well,” Luke’s voice is the coldest, hardest metal that’s ever ripped through my heart “I will not bother you again.”