

## Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 41

### Chapter 41 Say something

He doesn't come back the whole night.

Which is good. I didn't want him to hear me cry myself to sleep.

I wake up with puffy, red eyes, a numb mind, and a heavy conscience. My thoughts have tired themselves by running in circles, my heart is a traitorous b\*\*\*\*\*. The only solace I can offer myself is this;

It's going to be fine. Soon this Hunt will be over and you'll never see Luke again. Both of you will get busy in your new lives, forget this ever happened.

I splash water on my face, hissing when it stings my eyes but the puffiness decreases a bit due to the cool water. I

change clothes and put my hair in a messy braid.

I'm sitting on the bed, mind blank like an untouched paper when the door opens. Luke's eyes meet mine momentarily, I feel my heart jump to my throat.

He looks away and silently packs up our bag "We're leaving."

With that, he goes out of the room. I ignore the twist in my chest and follow him out. Ethan and Tyler are sitting in the lounge, they look up at us. Ethan quickly averts his gaze, his perfect nose swollen, though the bruises on his neck are now gone. Tyler only exchanges a nod with Luke before we go out of the house.

We walk on for hours, not once saying anything. The silence is so loud, I want to clamp my hands on my ears to shut it out. Several times, I had opened my mouth to say something but then mashed my lips together, not speaking.

The day bleeds into the night without a single word spoken between the two of us.

Is that how it will be from now? Did whatever we had was shattered by the reality I'm desperately holding onto?

"We'll camp the night here," Luke says, stopping at a small clearing

I nod, unable to form words. The irony is cruel. He always wanted me to be quieter, I always wanted him to treat me as an equal with respect. Both of us have exactly what we wanted, but it's not what we want anymore.

Silently, mindlessly, I start the fire and sit by it, watching the flickering flames.

Is this what it's like to be in relationships? Even if for a few minutes? Goddess, this s\*\*\*s.

Luke hands me a blanket, I silently accept it. He walks away, standing by a tree, arm crossed across his chest.

I stare at him for a few moments. Say something. Say what? Tell him he should've never thought 'we could work.

Tell him I'm an idiot for being blinded by my feelings to notice that he and I were becoming us. Tell him I wish it wasn't this way but the reality is choking my hope and telling me this is how it is. Tell him I want to put my arms around him and hide my face in his chest, away from reality.

Will that change anything?

So I just stay quiet. I put the bag under my head, using it as a pillow, and wrap the blanket around me. I close my eyes and tell myself again;

It's going to be fine. You're going to get over this. Both of you will get busy in your new lives soon, you'll forget

Luke Winters.

But somewhere in the back of my head, a thought creeps up to me, chilling me to my bones.

What if you can't?

✧ Luke's POV ✧

Silence.

I'd always savored it, found it best for thinking, clearing my head. I would have gladly had most people tape their mouths for the sake of the quiet.

I never thought there would be a day when I would hate it with every fiber of my being.

I can hear her footsteps behind me, her scent like the comfort that's always reminding me it won't last for long.

She's been quiet for the better part of the past two days, both of us have. I can't decide if I'm infuriated or elated.

Maybe both. Elated because I'm not sure I can handle pretending everything is fine. Infuriated because this isn't how

I expected the last of this Hunt to be.

Now and then, she would look at me, prepared to say something but then she stops herself, thinking I'm not

noticing just how many times she has done that by now.

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"Let's not stop tonight," I turn to face her as she speaks, steady golden eyes look back at me

I look up at the darkening sky. With minimum defense gear and food, it's better if we try to cover the remaining distance as quickly as possible. Besides, it's not like I'll be getting any sleep any time soon.

I nod at her and pick up my pace, only a short while later, a soft voice breaks the lovely numbness in the air.

"Luke?"

I resist the urge to clench my fists and glance at her from the corner of my eyes.

She takes a deep breath "Are you mad at me?"

I stop and look at her with a stoic face, but even then, I can't help but raise an eyebrow.

"Why would I be?" I ask, genuinely confused

She wrings her hands, something she's never done before, and bites down hard on her bottom lips. For the love of

Goddess, stop doing that.

“You’re not mad at me?” She asks slowly, I nod “Then why are you ignoring me?”

I c\*\*\* my head to a side “Like how?”

She looks away, shrugs look at me again, unease wrote all over her face.

“You haven’t talked to me since we left the house.” She says

“You haven’t either.”

A beat of silence pa\*\*es, the air around us is so thick, I could cut through it. then her lips curl up in a small smile.

“Well, then we’ve both been fretting over nothing.” She says, a hint of hope in her voice

Nothing? The way you and I had started trusting each other, leaning on each other was nothing? The way electricity cackles when you touch me is nothing? The way we complement each other perfectly is nothing?

I wouldn’t use that word for what we’re fretting over.

But the hope in her eyes makes me nod. I don’t want this to be more uncomfortable than it has already become. I don’t want you to be uncomfortable around me.

We start down our path again, the air seems breathable now, less tense. Hazel seems visibly relaxed as if the problem is gone and over with as if it was so small.

Maybe for her, it was, I ignore the twist in my gut. Maybe for her, you never meant more than a partner, a companion.

It was you who made these assumptions, and look where that has led you.

“Luke,” Hazel says, I detect the hint of tiredness in her voice “I know I said we should keep going, but I’m regretting my decision.”

“Keep on regretting, Hazel, we aren’t stopping now.”

“Why not?” She asks incredulously

“It’s nearly dawn,” I point out “there’s no point in stopping now.”

She marches up and stands in front of me, blocking my path. I give her a disappointed look. If anything, I expected

her to be used to this by now.

“You’re being difficult for now reason,” she rolls her eyes “If anything—

She stops, her eyes glued to something on the left side.

Instantly, my senses kick in sharp. My hand goes to the revolver tucked in the waistband of my jeans, but I doubt I’d need it right now, without the wolfsbane dose, I can rip apart any ambusher as long as he does come with guns.

What I see makes my brows furrow in confusion. Through the thinning trees, I see a vast field full of dandelions,

their white flurries like snow in the faint morning light.

“Don’t tell me you’re afraid of dandelions.” I give Hazel an incredulous look

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“Don’t be sa\*\*y, Winters.” She says, but I see the way her eyes light up.

She looks at me again, and I’m caught in the crossfire of emotions. Her smile is so bright, eyes alight with excitement, honey hair framing her face. I want to burn this image in my memory forever.

“Let’s make a deal,” Hazel says “We take a break to see that field and I won’t ask to stop again.”

I take into consideration her request— offer, actually, and find myself agreeing. If we take a walk around that field, it can’t possibly take more than twenty minutes, while I’m sure if we stop she won’t be getting up for at least two hours.

“Deal,” I say with a nod

“Perfect!” Hazel grabs my arm and starts towards her destination, her skin lighting sparks against mine

Once we pa\*\* through the trees and stand in the vast field, Hazel squeals, biting her bottom lip.

“This is like a dream,” she says “I always wanted to find a huge dandelion felid!”

“Why?” I raise an eyebrow, wanting to listen to her more than I would like to admit

“So I can do this,”

With that she opens her arms wide, turns around, and sprints forward, causing a cloud of white flowers to rise behind

her.

I watch with my hands in my pockets, a soft smile playing at my lips as she breaks in a fit of giggles, dandelion fuzz covering her clothes and hair. She takes another round of the field, probably only for the sake of it, before she walks over to me, a wide grin on her face.

“That was so awesome!” She says, gesturing animatedly with her hands

“Good,” I say “That means you’re done here. We can go back to important things now.”

“What?” her eyes widen in alarm “so soon?”

I c\*\*\* an eyebrow “It’s been ten minutes.”

“Come on, Luke,” she gives me a look, puffing up her cheeks “This isn’t fair, I want to stay for a bit longer!”

I keep my gaze locked on hers, Hazel doesn’t back down. Stubborn as always.

I raise my hand, her eyes follow its movement as I bring it near her face.

Then I flick her forehead.

Hazel loses her balance and falls back, a puff of dandelion fuzz rises as she falls, blinking in confusion.

My lips twitch upward “Being unfair has its benefits.”

Hazel glares at me, only adding to my amus\*\*\*\*t. Then I feel something hit my ankle— hard.

Before I can steady myself, my feet lose their footing on the slanted earth and I fall in the flowers, another puff of white fuzz floats in the air.



A cackling laugh reaches me, I look up with narrowed eyes at the girl who's struggling to control her laugh as she looks at me.

"That wasn't funny," I say sternly

"Of course not," Hazel nods, a wide grin on her face "It was hilarious!"

She doubles over laughing, I sweep my hand through the flowers nearby, causing the fuzz to fly straight into her mouth. Hazel stops laughing abruptly, then irregular coughs and sneezes follow, eyes wide, giving her an even more

animated look.

I find my shoulders starting to shake and before I can think better of it, a laugh escapes my mouth, the sound strange to even my ears.

Hazel glares at me and stands up, marching towards me "You are such an—

She cuts herself off with a yelp of surprise as she loses her balance, falling right over me, her head hits mine hard and before I know it, we're rolling down the small slope.

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When my eyes focus again, I was aware of the small body over mine, my arms wrapped around it of their own volition.

Hazel lifts her head, the tip of her nose touching mine, slightly parted lips hovering over my own. The light from the rising sun bounces off her skin, catches in her eyes to make them look like golden pools.

Her breath falls on my lips in soft pants, I can't help the desire that crashes over me like a high tide.

Without thinking, I tilt my face, my lips brush against hers, causing a shiver to race down my spine, a crackle of electricity.

She pushes me away.

My eyes snap open to see that she's turned her face away, lips pursed tightly.

Reality wedges itself like a silver blade in my windpipe. My body seems to lock itself in place, unable to move in the wake of the roil in my chest.

I force my arms to shift from around her and let her go.

She moves away, not meeting my eyes. I stand up, my throat parched like sandpaper. I want to punch myself in the face. She told you she doesn't want you, I tell myself fiercely, harshly.

"We should go," I say, my voice dead of emotion as I turn to go back

Someone holds my hand, I s\*\*\* in a sharp breath.

"Luke, I—

"Let go, Hazel."

She hesitates for a moment before withdrawing her hand. I look over my shoulder as she stands up, her face contorted in helplessness.

"It doesn't have to be this way," She says softly, quietly "We can be friends, we can—

“No.” My voice is hard to even to my ears “We can’t be. I cant be.”

“Luke, it doesn’t have to be all or nothing,” she says, closing the distance between us

“That’s the way it is with me.”

“I don’t want this to happen to us,” Hazel says “Just because of some infatuation—

“Infatuation ?” I ask, anger burns in my voice, composure slipping through my fingers “Is that what it looks like to you ?”

Her shoulders slump, eyes confused with the battle wagging inside her head. Say something. Some hopeless part of me expects her to say she doesn’t think that, that she feels for me what I feel for her, that she wants me to.

She says nothing.

I turn my face away, clenching my hands into fists, feeling my pointed fingers threatening to cut through the skin.

She would never understand what it’s like for me. What it’s like to think I will never see her again after this Hunt, what it’s like to imagine a life without her, what it’s like to know that she would fall in love with another man and I would be powerless to do anything against it.

She would never understand what it’s like to love someone who doesn’t want you to.

“We’re wasting time,” I said, steeling myself “Let’s go.”

She meets my gaze, searching. A moment later she nods, a troubled look on her face.

We start on our path again, silence descending over us.

I would not beg her to love me. I would not force her to see what I do.

With a deep breath, I straighten my back and roll back my shoulders, marching ahead on the path that would lead me to the goal I've waited to achieve for so long.

The world could survive a heartless man, but it would not survive a heartless beast.

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## Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 42

### Chapter 42 Lets pretend

Elise's POV

I tell myself it's nothing.

I tell myself I don't feel like I'm about to burst into tears every time Luke averts his eyes from me, I tell myself my thoughts do not drift to what he said that day every night, I tell myself I will forget this.

I watch as the sun comes up from behind the clouds. A wave of homesickness crashes over me. Mom's pretty face,

smiling warmly at me. Carlos' crooked grin, calm blue eyes. Angelina's ruckus over the tiniest things. Morgan's amazing apple pies and savvy stories.

What have they all been doing since I came here? Would they remember what day it is today?

Someone touches my shoulder.

I jump away, in an instant, my revolver is pressed against someone's forehead, my finger at the trigger.

Luke holds his hands up in mock surrender "That's a waste of ammunition."

I let out a breath I was holding and pull my hand away "You startled me."

Luke raises an eyebrow "I called you twice. You didn't respond."

"Oh," I blink "I didn't hear you."

"You seem distracted," Luke says monotonously as he s\*\*\*ters away from the remains of the firewood

I refrain from sighing. Why cant he just talk to me normally? It would make it so easier to ignore this. It would make everything—

—Like an illusion. Luke is right, Elise. This cant is as simple as you wish it was.

The moon knows what it took for me to push away from him when all I wanted was him to kiss me the way he had before, in a way that made me forget fear, restrictions, the whole damn world.

I should die of shame.

How could I do this to myself? To my mate? To Luke? I should've stopped him before things went so out of hand. I should've stopped myself.

Someone snaps their fingers in front of my face. I blink a few times, Luke's impa\*\*ive face comes into my view.

“I zoned out for a bit,” I say sheepishly

He keeps staring at me for a few moments “Are you alright?”

No. “Fine. Why?”

Luke shakes his head and picks up the bag, slinging it over his shoulders.

The next words seem to wrench themselves out of his mouth;

“You look like a kicked puppy.”

The corner of my mouth lifts “Just feeling homesick today.”

Luke starts walking, for a few moments, we walk in silence. Then;

“Why?”

Don’t tell him. There’s no point. This is—

“It’s my birthday today.”

For the briefest moment, I see him falter in his steps, his shoulders tense.

Silence stretches between us and I feel like kicking myself. Why the hell did I tell him? what did I expect?

“You’re twenty now?”

I snap out of my thoughts and nod “Yes.”

Luke only nods at me before glancing down at the map in his hands. Is it possible to be jealous of a piece of paper?

What the hell is the matter with you, Elise? I chide myself. This is what you wanted, this is what is right. Stop being so pathetic. He's not your mate.

I'm in the middle of taking a deep breath when a horrifying thought hits me in the gut like an iron fist.

What if I never find my mate?

I swallow thickly, the lump in my throat stays just where it is.

It's a huge possibility, I'm already twenty, already legally old enough to choose a mate for myself.

I suddenly feel like something has s\*\*\*ed the life out of my legs, my heart rate doubles. Before this, before Luke,

finding my mate was a secondary option over freedom. But now...

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If I don't find him, I'll never forgive myself for doing this to Luke. For doing this to myself.

I'll never be able to forget.

I stop in my steps, unable to breathe. Am I having a panic attack? Heart attack? Anxiety attack?

No, I clench my fists tightly. Not today whatever type of attack you are. Not now.

"Hazel?"

"I'm okay," I say too quickly

Luke raises his brow, I try and fail to swallow the persistent lump in my throat. Damn you, you weird reminder of restlessness!

“Right,” he nods his head, clearly believing my amazing acting skills  
“Then stop standing there,”

Nodding, I quickly walk over to him. The morning bleeds into noon and then the sun starts setting. We enter a thinner part of the forest, the earth covered with plush, dark green moss. It’s so beautiful in the failing evening light, a stark contrast against the orange sky.

I take another step forward, only, it doesn’t fall on the plush moss. It goes right through it.

A scream rips past my mouth as the earth swallows me, the next moment I feel like someone has simultaneously pulled my shoulder out of its socket and the breath from my lungs.

Luke pulls me back up, steadying me with his arms. I try to catch my breath and stare at the gaping hole in the sheet of moss.

“It’s man-made.” Luke says, his eyes scan the vast area covered with moss “This whole place must be full of them.”

I step away from him “You think we can cross this without dying?”

Luke rubs his jaw, eyes narrowed at the battlefield. He glances at me, just for a moment, so quickly I think I imagined it.

“I can gauge their location by focusing on my footfall. But,” he shakes his head “We can’t take chances right now, we’ll go around it.”

I open my mouth to argue but then decide against it and nod. I turn around but freeze in my place. Luke tenses beside me.



In front of us, at the border of the moss land a row of wolves appears, teeth bared, lips curled in snarls.

“Just perfect,” I hear Luke hiss out before he takes my arm in his and steers around—

Straight into the moss field. I whip my revolver out and look back, ready to shoot and—

My foot slips again, I instinctively pull the trigger, the shot goes through the trees.

“What is wrong with you?” Luke says, pulling me away from the hole “just follow—

A loud growl reaches my ears as a wolf lunges for us, others on its heels. Unthinking, I pull the trigger, a bullet goes straight through its head. The others only seem more enraged and charge forward, seemingly having memorized a safe path.

I hear Luke curse under his breath. He throws his revolver at me, I barely catch it when he lifts me over his shoulder.

“Shoot, Hazel!” Luke says, already sprinting ahead

Clenching his revolver in one hand, I use it to brace myself on his shoulder to stay straight and with my one, I aim.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

One, two, three down. A dozen more to go.

“I won’t be able to shoot all of them,” I say, switching revolvers

I take aim again and pull the trigger, it misses, but the wolf stumbles back and right into a hole, a howl echoes in the gunpowder thick air.

“I don’t think they know the exact path,” I say to Luke, shooting another wolf “Can you guess where the most traps are?”

He doesn’t answer for a moment, he takes a sharp turn to the left.

“Hold tight,” Luke says

I feel my hands jolting with each leaping step he takes, my aim not as good as it should be. But I see the wolves slipping and falling. Their pace slows down but Luke’s only increases.

Then to my immense annoyance, I see the moss bed fade away to give a glimpse of the solid earth and still four wolves hot on our heels.

Then suddenly my heart leaps to my throat. I see the earth way below, almost a speck as the chains holding the bridge click together with Luke’s running.

The never-ending bridge comes to an end and Luke all but drops me on my behind. I glare at him, but it’s short-lived as I catch sight of the wolves, following us.

“I don’t want to die today,” I say, getting to my feet

“I’ll see that you get your wish,” Luke says,

I see his fingers extend, his frame becoming taller and broader as he clamps his hands on one of the thick wooden posts where the chains of the bridge are connected. He pulls it off the earth and tosses it down.

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The bridge shakes horribly, the wolves stumble and halt but Luke wastes no time in going for the other post. He rips it off the ground.

The bridge falls like a recoiling snake, the howls of the wolves on it become distant as they fall.

I slump down on the ground, breathing hard. Luke slumps down beside me, his chest rising and falling rapidly as

his fingers go back to normal.

Finally, I open my mouth and words tumble out;

“Most unforgettable birthday ever,”

A faint smile crosses Luke’s face.

“Try not to flatter me, Hazel.”

Once we both gather our wits, we set camp only a few kilometers away. After a minimalistic dinner, I don’t know

when I doze off.

Someone is shaking my shoulder. I grumble a curse and swat away the hand.

“Hazel, wake up.” a familiar voice says

“Like hell,” I mumble, making myself comfortable against the makeshift pillow of our bag

“Hazel,” this time the handshakes my shoulder harder “Get up.”

I force my eye to open and see Luke crouching in front of me. instantly, alarms start going off in my head.

“What happened?” I ask, quickly sitting up

“Nothing of consequence,” he says, standing up “There’s something you should see.”

My brow pulls together in confusion but I nod nevertheless and get up. Luke motions me to follow, in the dim light of the moon, I follow him through the forestry until he stops.

Luke steps away from in front of me and I hold back a gasp.

A crystal blue lake invades my vision, reflecting the starry sky and the moon like a gla\*\*y mirror.

“This is,” I say softly, walking over to the lake “Beautiful.”

I touch a finger to the water, watching as the whole portrait of the night sky wavers. I see my reflection, the awestruck look on my face.

Luke’s come to stand beside me, his face impa\*\*ive as ever. I turn to look at him, a soft smile on my face.

“Thank you,” I say sincerely

He only offers me a nod, I turn my attention to the lake again, something in the portrait changes. I blink, I think I just saw a flash of light cross the sky.

I look up and my eyes widen as another shooting star goes through the black canvas. Then another, and another before the whole sky illuminates with them.

I faintly hear Luke stepping away. Unthinking, my hand reaches out to hold his, his profile stiffens.

“Stay here,” I find myself saying “Stay with me.”

Luke glances at me over his shoulder “Don’t act like this Hazel.”

“Like what?”

“Like you care whether or not I’m around.”

I ignore the way my heart tightens in my chest but I don’t let go of his hand. It’s my birthday today, I get to be happy for a while. Even if it’s an illusion.

“Let’s just pretend to be ignorant,” I say quietly, taking a step towards him “Let’s pretend your feelings are locked

away in your heart, never been let out.”

I swallow thickly, knowing if I say what’s in my head, I’ll be letting him know just how vulnerable I am. There

would be no taking it back.

“Just as mine is.”

I notice the movement in his throat, his face is impa\*\*ive as ever but his eyes give him away. The longing in them is making me want to break every rule I’ve set up for myself.

It’s terrifying.

Luke doesn’t let go of my hand when he turns to sit near the bank of the lake. Once we’ve both sat down, he lets go and I wrap my arms around

my legs, putting my chin on my knees. The silence that befalls us is comfortable after so long.

I look at the sky showering light, smile tugs at my lips.

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“Let’s make a wish,” I say to him

“You believe that?” Luke asks, not bothering to hide his amus\*\*\*\*t

“Yes, I do,” I say, not caring if it looks childish

I close my eyes and think of what to wish for. I am getting what I wanted, I’m getting my freedom. What else could I

want?

I want—

I cut off my thoughts, feeling emotions overwhelming me.

“I don’t think the stars can grant my wish, Hazel.”

My eyes open and gravitate to his, swallowing the turmoil of emotions they induce. There are inches between in, entire oceans. This is how it’s supposed to be, but it feels so, so wrong.

I turn my face away, ignoring the dull sting behind my eyes.

“Mine neither.” I regret the words just as I say them

I shouldn’t be doing this, I’m only pushing both of us on a path that ends in pain and disappointment.

“Let’s pretend that’s not what we wish for,” I whisper

I feel something warm brush against the side of my face, slowly turning it sideways. Luke’s stormy blue eyes meet mine, he leans forward, his palm rough against my cheek, causing my heart to beat a tempo against my ribcage.

“I can’t,” Luke says

I look away from his stormy eyes. It’s too much for me. His emotions, his sincerity, his care, it’s too much for me to handle—too intense.

“I’m sorry,” I whisper, afraid my voice would betray me if I speak louder

Luke holds up my chin with his thumb and finger so I meet his steady gaze “I’m not sorry, Hazel. Not for this.”

He holds my face in his hands, looking at me like I’m his victory, the sun, the moon, a priceless treasure. An illusion about to fade.

“Elise,” He says my name as an endearment, so softly it steals my breath  
“I—

I put a finger on his lips, my heart cracks into a million pieces “Those words don’t belong to me.”

Luke takes my hand in his hand puts it on his chest, above his heart—beating fast, hard, irregular under my palm— trying to tell me something words would never be enough to explain.

“Tell me again they don’t belong to you.”

I swallow thickly, feeling my resolute cracking under the intensity of his gaze.

“Why do you make this harder for me?” I ask, my voice fragile “Why do you make me want things I have no right of desiring?”

“Just this once, Hazel,” he says softly

He leans forward and despite myself, I find myself closing the distance as well.

“Just for a moment,” Luke whispers “Please be mine.”

His lips fall against mine, so softly, as if the slightest force would shatter this mirage. So slowly and carefully, as if wanting to stretch this moment over a million years.

Against the perfect texture of his lips, I taste something salty. Hesitantly, I pull away, blinking only to realize my eyes are sweating.

“This,” I try and fail to form words, a watery chuckle catches in my throat “This is so stupid. Like soap opera.”

Luke wipes away the tear streaks on my face, his face steeled but his eyes swirling with a storm of emotions “I don’t want to be the reason you cry, Elise.”

“You’re not.” I shake my head, a little sad smile on my face “I promise. And I don’t cry, my eyes sweat sometimes.”

He allows the ghost of a smile on his lips and pulls me to himself, wrapping an arm around my waist, stroking my hair with the other, offering the comfort that I will miss more than anything else in the world.

“Let’s pretend this is a dream, a whirl world fantasy.” He says, his hold on my tightens before saying “From tomorrow, everything will be the way it should be, I promise.”



A dream, I close my eyes and take a deep breath, taking in the intoxicating scent of coffee and pine trees.

Under the star tainted sky, surrounded by the secrecy of the forest, in the circle of his arms, my heart whispers, softly, clearly;

Then I never want to wake up.

## Alpha's Hunt by Starlight Chapter 43

### Chapter 43 Bullet through my head

The next week is a blur.

True to his promise, Luke didn't show a hint of his emotions after that night. For that matter, neither did I. We both acted the way we should; like partners.

And the fact that we're close to the finish line only fuels our will to keep focused.

We hadn't slept since the past week, only dozed off occasionally. This is precisely why I wake up in the noon to the sound of a growl.

My eyes snap open, hands already fumbling to get the revolver out of the waistband of my jeans. There's only one bullet left, is my only thought as I spring to my feet.

My eyes dart in every direction, but I see nothing that could be a threat. Then it dawns to me;

Where did Luke go?

Tucking the revolver away, I start forward, a frown on my face. Where the hell is he ?

Only a short distance away, I see him pacing around, his head in his hands. Another low growl reaches me.

“Luke ?” a hint of worry leaks in my voice

His head snaps in my direction so quickly I almost flinch. His eyes are dark, near black.

“When did you wake up ?” he asks, his voice a little rough around the edges

“Just now.” I say, walking over to him “Are you alright ?”

“Fine.” He moves away just as I approach him, but the tension in his frame doesn’t go unnoticed by me

I narrow my eyes at him back. I know the full moon is in one week, he must be having trouble controlling his wolf. Why won’t he tell me ? it’s not like I don’t know about it already!

“Are you sure ?” I ask him as he walks back to where I came from

“Yes.” He doesn’t even look at me

Luke walks ahead and I throw my hands up in frustration. Alphas! They are impossible!

I open my mouth to bug him again but then stop myself. It’s none of your business, I tell myself firmly. You’re not supposed to worry about him.

But I can stop myself from glancing at him now and then. Though Luke keeps always a fast pace, I've never seen him break a sweat. So I guess it's a bit concerning to see a sheen of sweat cover his brow, his whole body taut like a spring under tension.

"How long until we reach the finish line?" I ask him after a few hours

"I'm not sure," Luke says "The recreated map isn't very accurate, but I guess we should reach it in about five days,

give or take a few."

I nod, feeling a thrill of adrenaline go through me.

"If we don't have to change course—

Luke cuts himself off with a low growl. His hand reaches up, f\*\*\*\*\* his hair.

"Luke!" Without thinking my hands reach out to do, well, I don't know what, but something!

"No, Don't!" Luke stumbles back, dark eyes wide in alarm

I stop in my tracks, confusion and worry cloud my head.

"What?" I breathe out "You're hurting, you idiot! Let me help!"

"You can't help," Luke says, "Stay away. I'm not too—

Another growl rips its way out of his chest. I watch in horror as he falls to his knees, features contorted in pain. His chest rises and falls rapidly, eyes darting in every direction like a caged animal.

The next moment, I find myself kneeling beside him, preying his hands away from his hair. They're burning against my skin as if he has a high fever.

"What are you doing?" Luke snaps, momentarily coming to his bossy senses "I told you to stay away—

"Shut up," I give him a look "I'm not going anywhere."

"Can't you see?" Luke narrows his eyes at me, s\*\*\*\*\*ing his clawed hands away "I'm not safe to be around."

If he wasn't being so panicked about my safety, I would've slapped him for being such an idiot.

"Luke, calm down," I say calmly, taking his hand in my hands

"No," he grabs my arms, ready to push me away "You need to go, you need to—

"Will you ever shut up?" I put my finger on his lips "Just look at me."

Whether willingly or unwillingly, his dark eyes meet my own, panic and concern just on the surface.

"Breathe," I put my forehead against him "Don't think anything, okay? Just look at me and take a deep breath."

He does, at least the breathing part. For a few moments, we stay like that, I feel his skin cooling down against mine.

"See?" I pull away, a smile on my lips "That wasn't so hard, was it?"

Luke pulls his hands away from my arms and lets out a rattled breath "Why don't you ever listen to me?"

“Because you give the dumbest suggestions,” I chirp

Unthinking, I rake my hand through his hair, making it less messy. Just as I realize what I’m doing, I draw it back.

“This is worse than I thought,” Luke drags a hand down his face, rubbing his jaw “It’s not even full moon and yet...”

#### ADVERTISEMENT

“Are you going to be okay?” I ask him

A shadow crosses his face “It’s not myself I’m worried about.”

I swallow, catching the meaning behind his words. But Wolfie hadn’t hurt me, not in the slightest. Maybe he wouldn’t

hurt me this time either?

I open my mouth to tell Luke I’ll be okay but he beats me to it;

“If I ask something of you, will you do it for me?” he says, taking my hand in his

“I, umm,” I blink a few times

“Answer my question, Elise,” He says, tightening his grip on my hand, his eyes search my own “Will you do it?”

“Do what?” I ask him, confusion thick in my voice

Luke’s stormy eyes are steady as they look at me as if steeled against emotion.

“If I shift, put a bullet through my head.”

“What?” My eyes become the size of the moon

I try to s\*\*\*\*\* my hand away out of pure surprise but Luke holds it in a firm grip. He leans forward, his face dead serious.

“I don’t know how long until my restraint snaps,” he says “And when that happens, you need to put me out.”

“Luke, are you even listening to yourself?” I say furiously “I’m not going to kill you!”

“You won’t have a choice!” he glares at me “If you don’t kill me, I would surely kill you!”

I’m shaking my head “Luke, I can’t. I just cannot do that to anyone, let alone you.”

He grabs me by the shoulders, forcing me to look at him. I almost gasp when I look at his expression. Never in my

entire life had I thought I would see Luke Winters desperate.

“Promise me,” he says, his voice hard as stone “You won’t let me hurt you.”

“Luke, please, don’t ask this of me—

“I have to, damnit!” he shakes me, once, as if trying to knock some sense into me “I can’t live with your blood on my

hands!”

I give him a harsh glare “You think I can?”

“Think, Hazel.” He says, his stormy eyes bore into mine “Maybe this time if I shift, I won’t be turning back again. I would become a monster, a killing machine.”

He lets go of me, his eyes hold an ages-old pain, a fear that’s been with him for so long, he’s stopped being afraid of

it. A man standing at the brink of the ocean, ready to be thrown off and drown.

“I don’t want to become that,” Luke says

I stand to my feet “Come on, get up.”

I grab his arm, trying to pull him to his feet, though confused Luke complies.

“We don’t have time,” I say, starting to drag him behind me “We’re reaching that darn finish line if it’s the last thing

we do.”

“Hazel—

“No,” I’m surprised at the steel in my voice “You’re not going to become a monster. I’m not going to have to kill you, nor are you killing anyone.”

“Hazel, there’s no other way around it,” Luke sighs, though he keeps walking

I whirl on him, my eyes gla\*\*y with burning tears— no, sweat. I do not cry.

“Then we’re going to do what we always do,” I jab a finger at his chest “We’re going to find a way out.”

I hold his gaze, my breaths short and harsh in the silence around us.

Finally, he looks away from me and walks past me.

“Then stop wasting time,” I hear the hard and commanding voice that I’ve grown so fond of “We have places to be.”

...

The next few days go by almost in a run. Though Luke didn’t show it, I know these few days have been hard on him, specifically because he couldn’t blink an eye to sleep. Not once.

As our time is coming to an end, I find myself closer to telling him about that night he shifted. I want him to know

that he’s not the monster he thinks himself to be.

“Luke,” I say, mustering up my courage

“Watch your step,” he says, pushing aside the vines in front of his face

“The trees are older here, you might trip on a root.”

“I know,” I say, my eyes on my feet “but I have to tell you something.”

“Hurry it up,”

I take a deep breath and grab his hand. Luke’s head snaps back towards me, his eyes permanently a shade darker since the day he told me to shoot him if necessary. As if he’s constantly fighting off the beast.

And ever since then, he’s been hypersensitive to any kind of stimuli.



“I don’t know if I’ll have the chance to say this later,” I lick my dry lips  
“But I want you to know, you’re not a monster.”

## ADVERTISEMENT

Luke furrows his brows “Hazel, we’ve been through this before.”

“No,” I shake my head “I mean literally.”

His face is a mask of confusion “What?”

“On the full moon,” I swallow thickly “I went to see you.”

“You what?”

“I know you told me not to,” I say quickly “But I never listen to you, do I?”

His scowl tells me exactly how much he appreciates my joke. I can’t help but grin at him.

I’m going to miss this.

“But that’s not the point,” I say “The point is that you didn’t hurt me.”

“Of course, the chain—

I take a deep breath “I went in the range of the chain.”

I watch as his jaw goes slack, his head c\*\*\*s to a side, brows furrowed.  
He open his mouth to say something but I beat him to it.

“You had me. Pretty much engulfed in your arms, but you didn’t hurt me, not in the slightest.” I tell him

“You’re not a monster,” I hold his hand up in both of mine, almost under my chin “Not to me. Never to me.”

I let go of his hand when he does reply. I guess he’s going to explode in a fit of anger and over protectiveness in a

while better get out of his earth’s range.

I quickly walk past him, glad to have let out those words. Whatever his reaction maybe, Luke deserves to know.

Through the trees, I see something red flying in the evening breeze. Breath catches in my throat and I squint my eyes to see clearly.

Only a few meters away, I see a clearing, as if the forest stops there and a long white pole, on which a red flag is waving, a silver wolf flashing on it. The Alpha Supreme’s flag.

Someone grabs me by the arms and turns me around.

“I didn’t hurt you ?” For some darn reason, I’m imagining Luke sounding breathless, as if such a thing could happen in reality

Maybe I’m being delusional in my happiness.

“Luke, the finish line,” I grab his face and turn it to the flag

I see his eyes widen a fraction, grinning like a maniac, I hold his hand in a vice tight hold and sprint forward. In a dream, in a haze, I feel like I’ve just pa\*\*ed through a cold gel and out in the open air.

“We’re here,” I breathe out, a wide grin on my face

“Oh my moon, we’re here!” I jump up and wrap my arms around Luke’s neck “We’re alive and we’re here!”

His arms wrap around me, almost cutting off my breath. But who gives a damn about oxygen anyways?

“Now answer my question,” Luke says as I pull away a bit “You came to me and I had you, but I didn’t hurt you?”

I stare at him incredulously. Seriously? We just won the bloody Alpha’ Hunt and he’s asking me that?

“Yes you dumba\*\*,” I say with a roll of my eyes “You acted like an overgrown mutt fond of cuddles.”

He stares at me as someone would at a star, in wonder and amazement. The way you would look at a thunderstorm,

watching the light tear through the sky. Or the way you would look at someone with three heads.

Then he grins at me.

Luke Winters, grins at me, showing his perfectly pearly teeth.

He leans down to press a deep kiss on my forehead “Elise, you Goddamn idiot.”

I push him away a bit, my eyes narrowed “Excuse me?”

“Congratulations, Alpha Winters,”

I jump away from Luke and snap my head towards the source of the sound. A man in his early forties is walking towards us from an earthen path, two military-built men behind him.

A can almost feel the power in the air, my mind vaguely remembers his face. Red hair, blue eyes, and stern expressions. The Alpha Supreme.

“I’m so proud of you son,” he says with a smile, hands clasped behind his back

Luke only nods in his direction, I almost want to stomp his foot. He could at least pretend to care about his greeting!

The Alpha Supreme laughs “The att\*\*ude of a king. Just what we need, my boy.”

He walks over to us and the two military guys instantly focus their eyes on me, a thread of unease coils around my heart.

“I’m not surprised it’s you who made it, Luke,” the Alpha puts out his hand “Whenever we’ve met, I’ve sensed your

pa\*\*ion to win this Hunt.”

Luke shakes his hand “And I’ve sensed your unwillingness to let me, Alpha.”

The Alpha Supreme laughs and in a surprisingly strong tug pulls Luke forward to embrace him like a son.

“You were always too smart, Winters.”

“I’m surprised—

Luke cuts himself off with a gargled sound, the next moment I feel myself being pulled back by the guards.

## ADVERTISEMENT

The Alpha Supreme steps away from Luke, a bloody dagger in his hand, thick drops of blood drop from its tip. My

wide, horrified eyes turn to Luke as he stumbles back, blood oozing out of his side.

“I’m sure you are,” Alpha Supreme smiles at him, wiping the dagger on his arm, revealing a silver blade

Luke lets out a rasp of laughter “Good thing I’m off my meds.”

He moves too quickly for me to see, but I see the Alpha Supreme stumble back, holding his bloody nose as the dagger flies from his hand and into the earth on the far side.

“I haven’t had an interesting fight in a long time,” He wipes the blood from his face “Let’s make it easier for you, I won’t shift.”

He charges at Luke but Luke easily dodges his first throw, grabbing his arm to pull him forward and dive his knee into the Alpha’s gut. The Alpha doesn’t even seem fazed as he swings his fist, it catches Luke in his wound, causing him to loosen his hold on the Alpha.

He stumbles back, the Alpha takes it as a chance to grab him by the throat and quite possibly choke him but Luke somehow manages to twist himself out of the Alpha’s hold. The Alpha Supreme’s fists move faster than my eyes and all I know is that Luke’s lip and nose are bleeding, his movement sluggish due to the wound in his gut.

I feel the guards starting to drag me away. I struggle against their stone arms, digging my feet in the earth and

trashing around but it has no effect.

Desperation gets the better of me “Luke!”

His eyes snap to mine and I see the murderous rage that flashes in them. Alpha Supreme uses the momentary distraction to grab him by the hair and knee him in the face, Luke stumbles back, I see his teeth stained with blood.

But instead of focusing on his survival, his eyes fly to me again, once again giving the Alpha Supreme the upper hand as he practically lifts Luke off his feet and hurls him towards a tree.

Luke’s back hits the tree with a horrible thud, he falls to his knees, breathing heavily.

More on instinct than on anything else, I bite down the arm of one of my captors—hard.

His hold on me loosens just for a moment and I whirl on the other guard, my hand pulls the gun out from the waistband of my jeans and I slam its b\*\*\* on his nose. He stumbles back, letting go of me, I turn to the other guard instantly, my hand comes down to slam the gun against his neck, he doubles over, I slam it down on his head. He crumples on the ground.

The other guard recovers from his blow, his eyes red and nose swelled but it doesn’t stop him from grabbing me around the waist in a harsh hold.

“Luke!” I throw the revolver towards him the best I can

It lands in someone’s hand. Not Luke’s.

The Alpha Supreme gives me a chilling smile “I must admit, she’s a wild one. But I suppose this Hunt would have to remember her as a martyr.”

“Don’t you know your highness?” Luke grabs him by the back of his neck and whirls him around “Hunters never take their eyes off their prey.”

The sliver dagger goes straight in the Alpha Supreme’s chest, into his heart.

He crumples to the ground, pulling at the heavy hilt of the dagger. But I can’t see him anymore since the next moment,

Luke has ripped me away from the guard, his hand closes around the man’s neck, and a Snap! Sounds in the air.

I fall on my behind, breathing heavily. Luke crouches down beside me.

“Elise,” he’s holding my arms “Hazel, we have to go.”

“Where?” I ask shakily as he helps me get up

“There’s supposed to be a mansion to accommodate the survivors and winners,” he says “We need to get there fast,”

“Are you alright?” is a stupid question, but I’m staring at his blood-stained shirt

“Not too bad,” he says “I was already pulling away when he used the knife, the wound isn’t too deep—

Bang!

The air stills, both Luke and I hold our breaths. My eyes are trained on the Alpha Supreme's body on the earth, the revolver in his hand as his eyes glaze over.

With a shaking hand, I touch my stomach, my hand comes back slick with blood. I open my mouth to say something, blood comes out, pouring down my chin.

My legs give out from under me, my head swimming. Luke's holding me to himself, his eyes desperately looking over me, settling on the wound, I barely feel him lift me in his arms.

"Elise, hold on," Luke's running maybe, his voice is shaking maybe  
"Don't close your eyes."

But my eyes are dropping, there's so much pain through my body, it's numbing. Telling me to go to sleep the way I used to when mom told me bedtime stories. Mom, Carlos, Angelina, Morgan, everyone's faces swirl before my eyes. Ethan, Tyler, Clary, so many more.

"I'm tired,"

"I know, Hazel." Luke says "But I need you to stay strong like you always do. I need you not to close your eyes."

My hand is shaking when I reach it up to touch his face. His face snaps down to look at me, stormy blue eyes that

I've grown to adore looking at me with so much pain I think it's even greater than mine.

"Don't," I croak out, my hand drops "Don't be hurt."



“I won’t be, I promise.” He says I hear the hitch in his breath “I will do anything you say, just don’t let go.”

He’s still running, so am I. Where? I’m not sure.

I dimly register him shouting at someone. Bossy Luke, why let go of any chance to show who is in charge?

“Luke,” A breath leaves my mouth

He’s letting me down on something, his frantic eyes meet mine “Yes, Hazel?”

I feel my lips twitch up. I like that name. I like the way it sounds on his tongue. I want to taste something on my tongue.

“I love you.”

...

## Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight chapter 44

### Chapter 44 My Luna

✧ Luke’s POV ✧

My shoes make a rhythmic thud on the polished wooden floor as I turn to my newly acquired office. Everything is in perfect order, with a large L-shaped desk in the center, a high back chair behind it. shelves line the walls, the windows on the east wall light up the place.

I take my place behind the desk and pick up the file I’d put there last night— or early morning, sleep has been miles away from me.

Twenty Alphas had participated, seven have made it back.

After reaching the mansion, I had a witch lift off the spell from the competitor's wolves and the forest, officially declaring that the Hunt was over. The last team reached here yesterday.

The packs of the deceased Alphas will have to be adjusted under other's authority if they don't have another of the

Alpha bloodline to take the role.

As I leaf through the file, the accommodations storing in my memory with singular glances, the door knocks.

"Enter,"

A man dressed in a dark uniform comes in, his face impressive. Gorge Williams was part of the few warriors with me on my journeys the past five years. He was always my first choice to call when I needed to do something covertly.

"Alpha Supreme Winters," He bows to me

"The ceremony is in four days, Williams." I say, returning my eyes to the file "I'm not the Alpha Supreme yet.

What's the news?"

"As per your orders," he begins formally "The Alpha Supreme Marcus Goldstein's body has been taken care of. All the servants in the mansion who witnessed your arrival have been warned to keep their mouths shut."

I put the file away and prop my elbows on the armrests, steeping my fingers as I hold his gaze. I doubt people would take well to a ruler who killed his predecessor.

“Acceptable,” I say “And the pack?”

“The deceased Alpha’s pack will be under the authority of his younger sister, Alpha Zoya Goldstein. She was told that her brother suffered a planned rouge attack.”

“Very well,” I give him a nod “Make sure she doesn’t look too much into it.”

“Yes, Alpha.” He says “Should I send in the files of the confessions by Alpha Goldstein’s warriors?”

“Send them up. You’re dismissed.”

He gives me another bow and leaves the office, closing the door behind.

Alpha Goldstein had always struck me as the power-hungry type, but he would violate the Hunt as such was a surprise, even to me.

Only a few minutes later, someone brings me the file. I’d have to execute all these men anyway, but I wanted to have proof of their crimes in my hand.

Making a plan for the division of the packs left unsupervised takes me a big mug of black coffee and two hours. It’s

going to get more complicated when I discuss these with the Alphas who are having these additions, but till then, I’m almost done.

For a few moments, I sit in the silence of my office, cherishing the fragments of peace.

Then I pull my phone from my pocket and press my father’s contact.

“Finally made time for your father?” he asks in his usual gruff manner

“You’re the first one I called to give the news of my victory Father,” I say dismissively

“What do you want now?” he asks “Should I send Casper there?”

“No.” My voice holds a steely edge “I told you before that until I say so, no one is to come here. The risk of

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a\*\*a\*\*ination is high.”

“Don’t try to teach me, boy.” I can hear the scowl in his voice “Why did you disturb me?”

My father was never the affectionate type, which I’m glad for. He’d have killed me with sympathy if that were the

case.

“I want to talk to Mrs. Attwood.”

“What?”

“I’m sure you’ve told her,” I say in the measured voice “But I would like to talk to her myself.”

“You want to talk to that omega? What is—

“Give her the phone, Dad.”

For a few moments there’s silence, then some shuffling as he switches the call. A moment later he’s back on the line.

“She’s on her way,” Father grumbles, disdain rolling off his voice

Then the phone is given to someone else, a voice reaches me.

“Alpha Supreme, how may I help you?” She sounds so much like Hazel

“Please, Ms. Attwood,” I find my voice becoming polite “You can call me Luke.”

“I, Alpha, that,” she hesitates, I can guess why

“I would like you to step out of my father’s office,” I tell her “You’d be able to talk to me more comfortably then.”

“But Alpha—

“Tell him I said that.”

There’s silence. Then muffled voices. Silence again.

“I’m outside,” Mrs. Attwood tells me “Where’s Elise? Is she alright? Can I talk to her?”

“Elise is alright, Mrs. Attwood, I assure you.” I tell her calmly “But I’m afraid she cannot talk to you right now, I will make sure she does as soon as possible.”

I hear her let out a ragged breath “As you say, Alpha.”

“Luke.”

“Pardon?”

“I want you to call me Luke,” I say politely “Your daughter is the only reason I’m going to be the Alpha Supreme for the next ten years. Keep that in mind.”

There is a beat of silence. Then;

“Alright,” She says “Tell Elise I’m waiting for her call.”

“I will,”

“Luke?” she says, hesitates for a moment “Please take care of her.”

“You don’t have to worry about that.” I nod to myself

#### ADVERTISEMENT

She hangs up, I put the phone back in my pocket. Picking up my suit jacket from the back of my chair, I leave the office. The wide windows in the hallways illuminate them with the orange light of the setting sun.

I pause beside the window, the sight of the sun melting behind the trees looks unfathomably bleak.

Through the winding hallways on the top floor, my feet take me to the master bedroom. I see two guards stationed

outside the door, a short woman closing it as she leaves.

“Alpha Supreme,” The healer bows as she sees me coming

I look past her at the door, before my eyes meet her slanted brown ones  
“How is she?”

“She’s recovering exceptionally well,” She says with a nod “Having her wolf unlocked is helping.”

I only offer her a nod, moving to grab the door handle when she speaks again;

“Alpha Supreme, I think if you can get her mate here—

“I don’t remember asking you for advice.” My voice cuts through hers like a blade

From my peripheral, I see her swallow before she bows “Y-Yes, Alpha.”

She scurries away, I turn the handle and step inside the room.

As I close the door behind, the scent of gardenia flowers and rain wraps around me like a comforting blanket, soothing every worry and exhaustion.

The room does show it was the residence of a ruler of the Lycan race. The canopy ceiling high above the walls,

the ma\*\*ive windows on the east wall, the white sheer curtains hanging over them, the white settle and sofa in one corner all scream royalty.

I walk towards the king-sized, chair I’d put by its side still in its place.

My eyes fall on the girl asleep under the sheet, her honey hair spiraled on the white pillows.

Silently, I sit down in the chair, my hand already reaching to hold hers. My skin sings as it touches hers and I let out a

breath I didn't even know I was holding, my shoulders sag, relaxing for the first time since I checked up on her this morning.

Its been two days since the incident, she hasn't made a single movement except for the soft rise and fall of her chest.

A newly familiar ache constricts my chest as I let out a rattled breath. I can't shake the hope that she might wake up just as I come.

I've been waiting for you for so long, Hazel. Don't make me wait longer.

Unbidden, distant memories unfurl in my head;

' "Is there a cure?" My father had asked the strange woman sitting in his office

I knew she was a witch, I'd met her once before when I was eleven. But she always seemed different from other witches. There was something strange in her scent; something powerful, something more knowledgeable than the rest.

"I can only think of one," she said, her blazing yellow eyes swam towards me

I wanted to look away, unable to hold her scorching gaze. As if she could see what I become the night of the full moon, see the poison called wolfsbane used as a medicine by me, see the blood on my hands as I did in my nightmares.

But I held her gaze, my face impa\*\*ive. I was thirteen, I shouldn't be intimidated by anyone.

"Then speak woman," My father said, but I noticed that his voice wasn't as commanding as always— this woman was important and she had no reason to do as he said



“Find ’is mate,” the witch said, “she should work as a leash.”

## ADVERTISEMENT

“A leash?” I couldn’t help the note of disdain that leaked in my voice. The idea of having someone else know about my condition didn’t sit well with me

Both my father and the witch ignored me. Father’s gaze was trained on the witch, determination etched on his face.

“How would that help?” He asked

“Don’t ya know, Jax?” The witch raised a golden brow “Even beasts can’t ’urt what they love.”

I was suddenly glad that they were both ignoring me since I could feel my ears burning.

“But keep in mind what ’e is,” the witch said, “ ’e can’t find ’eras easily as ya mutts do these days.”

I saw my father’s jaw tighten when she said mutts, but he only nodded, understanding what she’d said.

“But he isn’t in his senses then,” My father told her as if she didn’t know already “He’d kill anything in his reach.”

I could feel my innards roil as he said that. I wished I could vanish when both of them glanced at me for a moment, as

if I wouldn’t notice the way they looked at me like I was a ticking timebomb.

“Anything except ’er,” The witch stood up from her seat, dusting her long black gown “How ya manage ta do it ain’t ma problem.”

She walked towards the door but paused for a moment, she looked at me and smiled, I almost cringed when her yellow and gold teeth came into my sight.

“Best of luck, beastie.” And she went out

For the next few days, my father and Beta Drake busied themselves in devising plans to find my mate. I wasn’t sure if

I wanted her to see me, I wasn’t sure if I wanted my soulmate to know what I was.

But Mom always told me it wouldn’t matter to her, that she would help me, understand my pain like no other.

And I was stupid enough to believe that. ‘

For a few years, I believed her. I wished, hoped, and prayed, and visited every pack in my country, let every trusted man see the monster preparing to unleash itself on the world.

I had one hope, they all told me, and that was finding another to fix my broken pieces.

Only a few months after I started my journey, I knew it wasn’t the solution I wanted.

I didn’t want my soulmate to find a broken statue she had to fix and cut herself in the process. I didn’t want my

soulmate to be afraid of me.

I didn't want anyone to take care of my problems for me.

I didn't want to be that man.

Soon my mate was a secondary matter, soon I knew what the Alpha's Hunt had to offer, soon I didn't have to look for a stranger for peace. I had it in myself, an unshakable belief that I will find a way out.

For five years, I went from one country to the next, training with one pack and the next. Using any means to learn how to control the beast. In five years, I grew to the age of a hundred, survived more murder attempts than people double my age and reputation. In five years, Jax Winters' son became Alpha Luke Winters.

I didn't need my mate, I didn't need anyone.

Now as I look at the girl in front of me, her eyes closed and features calm, a strange longing fills me. More than any I have ever felt for the stranger I'd been forced to look for.

I may be damaged, ruthless, demanding, and not worthy of this girl in any way at all, but I wasn't so far gone that I couldn't love her more than anything in this world.

Wake up, Hazel. I press a kiss to her knuckles. I need my Luna with me.

## Alpha's Hunt by Starlight chapter 45

### Chapter 45 The stupidest plot twist

Elise's POV

When I open my eyes, I'm sure I'm dead.

And surprisingly enough, it seems as though I'm in heaven. The mattress under me is like a cloud, the sheets covering me are stain soft. The room is beautiful and white and a bit hazy.

Then pain kicks in.

I'm alive alright and the dull pain coming from where the bullet had hit me tells me it hasn't been long since I almost died.

My mind clears, the room comes into focus. Panic and confusion race through my head. How am I still alive? Where am I? Where's Luke?

With a herculean effort, I heave myself up into a sitting position. The room looks like a five-star hotel's master suite.

The canopy ceiling is high above, decorated with an illustration of star constellations. The east wall is practically covered by windows, the curtains drawn over their silhouette. There are two doors, one near the huge bed, the other at

the far corner.

The said door clicks open, catching my attention.

Someone steps inside the room, my shoulders tense, bracing for action but soon enough, the rich, intoxicating scent of coffee and pine trees hovers towards me.

"Luke," anticipation leaks in my voice, as I stupidly try to get up

His head snaps in my direction, his dark stormy blue eyes focus on mine. His shoulders rise as if he's holding his breath, eyes wide a fraction. The air is so heavy, almost palpable with tension.

“Elise,”

Something in the air snaps, then tension falls on me like a heavy blanket.

The next moment his hands are on my shoulders, holding me back so I can't get up. whatever emotion was on his face moments ago was gone as if it was just my imagination.

“Rest,” he says, his voice terse “Your wound is still healing.”

In quick, precise movements, he adjusts two pillows behind my back, carefully leaning me against them. I take in his

profile, the creaseless grey suit he's wearing, his perfectly brushed hair, freshly shaved stubble but the shadows under his red eyes tell me what I need to know.

“Luke, why— how am I still...” The question hangs heavy in the air

Even if I had my werewolf strength, a silver bullet would've been lethal for me, and omega. It's impossible that I'm still alive.

Luke sits down in front of me, staring thoughtfully at my face, almost as if trying to believe I'm sitting right here.

“You were asleep for three days,” he says quietly

My eyes widen. Three days? I've taken a silver bullet, been unconscious for three days and I still survived?

“How do you feel?” Luke touches his hand to my cheek

I jump away from him due to sheer surprise, my cheek tingles as if someone's just electrocuted my skin. The confusion in my head only

thickens further. Luke has touched me before, and though it feels amazing, it doesn't make me feel like stars are erupting across my skin. That's just... not right.

## ADVERTISEMENT

I see a flash of emotion across Luke's face. Almost like... rejection. But he draws his hand back, his face unreadable as he stands up from the bed and walks to the dresser.

Luke holds out a small mirror for me. Hesitantly, I take it and look at my reflection.

My cheekbones have hollowed out, my lips are champed, and my skin pales like a sheet. Otherwise, I look like myself.

Hazel eyes wide and bright, golden-brown hair tumbling down my shoulders to the middle of my back.

Luke guides my hand, super-nebulas burst where his skin touches mine, but I focus on the reflection in the mirror as it lowers.

Breath hitches in my throat, my eyes widen. Someone has robbed the breath from my lungs and the life from my

limbs.

There, at the junction of my neck and shoulder, a puncture wound has faded, leaving behind something disturbingly well known.

A mark.

When a Lycanthrope is marked, his wolf isn't just living for himself, but also his mate. Legends and stories tell

over and over again the tales of Lycanthropes surviving what would've been fatal wounds because of the presence of their mates.

I turn my wide, terrified eyes to Luke's impa\*\*ive face.

"Tell me I hit my head," I say, my throat suddenly feels parched "Tell me I'm hallucinating."

"You didn't hit your head," Luke says, his voice clear and hard as crystal "I caught you before you could fall."

My organs suddenly start working again. Too efficient this time.

My heart pumps madly in my chest, trying to break out of my ribcage. My breath comes out short and ragged, panic rising like chilling water in my head, numbing my senses.

I push my hair back from my forehead as sweat breaks over my brow.

"Hazel," Luke tries to pull my hand away "Calm down, I—

"Don't touch me!" I break away from him

Never had I thought I'd see the day when Alpha Luke Winters, the most dominating and strong-willed person to roam this earth, flinches. Because of me.

My wrist tingles where he'd held it, I resist the urge to rub away that feeling. Tears well up in my eyes, frustration, and guilt hold my heart in a fist. My chest rises and falls rapidly, the pain from my abdomen suddenly numb in the wake of a new agony, one that's making it too hard to breathe. Realization hits me like a brick in the face.

I'm feeling Luke's pain.

Oh my moon, oh my moon, what has he done.

“You should have just let me die,” I choke out, holding my head in my hands, blocking out most of his emotions

A low growl reaches my ears “Don’t say that again.”

I snap my eyes to him, my own blurry with tears of frustration and anger.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

“Wasn’t this what we had fought?” I demand “What about all your promises Luke? Were they for nothing?”

Tears race down my cheeks, but I don’t move my steely eyes from his unreadable face. Luke leans forward and brushes the tears away from my cheeks. I hate myself for wanting to give in to his touch. I hate that its effect on me is only stronger now.

“You said you love me.” He says softly

I push his hand away “I was dying. People say stupid stuff when they’re dying.”

I sense the tension in his frame, the storm in his eyes ready to devour me whole.

“You didn’t mean it?”

My shoulder slump in defeat, my feral expression slips away to give way for the helplessness that welled inside.

“I did.” I whisper, afraid of saying the words aloud “I do.”



“Then what’s the problem?” Luke asks “You bear my mark now, nothing is standing between us anymore.”

I want to rip my hair off my head “What about the pack? They know we’re not mates! What if someday your real mate comes in front of us? Or my real mate? What will we do then? This is wrong. So bloody wrong, you should’ve just let me—

Something warm presses against my lips. Not a finger this time.

A million burning flames heat my face. Luke pulls away, creating an inch of space between our lips.

“Shut up,” he puts his forehead against mine, eyes closed “Do you have any idea what it was like to see the shine fading from your eyes? To carry your bloody, limp body in the mansion at the finish line? To look at you on that bed, not chattering my ears off, not complaining?”

He presses his lips to the corner of my mouth, almost sighing into the kiss.

“I would’ve set the world on fire if that’s what it took to have you back.”

I swallow the lump in my throat, try to force my heart to stop beating so fast, and hold onto the remains of my morals and logic.

“That doesn’t change anything, Luke. I’m not—

Luke opens his eyes, almost challenging. The words that come out of his mouth tell me I’ve hit my head somewhere.

“You’re my mate.”

I blink, my features contort in confusion “What?”

“I should’ve told you before,” he says “You should’ve told me before.”

“I don’t...” Words stop making sense

“The night I shifted, even when I told you to stay away, you came to me.” He says I nod blatantly “I told you I would rip apart anything in reach. But I didn’t hurt you.”

I remember it clearly. I remember knowing somewhere in my heart that he wouldn’t hurt me.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

“A few centuries ago, Lycanthropes lived in their animal form for the most part. They couldn’t sense their mates in human state.” Luke says, tracing his fingers along my cheek “Since I was shoved back to that primal state, I need to be in my Lycan form to find my mate, and until I mark her, neither of us would feel anything in human form.”

“But you said,” I struggle with my words “You will hurt anyone and anything.”

Luke stares at me as a teacher stares at a hopeless student.

“Anyone and anything except my mate.”

Everything clicks in place. His travels in the past five years. Training with packs. All the other pack leaders must’ve

allowed him to shift— in a dungeon maybe, tied with that chain, maybe some other way, and tried to see if he can sense his mate.

“You,” words betray me once again

My mate. My escape. The man I always thought of as a way to run from my pack, a chance of new life, and yet a man I wanted to be true to.

Korra's words from long ago echo in my head;

You will find your mate after you fall in love.

Luke Winters, the man I fell in love with despite my every effort not to. Feelings that I knew were hopeless, feelings that wouldn't go away.

A strange sound reaches my ears. It takes me a moment to realize what it is.

My sob.

"Elise," Luke says as if softly chiding me. He pulls me towards himself, his arms warm around me "Hazel, why are you crying?"

"I'm not crying," I lie, hiding my face in his chest "my eyes are sweating from exhaustion."

This was the stupidest plot twist, fate. And I know you're a b\*\*\*\*\* but thank you, thank you, and thank you a million times.

We sit in silence, my small frame cradled in his arms. Neither of us says anything as if exhausted by words.

The tears stop, the confusion and panic clear away, leaving a strange serenity in their place. I take a deep, soothing breath, relishing the scent of pine trees and coffee. Luke's scent. My mate's scent.

Luke presses a kiss to my hair, his voice is soft as three little words caresses my ears;

“I love you.”

And finally, finally, those words belong to me.

A laugh bubbles past my lips, happier and lighter than it's been in ages. I look up and brush away the tear streaks on my face, a smile on my lips.

“A bad decision, really,”

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## Alpha's Hunt by Starlight chapter 46

### Chapter 46 Utterly unromantic

I mutter another curse.

Is there anything in here that I can wear?

I look through the closet, the clothes in which had belonged to one of the previous Alpha Supreme's daughters. Most of her clothes must've come from some crazy designer.

Who the hell wears a dress with a gaping hole on the belly?

Finally, I find a mustard yellow, knee-length dress. Looking at it with skeptical eyes, I decided to give it a try.

I hurry into the bathroom and zip it up, brushing my fingers through my hair as I stare into the mirror. At least the top part is decent.

Since the sink mirror can only offer so much of a view, I step out to look at my reflection in the dresser mirror.

A smile curls my lips upward. Who knew yellow was my color?

I do a little twirl, giggling to myself. Is it okay if I keep it? I am liking this dress.

As I busy myself with making silly faces at my reflection, the door clicks open. I look over my shoulder to catch

familiar stormy blue eyes and grin.

“How are you feeling, Hazel?” Luke asks as he closes the door behind

“Amazing!” I grin wider

I do feel great, the pain from my wound is almost gone and my head isn't spinning at all anymore. I feel so light, so strong like I could do anything at all.

I turn my eyes to the mirror again, the tiredness on my face is gone and a strange glow has found its home on my face. Happiness.

Luke's reflection appears behind mine, the faintest smile on his lips. He presses a light kiss behind my ear, causing a shiver to race down my spine.

“I'm glad, mi more,” he says, both his hands fall on the dresser beside me, trapping me in place

I turn around to face him. he's standing so close to me, my nose almost touching his. And there's nothing wrong with

it. Realization leaves me slightly breathless.

His stormy eyes look over me leisurely, as if absorbing my image, making my heart beat a tempo against my ribcage.

“I’ve been waiting so long for you, Hazel.” Luke’s warm breath fans my face, his fingers brushing against my arm

“For your mate?” I ask, hooking my arms around his neck

He shakes his head, the storm in his eyes darker “For you, Elise.”

His lips capture mine, stealing my breath. My mold against his, desperate for re\*\*urance that this is real. That I belong with him and he belongs with me. Luke’s lips move against mine with burning desire, making my stomach twist into heavenly knots, my knees weak.

His arms wrap around my waist, sitting me on the dresser. My hands tangle in his hair, a growl thrums from his tome, making goosebumps rise on my arms. Luke’s hands travel up my back, slow, exploring, as his teeth catch my bottom lip. A strange sound escapes me, embarra\*\*ingly loud.

Luke lets go of my mouth, his lips trail down my jaw, burning against my skin. My muddled mind barely registers his fingers on the zipper at my back, his mouth travels down my neck. His lips skim the mark, making electricity shoot

through me, a startled gasp leaves my mouth.

He s\*\*\*s hard on the mark, my grip on his hair tightens, my throat parched with desire, and my heart racing with anticipation. The zipper slides down, making the neckline of the dress go lower. Luke shifts his attention from the mark to my collar bone, kissing and nipping along my skin, making me feel things I’ve never felt before.

I know what happens after someone marks their mate. I know specially what happens between mates when the full moon is approaching. Everything in my heart says yes, everything in my body wants to give in to this desire thrumming in the air.

My hands let go of his hair and find his arms, pulling away.

“W-Wait,”

Luke stops, frozen for one moment before he looks up at me, his eyes almost black.

“This,” I move an inch away, breathless “This is too much.”

Luke’s brows pull together in confusion as he straightens, effectively giving me a little space. I gently push his arms down and pull the zipper back up. I’m aware of his eyes on me, aware of my pounding heart. I try and fail to meet his gaze.

Warm finger tucks under my chin and lifts it to meet stormy blue eyes.

“You don’t want me?” Luke’s voice is quiet as if he doesn’t want to say the words out loud

“I do,” I say softly “I do but, this, it’s moving too fast.”

He doesn’t say anything but nods. I don think he understands what I’m saying. I take a deep breath, holding his hand in my own.

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“It’s just...” I struggle to find words “I always thought about my mate as an escape plan. I never went as far as to

think we...”

I peek at Luke from under my lashes. Embarrasment is not something I feel often, nor is it something I can handle well.

“No man has ever touched me like this before,” I rub my thumb over his knuckles “This is just so new to me, unknown territory I don’t want to rush through.”

I want him, I did even before I knew he’s my mate. But my mind will not let me give myself to anyone, even to him, so easily. Not when it had always been wary of every man who approached me.

Luke’s face is ten times as unreadable as always, I refrain myself from fidgeting and hold his gaze.

Finally, his lips twitch upward. His shoulders shake and I stare in bewilderment when he starts laughing, shifting his arms so he holds me, his forehead falls against mine.

“You asshole,” I slap his chest, trying to repress a grin “You’re laughing at me?”

“You look so tense, Hazel.” Luke says, his eyes twinkling “As if I would object to such a little request.”

“You-You’re not upset?” I ask him, wide-eyed

“You belong to yourself before any other,” Luke says, his voice clear and hard as always “I can wait my whole life if that’s what you want.”

I try and fail in repressing a smile, my heart warms at his words “You make me sound so boring.”



“Well,” Luke tucks my hair behind my ear “You are pretty unromantic, Elise.”

I gasp, mocking surprise “I am not!”

“Hazel, it took you days to realize I’m falling for you, even when we were practically living with each other.” Luke shakes his head

“It was because you’re so utterly unromantic,” I say “How was I supposed to know you liked me when you never even gave me a compliment?”

“How shallow of you, my love,” Luke sighs mockingly “I would’ve gladly laid my life for you and here you are, complaining about words.”

“Well, I don’t want you to die for me,” I chirp “Little compliments here and there will do.”

Luke nuzzles the tip of his nose against mine, making me giggle “I love it when you laugh.”

He presses a chaste kiss to my lips, my laugh stops in a gasp at the unexpected action, my face turns red “I love it when you blush because of me.”

“Which is rare,” I roll my eyes with a smile

“But what I love the most,” Luke says “is you. Just you, all of you, only you.”

A soft laugh escapes me and I wrap my arms around him, resting my face against his chest.

“Ditto on that last part.”

...

I peek from behind the shelves, the motionless target in sight.

I tiptoe towards the high back chair, my hands raised to cover his eyes and surprise him. I brace myself to pounce, a grin on my face.

The next moment, the chair turns, two hands grab me around the waist and lift me to someone's lap, wrapping around me in a secure hold.

"Sneaking up on me, Hazel?" Luke raises an eyebrow at me

"Oh come on!" I throw my hands up "I masked my scent! How could you know I was here?"

"Hyperactive senses, Elise." He says, turning the chair back around  
"Why are you here? You should be resting."

"I've been resting ever since you left."

"That was two hours ago."

I give him a look "If I stay in that bed for any longer, my lower limbs are going to become useless. Do you want that?"

Luke sits me on his desk so we're on eye-level "I want you to heal properly before you quite possibly fall down the stairs and crack a rib or two."

I puff up my cheeks and cross my arms "I am not that clumsy."

"I believe you, Hazel," he says, a faint smile on his lips "Did you call your mom?"

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I nod “Just now. She wants me to come back as soon as possible.”

The smile fades away “Did you tell her?”

I bite my bottom lip and shake my head “I didn’t know where to begin.”

Luke lets out a breath, leaning back in his chair. I furrow my brows, I thought he’d want me to tell her as soon as possible.

Noticing my expression, Luke takes my hands in both of his, shifting to face me fully. My heart rate doubles by the small contact, but I do my very best to keep my head.

“Elise, keep an open mind about what I’m going to tell you,” Luke says, his voice is as hard as always, but I notice the pinch of concern in it

I hope my worry isn’t showing on my face.

“Okay,” I nod at him calmly

“No one can know about this,” he holds my hands tighter “Not until I officially become Alpha Supreme, not until we move to the New York HQ.”

“Why?” my face is all angles of confusion

A shadow across his face “If anyone found out about you, it won’t take them long to plan something to get to me.”

“Get to you for what?” I ask

“I’m a new ruler, not even official,” Luke says “There are countless people probably planning a\*\*a\*\*ination attacks right now.”

I stare at him, mind running a million miles per second. Luke searches my face, looking for a hint of what I'm thinking. Considering the way his grip tightens a notch, I think he comes up short.

I shrug.

The look of pure surprise on his face makes a laugh bubble from my lips.

"Alright, so we can't make it public just yet." I grin at him, eyes crinkling in amusement. "It's only for like what? One week?"

Luke flashes me a small smile, the relief on his face barely readable but there. He presses a kiss to either of my hands.

"I thought you would insist that you can keep yourself safe." He says

"I can, Winters." I say, raising my chin. "But I'd rather not look over my shoulder every ten seconds to make sure no one is stalking me for taking me hostage."

"Thank you for understanding, Hazel."

"You don't have to thank me." I wink at him, then a sudden thought crosses my head

"What about this though?" I ask, tilting my head to expose the mark on my neck

"We can hide it."

I put on a thinking expression, then nod. "Turtle necks and a boatload of perfume, I got it."

Luke shakes his head. "That won't work, Hazel. The change is in your very scent, your aura. It's not that simple."

“Then what?” my brows furrow

Luke’s face is impassive as he stares at mine, finally, words wrench their way out of his mouth.

“Korra can mask it.”

“No way,” I pull my hands away, my nose crinkles at just the thought “I don’t want to mask it, and her spells sting pretty bad from what I remember.”

“She’s our best option.” Luke sighs “I’ve thought of other ways only to come up short. She’s the only witch capable of anything close to masking a mark.”

I bit my bottom lip, brows pulled together. Well... I can handle a bit of a sting and it’s not like I want an inexperienced witch to turn me into a toad by accident.

After a few moments of awkward silence, I finally make a face at him.

“This relationship better be worth doing all this for,” I say

Luke leans forward, brushing his fingers along my jaw, trailing towards my neck, over the mark. The storm in his dark eyes gravitates towards my wide eyes, he flashes me a smirk, showing a hinting of glistering canines.

“I wouldn’t doubt that.”

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He stands up from his chair, face coming dangerously close to mine and I hold my breath, frozen in anticipation.

He reaches around me and grabs a file.

With a smirk loaded with mirth and haughtiness, Luke leans back and opens the file, the pen in it tells me he's been working on it.

I gape at him. That bloody b\*\*\*\*\*!

"Something the matter, Hazel?" Luke raises an eyebrow, giving me a fleeting glance before looking at his file again

"You look flustered."

"What are you doing?" I ask, willing my attention to shift from the thoughts of bashing Luke's head in his desk

"Selecting a day for the execution."

I nod "Oh, that's understandable— What?!"

Luke looks at me as if there's nothing wrong with that "The men at the second lodge, they were warriors from

Goldstein's pack, sent there to ambush the participants."

I gape at him "So you're just going to get them killed?"

"They violated the Hunt rules," Luke says, his voice dead of emotion

"There's no saying they wouldn't try to avenge

their Alpha later."

"Luke, no."

"Excuse me?"

“This isn’t their fault,” I say vehemently “They were just following orders!”

“Following orders to kill us,” Luke narrows his eyes

“Whatever it was, Luke.” I say, my voice softening “They don’t deserve this.”

“You want me to send them back to their pack?” He asks dispa\*\*ionately  
“Where they would tell their new Luna that

Goldstein was planning to attack the participants and got himself killed?”

“Why would that matter? He was the one who did wrong.”

“Zoya Goldstein is as witty as her brother was, if not more.” Luke says  
“She’s going to use this against us.”

“Just because Alpha Goldstein was a horrible king doesn’t mean you have to be like that too,” I say

“I’m not a king, Hazel.” Luke says coolly, leafing through the file “I’m a leader. And I cannot lead those unfaithful to me.”

I resist the urge to throw my hands in the air. I need to handle this carefully, Luke will come around, but I need to push him in the right direction.

“You don’t want to execute all of them,” I say softly, touching my fingers to his cheek “you wouldn’t do something so ruthless.”

“Elise, Hazel, I can’t just—

“You can,” I say softly, persistently “That’s what they’re expecting you to do, to kill them. If you show them forgiveness, they will be forever grateful. They will be loyal to you.”

I can almost see the gears in Luke’s head moving, his eyes calculating, a storm of thoughts brewing in them. A gleam settles in the deep blue as he c\*\*\*s his head aside.

“Perhaps,” he says slowly “I can make as an exception this once.”

I know he has something in mind other than sending them back to their pack, but at least they’ll live.

“See?” I say, a smile lifting at my lips “If you just move your head from the rigid pathways, things can work out pretty well.”

But Luke only stares at me, eyes thoughtful. I can tell his mood has shifted from scheming by the way the tautness of his face is replaced by a little smile.

“You’re going to be a great Luna, Elise.” He says a hint of pride pinched in his voice “My Luna.”

“What can I say?” My lips curve in a smirk “I’m known to be pretty amazing.”

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Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight chapter 47

Chapter 47 The chains of restraint

I sigh in pure bliss. Goddess, this is the way to live.



I turn the page of my book, the sunlight illuminating the library also warms it up. My hand returns to run through the soft tendrils of hair in my lap— attached to Luke's head.

The sound of him turning the page of his book is loud in the soothing silence.

With considerable willpower, I turn my eyes away from my book and towards the grandfather clock against the wall.

"It's already been two hours," I say out loud, surprise evident in my voice

Luke lifts his head off my lap and straightens himself, pulling his legs down the couch "I could've sworn it's only been twenty minutes."

I stretch my arms above my head, a grin curving my lips as I pull my legs up and settle comfortably on the couch, my

book in my hands.

"Go do your Alpha duties," I say to Luke with a dismissive wave "I'm going to finish this one today."

Since I can't really meet the rest of those who survived due to the risk of them finding out about the mark, Luke had

showed me the library that's just in front of the staircase leading to the top floor— the whole of which is reserved for the winners.

I see Luke frown from my peripheral. When I give him no attention he sighs and heaves himself off the couch.

"Why don't you come along?" he says "I could use a review on the accommodations for the unsupervised packs."

“We did that last night, remember?” I say, mindlessly turning the page of my book

“Did we?”

“Yes.”

When he doesn't move from his place for a few more moments, I raise my hooded eyes to meet his, feigning confusion.

“I will be going then,” He says, picking up his suit jacket and shrugging it on

He walks to the door, steps sluggish and determined at the same time. I bite my lip not to grin as I say;

“Luke?”

He pivots on his heel, intent gaze on me “Yes?”

“Would you mind sending a cup of tea here?” I say innocently “Thank you.”

His eyes narrow a fraction, I'm dead sure he can see the amus\*\*\*\*t dancing across my eyes but he only gives me a

nod and goes out of the door, shutting it behind with a thud!

A laugh escapes me— more like a mischievous giggle. Luke does not like being ignored.

Only moments later, a maid comes in. I look up, a little surprised for a few reasons. The first being that it was too

quick of service to be real, the second being that the maid has no cup in her hands, the third being it that doesn't make sense why she's here if not for the tea.

"Alpha Supreme is asking for you in his office, Ms. Attwood." She tells me

Seriously? With a huff, I push myself off the couch and place a bookmark in my book.

"Did he say what for?" I ask her as we start for the door

"No, Ms." The maid replies "But there are guests in his office."

Guests. My heart leaps in my chest at first thought that it must be mom, mom here to see me.

Homesickness crashes over me like a tide of rough water, drowning any logic or sense and the next thing I know is

that I'm racing above the stairs, towards his office.

Without knocking, I go through the door open, face warm and breaths short from having run up so fast. My eyes instantly land on Luke, then to the visitor's chair, a woman turns to face me.

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I almost step back with disappointment.

Korra. Not mom.

Of course you dumba\*\*! How could she be here right now?

Trying to cover up my expression, I offer her a small smile.

“Hello,” I say as I walk towards the other visitor chair

“Expecting someone else, dearie?” Korra asks, her blazing yellow eyes fix on my mark

“No, not really.” I lie smoothly “How come you’re here?”

She turns her gaze to Luke, mirth fills her eyes “Ya didn’t tell ’er, beastie?”

Luke’s eyes narrow at that word, a low growl rumbles through him but he says nothing of it.

“You knew, didn’t you?” Luke gives her a customary disdainful glance

“Please,” She rolls her eyes “This is ’ow fate wanted it, so this is ’ow it went.”

He keeps his glare on her for a few more moments, then turns to me.

“Hazel, I told you we cannot let anyone know about us yet.” He says I nod “Korra’s here to help with that.”

“You told me that.” I say, turning my face to the witch “Can I trust you not to blow my head up?”

“Not remotely.”

The glare that Luke sends her even makes Korra hold a hand up in defense.

“Cool down, beastie.” She flashes him a grin, golden teeth gleaming “I ain’t hurting yar treasure.”

Luke gets up from his place to make his way towards me, his hand falls on my shoulder. He gives it a reassuring squeeze. I take a deep breath, biting my bottom lip.

Am I going to do this? Remove the mark that saved my life? That's supposed to be the most expensive jewelry

I ever wear?

I turn my eyes to Luke, his gaze is apologetic, reflecting the ruefulness in my own eyes. With a sigh, I internally shake myself.

Get a hold of yourself, Elise. It's temporary masking.

I nod at Luke, surprising both of us with a fierce grin.

"Should I just get it done with?" Korra asks, almost bored

"Let's do this while the fit is on us," I say

She closes her eyes, muttering words under her breath. Wisps of gold spin out of her wand and slowly swirl towards me. The wisps curl around me. I feel pain shoot up my skin as if someone is burning my skin with a blue-hot flame.

My lips part instinctively and a blood-curdling scream escapes. I rub my arms, my neck feeling as if something is ripping my skin off. Melting something off me, as if I'm being put from one skin into another. I can't hear my voice but my throat is burning raw with pain.

My senses give in, numbing and bending away under the pain that comes over me. I feel like I'm falling, but I don't reach the ground. I keep falling and falling and falling until there's something soft against my back.

I wrench my eyelids to open up, my vision lurches and so does my stomach. I feel sick, like that one time I did when I

thought it's a good idea to ride in the washing machine with the door open.

With a groan, I heave myself up the bed.

The next instant, I find myself looking into familiar stormy blue eyes, raking over me, searching.

"Are you alright, Hazel?" Luke asks "Does it hurt anywhere?"

"Just dizzy," I rub my temple "What the hell happened?"

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A different voice answers me from the other side of my room.

"What the stars willed, dearie. I removed yar mark."

"That, that's impossible," I say, my wide eyes land on Korra

"Ya 'haven't completed the bond, dearie," Korra says simply

With a low growl, Luke advances at her "The deal was to mask it, make it undetectable."

Korra grins "What's done is done."

Luke gives her a death glare "I should kill you right now."

"The leash has already slipped," she looks pointedly at his hands

Mine and Luke's eyes follow her line of sight and I see his fingers elongated, pointed to sharp claws.

"Need some air, beastie?" She raises an eyebrow, but the momentary glance she sends my way doesn't go unnoticed by me

"I'm not leaving you alone with her," Luke growls lowly

"As ya wish." Korra shrugs but casts a glance at me again

She makes her way towards the window, probably ready to take flight when she looks at me yet again. Curiosity

grabs me by the shirt front and shakes me hard.

"Wait!" I say, without waiting for anyone to answer, I get off the bed

My head spins slightly, but I feel a lot better than I did a few moments ago. Luke instantly moves to my side, placing a hand on the small of my back. I can feel his skin burning with withheld anger.

"You want to say something," I say to Korra "Then say it."

She c\*\*\*s her head, thinking. Then nods, maybe to me, probably to herself.

"Send 'im out and I will."

Another low growl slips past Luke's lips, he takes a step forward but I hold him back.

"Just for a moment," I say quietly "You can wait just outside the door."

His eyes snap to mine and I'm taken aback by just how dark they are "No. I'm not letting you out of my sight."

"Luke, please." I cup the side of his face "If anything goes wrong I'll scream my lungs out, promise."

His eyes dart between both of mine, unconvinced, concerned.

I try again "At my request?"

His jaw tightens, every muscle in his body tenses like springs under pressure but his head jerks a nod. He turns his stormy eyes to Korra.

Luke lets out a breath and I see the armor slide back in place, he puts his hands behind his back, looking down at the

witch with an impa\*\*ive face.

"Anything happens to her," he says slowly, calmly, each word hard as a rock "And Braxton will have to face the consequence."

For one split second, Korra's eyes widen but she recovers too quickly. A shadow crosses her face, making her yellow eyes more pronounced.

"Done yar share of bargaining, haven't ya?" she asks, a slight sneer in her voice

"My whole life is a series of bargains, witch." Luke says "And I always keep my end of the deal."

With that he leaves the room, closing the door behind. I shift awkwardly on my feet.

"So what did you want to say to me?" I ask calmly



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Korra turns her glare from the door to my face “Keeping in mind that full moon is coming, I’ll let him go this time.”

I give her a tight-lipped smile, she lets out a muffled sigh.

“The stars seem ta love playing with ya, dearie.” She says

My brows pull together “How so?”

“Ya know what ’e is, what ’e is gonna become on the full moon.” She says I nod “And ’ is marked on ya, the beast’s

a\*\*urance that ’is mate belongs ta ’im, is gone.”

My stomach turns in unease “Luke wouldn’t hurt me, he never has.”

“And ’is mate just so ’happens to be an omega,” Korra ignores my statement “A fragile doll ’e needs ta protect.”

“Luke isn’t like that,” I say, a bit severer this time

“Winters ain’t,” Korra shrugs “But the beast is.”

Korra’s amber eyes settle on mine with a seriousness I haven’t seen before “Don’t let the beast break the chains of restraint Winters has on ’im.”

She turns to the window again and what she says next is barely audible to me;

“The beast cant hurt ya,” she whispers “But ’e can hurt many people ya would like ta see alive.”

Then she shifts into a raven and takes off, leaving me with a racing heart and a swimming head.

I open the door and find Luke just outside, his head snaps to mine and I usher him inside.

“Are you alright?” he asks me instantly, I nod “What did she say?”

I chew my bottom lip “To be careful.”

Luke drags a hand down his face, rubbing his jaw before he lets his hand drop. He closes the distance between us,

cradles my face in his hands, and sets his forehead against mine. His skin is warm against my own, callous hands on my soft cheeks. No stars erupt across my skin, but the sure, warm tingles of his touch make my heart flip.

“Did it hurt a lot?” he asks quietly

My lips tug upward in an easy smile “Like hell.”

“I’m sorry.” Luke says, disappointment evident in his voice “I didn’t know—

I press a quick kiss to his lips “You don’t have to apologize to me.”

His lips quirk upwards at my words, but the smile dims the moment I step back. Luke leans down to kiss me again but I swiftly turn my face so his lips touch my cheek.

“What?” I hold back a laugh at his bewildered expression “I’m tired.”

Luke narrows his eyes at me, a hint of playfulness gleaming in his eyes  
“Of course, Hazel, you should rest.”

He leans forward so his lips brush against my ear, causing a shiver to race down my spine.

“Trust me, you’ll need it in the long run.” He whispers

“Aren’t you being too desperate, Winters?” I ask

His shoulders shake with silent laughter “You don’t know what desperate looks like, Elise.”

“You need a cold shower,” I pull away from him, a half-embarrassed, half-amused look on my face “And a reminder that you have work to do.”

With a huff, he lets go of me “Rest, and tell me if you feel anything isn’t right.”

I roll my eyes despite my smile “I will,”

Reluctantly, Luke goes out of the room yet again, closing the door behind. The worry I’d felt while talking to Korra evaporates quickly. She’s probably just angry at Luke. Luke wouldn’t lose his calm, he hadn’t lost it before.

**Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight chapter 48**

Chapter 48 Someone I love

Humming, I take a long shower. When I come back out, the sky is thick with dark clouds, I see the lightning flash in a distance. Luke isn't back yet.

Combing my fingers through my wet hair, I wonder if I should go down to meet the others.

Seven teams made it back, six excluding us. Luke told me Ethan and Tyler made it back and so did Joseph and

Freddie. The others I don't know, but I do want to meet my friends.

My mind made up, I make my way towards the stairs and go straight to the first floor. I reach the first door and raise my hand to knock when the realization hits me.

I have no idea which room they're in.

Muttering a curse, I move the gears in my head.

Just then, a maid goes past me, an idea hits me like lightning. The sound of thunder in the background only adds to create the effect.

"Wait," I quickly walk to her, she raises an eyebrow at me in confusion  
"Do you know where Alpha Parks' room is?"

"Sure, Ms. Attwood." She nods "The second last on the left."

"Thank you," I grin at her but just as I take a step forward, she speaks again

"If you are hoping to meet him, Ms. He's not there." She tells me "He left for a jog with his beta just five minutes ago. They said the rain wouldn't be a problem."

“Oh,” My shoulders drop “And Alpha Vanderwood? Where is he?”

“He just asked for coffee in the library.”

With a smile, I nod at her and turn to the stairs again. Soon enough, I reach the library on the second floor.

Without knocking, I slip inside. Using my ninja maneuvers, I quickly detect a mop of dark hair against one of the couches.

I slowly creep forward, making no sound whatsoever, finally, I am close enough to the couch to scare the s\*\*\* out of him when I hear;

“And you said I’m creepy.”

“Seriously?” I frown at him, peeking from behind the couch “What is it with everyone knowing I’m there?”

“Your scent is strong, Attwood,” Joseph looks up from the chessboard in front of him on the table “And every

Lycanthrope here is either Alpha or Beta, except you, of course.”

I huff “Yet I’m the one who won.”

“Winters won.”

“Same thing.”

He gives me an amused look “What are you doing here?”

“Cant I check up on my housemates to know if they’re alive?” I give him a look, propping myself on the couch

“I appreciate the concern,” he says with a quirk of his lips “I’m surprised you’re alive, Elise. Heard you took a silver bullet.”

“Who told you?” my eyebrows shoot to the sky

“Parks wanted to see you, Winters said you’re still recovering.” He says, moving a piece from the black’s side and then moving one from the white  
“By the way, how are you now?”

“I’m good,” I say cheerfully “Never been better.”

Joseph casts me a sideways glance, his lips curve in a smirk “So, you and Winters?”

I raise an eyebrow at him, hoping he can’t hear how my heart has started to gallop.

“What do you mean?” I play dumb, faintly aware of the splatters of rain on the windows

“Don’t give me that look,” he rolls his eyes “I know about his curse.”

My mouth falls open “What, how?”

Joseph takes a moment to think, then moves the black’s queen, knocking over white’s king. Checkmate.

“My father attempted to kill him.”

“What?”

Joseph picks up his coffee mug and takes a sip, leans back in his seat.

“He came to our pack some four years ago, talked to my father on some matters.” He tells me calmly “He and his little crew of warriors were to

leave in a few days, my father told me we would finish them off in the night. I asked him the reason. He told me.”

He takes another sip of the coffee and looks at me with those too clever forest eyes “I don’t think I’d ever forgotten the night a single Lycan killed ten trained warriors.”

A beat of silence passes and then I’m compelled to ask;

“What about your father?”

“Gone.”

My eyes widen in horror “Did he, Did Luke—

“No,” Joseph says “He’s not dead. He’s in exile for planning an attack on your pack a few months later. He helped some rouges, the Alpha Supreme found out. He was exiled without trial, no one bought his story of the boy beast.”

I let out a breath I didn’t know I was holding, Joseph exhales a laugh.

“You’re acting as if it would’ve been bad if Winters had killed him.” He says

“How can you say that?” I ask applauded “He’s your father!”

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“A father who killed his two older children to save his title.”

I’m openly gaping at Joseph. He rolls his eyes at me.

“Get yourself together, Attwood.” He says lightly, but I detect the careful warning in his voice, telling me not to show sympathy “Things happen, people go on. I don’t remember much of it anyway.”

I decide to change the topic to “Yeah, Luke and I.”

“Knew it,” he flashes me the usual self-content smirk “I must admit, Winters is a lucky b\*\*\*\*\* to get to stay with his mate the entire Hunt.”

“You must be missing you mate too, huh?” I ask, then a grin comes to my lips “I’m sure she’s glad to have you away for a while.”

“Penelope adores me,” Joseph huffs “And she shares my admiration for chess.”

I find myself genuinely smiling at him “I’m sure she does.”

“Now that you’ve given me the official t\*\*le of being your housemate,” Joseph says “I expect you to have the first official dinner at my pack.”

“Official dinner?”

He nods at me as he stands up “The new Alpha Supreme receives a lot of invitations for an official meeting with other packs.”

I stand up as well “I expect a grand feast.”

Joseph gives me a little bow “As you wish, your highness.”

I smile at him, only to realize a moment later that he probably has to go and I’m standing just in front of him. He’d have to move around the table to leave, or I could just step back and save him the trouble.



In my haste to move back, my foot hits the table's leg and I lose my balance. Instinctively, trying to hold something for support, my hands find Joseph's arm, causing him to fall with me.

The mug slips from his grip and shatters to the floor as we both fall on the couch. Joseph manages not to crush me by holding himself by the arms. I almost cringe at the awkward position.

Before either of us can move, a low growl reaches my ears.

The next instant, I hear a crash as the table is tossed away, its glass top shattering with an ear-piercing sound. Joseph has hauled off me, and I hurriedly scramble up to see him being held against a shelf.

"Stay away from her," Luke's lips curl in a snarl, displaying his elongated canines, his hand clenched around Joseph's throat

I stare at Luke, petrified in my place, if he tightens his hold he's going to kill him. Something hits me like an iron fist in my guts.

"Luke, let him go," I scurry off the couch and towards them, trying to pull him back from a struggling Joseph

His head snaps to me for a moment, eyes dark like obsidian, rage swirling in their depths. Without thinking twice, I step back.

He turns his face back to Joseph, whose face is turning red, his own hands have shifted, trying to claw off Luke's grip in vain.

"She's mine," Luke growls at him

I flinch at the raw possession in rough his voice. My heart starts to pound hard against my chest. Something is very, very wrong here. This is not Luke's voice, it cant be.

Internally shaking myself, I grab his arm yet again, trying to pull back.

“He knows that,” I say, desperation taints my voice like poison “He has a mate, remember!”

His chest rises and falls as quickly as Joseph’s, a few painful seconds die in the process of his hand leaving Joseph’s throat, who quickly pushes Luke away from himself, drawing in sharp breaths.

Two burning arms wrap around me in crushing hold, reminding me so much of the last full moon.

“Don’t touch her again.” Luke’s voice rumbles with a growl

I cant see Joseph’s face, but he says nothing. I feel a face pressed in my hair, taking a deep breath.

“My mate,” A rough voice whispers “Only mine.”

I manage to snake my hands between us, hopelessly trying to push him a bit away. Finally, relenting, Luke pulls away just enough to look at me. Anger, possession, and adoration all mixed up in his eyes. My brain jams in place, unable to comprehend what’s happening.

Something in him snaps, clearing away the dark mist to give way for the stormy blue.

Luke’s eyes widen a fraction, eyebrows pulling together as he abruptly lets go of me. I hear the sound of a door slamming shut as he leaves.

I whirl around to see Joseph, leaning against the shelf, the bruises on his neck already fading.

“Are you okay?” I ask

“Fine.” He nods, still staring at the door “You?”

“I’m okay.” I let out a breath “Joseph, I’m sorry, my clumsiness got this messed up.”

He finally looks at me again and shakes his head “This is expected. Lycans are possessive even these days, and he

is... something ancient.”

“This isn’t,” I swallow “Always going to be like this, right?”

Joseph keeps staring at me for a while “I don’t know.”

I try to swallow the lump in my throat “I should go.”

“Elise,” Joseph calls as I near the door, I look over my shoulder “Give him time, this must be new for him too.”

I give him a quick nod “I’ll keep that in mind.”

I quickly make my way to my room, when I throw the door open, I can’t see him anywhere. I’m not sure if I’m relieved or disappointed.

I bite my lip in thought. Should I look for him? But Luke will come back when he’s done processing this right? I should give him time.

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I sit, pace, lay down, and pace again in my room as the minute’s tick by. The rain outside gets harder. He doesn’t come back.

Finally, when it’s past midnight, I decide that’s this is enough. Leaving my room, a storm of thoughts swirls in my head.

I don't know if I want to have this conversation. I'm sure Luke doesn't want to have this conversation. But we can't avoid this, I refuse to let a dumb incident be a hurdle between us.

I go to his office and without knocking, go inside. Blinking, I look around. He's not here. I close the door and look through the other rooms.

The thunder roars, illuminating the otherwise dark hallways. I contemplate calling out his name but I don't want to risk him walking away.

Looking inside each room, my disappointment increases. But he should be here! Unless he went out. But he wouldn't go out in this weather, would he?

My feet accelerate their pace and so does my heart and I silently pray to the Goddess for him to be here.

I reach the second floor and just as I quickly pass a balcony, my steps falter.

I step back, slowly, hopefully, and there, standing in the pouring rain I see a tall, dark silhouette.

The thunder roars again, I quietly step out into the rain, biting back a gasp as the icy water hits me. My hand reaches out to touch him but I hesitate before pulling it back

A whisper leaves my mouth "Luke."

Impossibly, over the sound of the splashing rain and rushing wind, he hears me. He whirls around, eyes wide a

fraction, muscles taut.

For a moment, we just stand there; in the pouring rain under the dark sky, looking at each other, asking a thousand

questions in the silence that envelopes us.

My feet move forward, my hands reach up to hold his face and I vaguely wonder why he seems so taller than usual.

Tenderly, my freezing fingers graze his burning skin. His stormy eyes burn with deep regret, a pain ages old.

Breaking the spell of silence, my mouth opens and words tumble out;

“Why did you leave?”

Luke snaps out of his trance, he briskly steps away from me before turning his back at me once again.

“Why are you here?” his voice is harder than it’s ever been before

“You just took off and you’re asking me why I’m here?” I say

Another flash of lightning illuminates the balcony, I notice his hands digging into the railing.

“You should go.”

I gape at his ripped back, feeling irritation and confusion arise in me. Why is he acting like this? I didn’t do anything

wrong!

“Do you think I came here at this hour of the night, in the pouring rain, just to turn back?” I ask, my eyes narrowed

His neck muscles tense, other than the sound of thunder, I get no response.

“Luke, look at me,” I say in a firm voice

He doesn't move an inch. Closing the distance between us, I take his arm and force him to look my way.

“Do you have any idea,” I jab a finger at his chest “how worried I was?”

“You don't have to worry about me, Hazel.” He looks away

“Luke, what are you talking about?” I stare at him, brows furrowed in confusion

“Monsters are not to be worried for,”

“You're not—

“I saw the way you looked at me,” He steps away from me, a strange sort of restlessness on his features

I stare at him, wide-eyed and stunned. Getting no answer out of me, Luke runs a hand through his hair, pushing the dark strands away from his face.

“You looked at me like you want to run away,” his eyes clench shut as if he's in too much pain “as though I terrify you.”

My heart falters, crushed with an unknown pain, and my shoulder sag under its weight.

“You don't scare me.” I say, my voice hushed in the rough winds “You never will.”

“How can you not be afraid,” he asks, staring down at his hands— claws  
“Of what might surface through me?”

I step forward and hold his face. Luke’s eyes gravitate to mine, looking like shattered gla\*\* after a storm.

“How can I be afraid of someone I love?”

Even in the pouring rain, his body radiates heat. Standing on my toes, I hook my arms around him, his arms wrap around me, holding me as though I might vanish any moment.

“This won’t happen again, Elise.” his voice is so low I almost don’t catch it over the sound of the rain “I swear.”

“I know,” I whisper, then little smile tugs at my lips “But I kinda really like hugging in the rain.”

His shoulders relax slightly, Luke presses a soft kiss to my temple “This won’t happen like this again.”

I nod “Yeah, there should be a garden and background music.”

He smiles then. The first deep smile I’ve ever seen him give after the one on the finish line. It melts my heart as I look at him, really look at him. At a man who’s been told of the monster he might become his whole life and yet he had the strength to take that t\*\*le down and build a new one.

Goodness, I have fallen hard.

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I lean forward to lock my lips with his, Luke instantly returns the gesture but I stop before that. A strange feeling crawls up my body, my eyes widen in realization and I turn my face just in time before—

I sneeze.

Sniffing, I turn back to Luke with a sheepish smile.

“Come on,” He smiles, his hand seems to engulf mine on a whole new level

Luke guides me back inside and pa\*\*ing through the dark hallways to my room before flickering on the lights I had

turned down before leaving.

“You should take a warm shower, Hazel.” Stepping away from me, Luke opens the closet and takes out a long sweatshirt

Taking the shirt from him, I look up—way up at his face “And you?”

“I’ll take a shower in the other room,” Luke says

Nodding, I step away from him into the bathroom. Taking off my soaked clothes I take a quick warm shower.

Sneezing a few times, might I add. Then I dry off and put on the dry shirt.

My mind wanders back to what happened not so long ago. I know the full moon is coming, but Luke was fine just before... Korra removed my mark. But that can make him go so out of control was unimaginable.

Korra had warned me, maybe I should’ve been more careful. But what about a full moon? Is Luke going to shift during the ceremony? What



about me? He won't try to mark me, would he? It's not like I don't want him to, but I don't want it to be like this.

With a storm of questions, I step back into the room. My eyes instantly land on Luke sitting on the bed. I focus my eyes on his face, his damp hair, and his dark stormy gaze but he looks calm, not as guilt-ridden as he did a while ago.

My gaze travels to his hands and, for a millisecond, I freeze. They're still not back to normal.

Surprised, I walk up to him and curiously, cautiously hold his hand in mine. It should be back to normal, every other time it happened, it goes back in a while.

He waits for me to speak and I do too, but no words come out of my mouth. I look up and my eyes meet his tired ones, a note of worry in them.

A small smile tugs at my lips as I interlock his fingers with mine.

"Let's sleep, yeah?" I ask

Luke presses a kiss on my forehead and nods.

I have so many questions, so many queries and yet I can't make myself ask him anything. I will, of course, but not now.

Now is not the time for that.

Luke lays down on the other side of the bed, a little away from me. Both of us lay on our sides, I curled up and his ramrod straight, staring at each other.

“Luke,” I say after a moment “I’m feeling cold.”

“Strange,” he says, “I think it’s warm.”

Well, if that’s the case. I scoot over to him. In an instant, his arms wrap around me so his head falls against my

chest, no doubt hearing my fast heartbeat.

The thunder roars again, rain splatters on the gla\*\* windows and my body relaxes completely in Luke’s hold. I nearly drift off to sleep before realizing that he was still awake.

“Can’t sleep?” I ask quietly

Silence. Then;

“Yes.”

I tilt my head to look at him, a little sleepy smile on my face.

“You have me here and you still can’t sleep,” I say, hushed amus\*\*\*\*t in my voice “I have the right to know why.”

Luke shifts his hold on me so we’re on eye level, in the dimly lit room I make out the slight furrow between his

brows, not a wink of sleep in his eyes.

“Elise, if I ask something of you, will you grant it to me?” He asks, his voice quiet in contrast to the storm outside

I ignore the worry in my mind “If you ask me to kill you again, I just might.”

He doesn't find that funny, instead, his fingers interlock with mine, engulfing my hand in warmth.

"Don't give up on us."

I blink, confused at what he just said. He presses on;

"I will not lie to you, Hazel. Even after I become Alpha supreme, even after I mark you, I might not be able to control my shift on a full moon, I might not be able to hold back my instinct when another man comes close to you," Luke says

"But I swear, Elise, I will never hurt you. I will get this under control. I—

I press a kiss to his lips "Shut up,"

A small laugh escapes me at his bewildered expression "You worry way too much, Luke."

I pull my hand out of his and trail my fingers down the side of his face, along his jaw "You don't have to explain yourself to me. You kept no secret about yourself, I fell in love with it all. I'm not going to take the good you offer and frown at the bad. I know you will work this out, and I'm always happy to help."

I can almost feel him relax, he buries his face deeper in the pillows, hooded eyes staring at me.

"Maybe after so long of having everyone fear me," he says softly "I keep worrying that you might fear me too."

I snuggle closer to him, tucking my head under his chin. His scent and warmth engulf me in comfort, I can hear his rhythmic heartbeat as I close my eyes.

“I’m here,” I whisper “Don’t ever forget that I’m here, Luke. You’re not alone anymore.”

“I know, love.”

## Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight chapter 49

### Chapter 49 Mia Regia

Today is the day.

When I wake up, Luke is of course already gone, since I wake up at 8 and he wakes up at 5. Fidgeting excitedly, I rake through the closet and find a knee-length white dress that looks sophisticated enough.

I quickly take a shower and dry my hair, put on the dress, and apply a bit of makeup. Quickly zipping up my ankle boots, I take another look at the mirror.

The door opens, I see Luke’s reflection, already dressed in a navy suit. I grin at his surprised expression as he sees me

and do a little twirl.

“Ta-da!” I say excitedly “So, how do I look?”

He c\*\*\*s his head to a side “You look beautiful, Hazel. What’s the occasion?”

I stare at him, dumbfounded “Well, we’re leaving for the royal chapel, aren’t we?”

He takes a moment to consider my words, then gives me a nod “Yes, I suppose Casper will be here in a while, then we will leave.”

I squeal excitedly and rock on my toes, which is kind of hard considering that I’m wearing pencil-heel boots.

Luke stares at me thoughtfully “And you are so excited because we’re leaving?”

“Of course I am!”

“I had no idea you wanted to be rid of me so badly, Hazel.” Luke gives me a mock wounded look

My excitement screeches to a halt. I blink at him “What?”

“Casper and I are leaving for the royal chapel. The other competitors have already left.” Luke says, walking towards me “A few guards will take you back to the pack estate. After the ceremony is over, I have to stay there two nights due to some ridiculous tradition. Then I will come to get you.”

I gape at him as he reaches around me to pick up a watch and changes the one he’s wearing right now.

“Why are you so surprised?” Luke lifts my chin to close my mouth “We talked about this.”

“I thought you were joking!” I use my hands to exaggerate

My mind goes back to the conversation we had about this ceremony two days ago, the day I'd woken up and bombarded him with questions after the too emotional confessions.

"Too bad, Hazel." He leans down and presses a kiss to my cheek "I don't want to let you out of my sight, let alone stay away for three days, but it can't be helped."

"But why?" I demand "why can't I come with you?"

"There's a constant risk of a\*\*a\*\*ination."

"Then maybe you shouldn't go either!" I glare at him

Luke shrugs coolly "After spending so much time with me Hazel if you still think I can't hold my ground then you're hopeless."

"This is so unfair!" I give him an accusatory look

"I don't see how keeping you safe is unfair."

"Because I want to go!" I narrow my eyes at him "We've worked so hard for this together, you cant ditch me now! I won't stay behind like a fragile doll!"

Luke straightens his back, towering over me with the authority of an Alpha.

"You're not going, Hazel." He says, his voice hard as stone "I'm not going to put you at risk again."

I hold his stormy gaze with my burning one "If you've forgotten so quickly, I can handle myself."

His hands come down on either side of me on the dresser, Luke leans forward, his face is all angles of determination, eyes narrowed a fraction.

“Why do you always want to put yourself in danger?” he asks, his voice dangerously low “Why can’t you just stay safe for once?”

“This is what you signed up for, Winters.” I say, then my lips tug upwards “Besides, if I were such an obedient maiden, we wouldn’t be here.”

Luke opens his mouth to say something but then closes it again. I look at him suspiciously, what is this man—

All conscious thoughts fly out of my head when he brushes my hair away from my face, his hand slips behind my neck as he leans forward to put his lips against mine. A million burning flames embrace me in their hold as my eyes flutter shut.

“I can’t risk you, Elise.” Luke whispers against my mouth “Not when I just have you back.”

“Why don’t you trust me?” I ask “After everything we’ve done together?”

I reached out to grab him by the shirt in front of tugging him towards myself harder, a low growl rumbles through him to me.

“Don’t you think I can protect myself?” I ask, then I change my strategy “That you can protect me?”

Luke kisses me hard then. Hard and desperate and demanding and that’s exactly the way it wants it. I want this moment to shatter a million times yet every reality will be the same. I feel him nudge my face upward, his lips pushing apart my own, and his tongue slides into my mouth.

A breathy moan leaves me as I melt into him, hooking my arms around his neck, my toes curling in my shoes as the intoxicating flavor of him fills my senses.

His mouth leaves mine burning, I look up to meet his hooded eyes, trying and failing to catch my breath.

“I trust you, Hazel. And I trust myself to protect you more than anything” Luke says “but I don’t trust myself not to

kill anyone who tries to hurt you.”

“You’re overthinking,” I hold his face in my hands “Stop being such a prude.”

“I overthink and that’s why we’re still alive.”

“How could you just leave me here?” I ask, pulling my hands away “I’m your partner! Your mate! Aren’t I the Luna Supreme?”

Luke opens his mouth to deny but then realizes what I’m saying is perfectly right. I grin as he scowls.

“You’re not going to stay here, are you?” He says, dislikes obvious in his voice

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“Nope.” I chirp “Trust me, you’re going to thank me later,”

Luke lets out a rattled breath “You’re going to be the death of me.”

“I’m going to take that as a yes,” I grin

Just then the door slams open, habitually, I jump away from Luke.



Casper comes in my line of sight, his face flushed from running, suit-clad form hunched, blond hair flying and grey eyes instantly settling on me and Luke.

“All the angles and their babies,” Casper huffs out “You two are alive.”

The next instant, he has one arm around me and the other around Luke holding us in a tight embrace.

Luke scowls, I giggle.

Nevertheless Luke pats him on the back, Casper lets go of us, beaming.

“When Alpha Jax told the news I almost collapsed from relief,” He says “You’ve outdone yourself Winters.”

“I think not,” Luke says coolly “It was rather obvious.”

Casper huffs “You should brush up on your common courtesy,”

“I can’t agree more.” I nod solemnly

Casper turns his bright grey eyes to me and the next moment he’s lifted me off my feet in a crushing embrace.

“Thank you, Elise, from the bottom of my heart for tolerating this rock and surviving.” He says, letting go of me

“I deserve medals, I know,” I say smugly

All smugness washes off my face when he presses a kiss on my forehead.

“We can get that arranged—

He's pulled away from me by a very pissed-off Lycan. Casper staggers back as Luke lets go of him and I resist the urge to facepalm myself. Why did he have to do that?

"Get a hold of yourself," Luke's voice rumbles with a low growl, his hand already reaching for mine

Casper's wide eyes take in our interlinked hands. He looks at Luke's dark eyes, then he looks at me, I offer him a little smile, then he looks at our interjoined hands again.

"Is she, are you two," Casper gestures with his hands as if they would convey his message but then words splutter out of his mouth "Tell me you b\*\*\*\*\*, is she the one?"

Luke clears his throat, snapping out of his instinctive haze, with a face blank, he says;

"Yes. Yes, she is."

"Holy mother of f\*\*\*s—

Luke holds Casper back before he can hug us again, but Casper doesn't seem to care, his lips are pulled in a splitting grin, eyes t\*\*\*\*ling.

"This is brilliant, perfect!" Casper says I can almost feel the elation in his voice "To think we had your mate in our pack all this time!"

Luke murmurs something along the lines of "Don't remind me."

"So, this is our official meeting as Luna and beta," I say with a grin  
"Pleased to meet you, Beta Casper Hendricks."

"The pleasure is all mine, Luna." Casper gives me an exaggerated bow

Luna, I grin at the t\*\*le. Yeah, I can get used to this.

“Come on,” Luke tugs at my hand “We’ve already wasted enough time as it is.”

“Yeah, the driver is waiting to take you back...” Casper trails off “Uh, are you going back?”

Luke shakes his head “There’s a change in plans. Elise will attend the ceremony with us, then she will go back.”

He gives me a pointed look as he says that, but well, I suppose we can make a compromise.

“All righty let’s go then.”

...

Everyone stands up as Luke gets up from one knee, a golden crown glistering atop his dark hair, a cloak fashioned from the hide of the legendary white Lycan dr\*\*\*d over his shoulders. He stands erect, hands clasped behind his

back, looking every inch the King they just declared him to be.

My hands sting from clapping too hard.

So I decided to put my fingers in my mouth and whistle.

Through the crowd, his eyes snap to mine, dark hues of stormy blue and I can’t help the pride that flows through me.

The gla\*\* roof of the chapel displays the starry sky and the full moon almost at its peak. Luke had the ceremony

started before the moon could rise fully, it didn't make much difference in the procedure, but it did stop him from eating the guests.

All the Alphas that attended the ceremony and the participant Alphas surround him, shaking hands, congratulating, inviting him for dinners.

"Your boyfriend just got famous," Casper says to me, hands in his pockets

"He's always been," I say with a smile

"Aren't you jealous?" He raises an eyebrow, glancing at where a very bored Luke is flanked by female Alphas and betas

Just as I look his way, he seems to sense my gaze. His eyes gravitate to mine, irritated itched on them.

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"Nah," I wave my hand dismissively "They have no chance."

Casper laughs a little "You should talk to Gloria soon."

I raise my brows at him "And who's that?"

"My possessive little mate,"

I gape at him "You have a mate?!"

"Come on, Elise," Casper gives me a bemused look "You think I traveled the world with Luke and never found my mate?"

"Then why isn't she with you?"

“I met her last year, but we were still traveling then.” Casper shrugs  
“Gloria was a warrior in training at that time. I’d rather stay away from her than have her give up on all she’s worked for.”

“Aww, Cas, that’s so adorable.” I nudge him with my elbow

“Firstly, thanks for acknowledging my good heart, and secondly,” he gives me a look “Cas? It sounds like a girl’s nickname!”

“You do love drama.”

“You wound me, Luna.”

“And me too,” a familiar deep and hard voice says

Luke takes my hand in his, away from prying eyes. I feel the scorching warmth of his skin. Maybe to anyone else,

he would look perfectly fine, but I can see the tension in his shoulders, the way he’s rubbing his temple now and then.

He’s having a hard time keeping it under control, I squeeze his hand, hoping to be of some comfort.

Luke couldn’t dose himself with wolfsbane because it would tamper with the ceremony. Goddess, we’ve managed this on a thin margin.

“You’ve never given me a nickname,” Luke says

I grin “What about all those during the Hunt? Like b\*\*\*\*\*, idiot, a\*\*hole—

His finger pressed against my lips “Maybe you need to reconsider, Hazel.”

Before I could reply, Casper coughs distinctively.

“There are praying eyes everywhere,” he coughs again “Get a hold.”

“One of the few smart things you say, Hendricks.” Luke puts my arm through his

We go around the Chapel, interacting and talking. It’s strange how all these Alphas and Betas are talking to me, respecting me. It feels good, to be considered an equal.

Well, most of the time.

“Alpha Winters!”

“Alpha Pines,” Luke nods towards a man

My eyes fly in his direction. He seems to be in his mid-twenties, maybe a year or so older than Luke. Dressed in a

neat tux, with chestnut curls down to his shoulders, he looks pretty handsome.

“My man,” he shakes Luke’s hand heartily “Congrats! I can’t wait for you to take charge. It’s about damn time young

men told hold of authority.”

“Thank you, Xavier,” Luke says formally “I’m sure you’re happy about this.”

His brown eyes fly to me and he offers me a crooked grin “Didn’t know you brought along a date, Winters.”

Luke raises an eyebrow “You didn’t recognize her?”

Xavier looks surprised “Should I?”

Luke glances at me, I smile at him before turning my eyes to the Alpha standing in front of us.

“Elise Attwood,” I offer him a professional smile

His eyes widen and his jaw drops “You accompanied him on the Hunt?!”

I can’t help the laugh that escapes me “What were you expecting, Alpha?”

“Some old battle-ax,” He says, looking pretty serious “At least not a bathing beauty.”

“I’m flattered,” I roll my eyes with a smile

“Allow me to introduce myself,” he sweeps my hand in his and presses a kiss to my knuckles “Alpha Xavier Pines,

Alpha Supreme of Europe.”

“Pleased to meet you.” I nod

“Feel free to be pleased by me anytime, little lady.” He winks

Luke’s arm around my waist tightens just slightly. I offer Alpha Xavier a small smile, praying to the Goddess he does not get his nose broken.

“Say, I have a vacancy for my secretary,” Xavier says, not at all bothering to be subtle “Ever thought of visiting

Canada, Elise?"

Before I can reply, a hard voice does it for me.

"Elise will be staying here, Alpha Pines," Luke's voice reverberates with a low growl "With me."

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Alpha Xavier looks at him, then looks at me and holds his hands up in mock surrender, a little smirk playing on his lips.

"I was merely joking, Alpha Winters." He says "I should get going."

I let out a sigh and turn to my favorite brooding granite statue "Did you have to do that?"

Luke's eyes meet mine, the obsidian took over the blue "Yes."

"It's not like I was going," I tell him

"I didn't like the way he was looking at you," Luke says, pulling me closer to himself. His eyes go over the room

once "I don't like how any of the men are looking at you like it's some mating ball."

I grin at him and wiggle my brows "Are you insecure, my love?"

Luke narrows his eyes a fraction "Irritated would be a better word, Hazel."

"Then pick up a few things from me," I say cheekily "Like not being irritated by people flanking your mate."



He frowns a little as I say that “So you wouldn’t be bothered by any woman flirting with me?”

“Nope.” I shake my head

“Why?”

“Because I trust you,” I smile, touching my fingers to his cheek “And if any dumba\*\* goes as far as to kiss you, I’ll have to get her executed.”

“That would take some explaining, Hazel,” Luke says, a faint smile on his face

“Don’t worry,” I wink “I’m pretty good at convincing people.”

“You two just cannot stop that, can you?” Casper says, walking over to us, a frown on his face

“Stop what?” I ask, dropping my hand from Luke’s face

“This,” he makes a discrete gesture towards us “In a setting like this, someone is always watching.”

Sighing, I realize he’s right. We do need to keep our guard up.

The party goes on for a few more hours and in the dark hours of the morning, we finally make it outside towards the residential area build in the chapel’s neighborhood to accommodate guests.

While Luke deals with the remnants of our guests, I take a shower and change into a loose nightshirt and sweat pants for a little while, I’ll have to leave in a few hours.

I brush through my hair while standing by the window, the moon high in the sky, humming to myself when the door opens. A familiar rich aroma

drifts over to me and soon enough, two arms wrap around my waist, pulling me to a warm chest.

“Waiting for me, Mia Regia?”

“No, not really,” I say, a little smile playing on my lips

Luke’s lips brush against my ear “Liar.”

I’m aware of the way my heart gallops in my chest “Whatever makes you sleep at nights, Winters.”

Since I’d brushed all my hair against one shoulder, the side of my neck catches his attention.

“You make me sleep at night,” his warm lips brush over my cold skin  
“But you’re leaving.”

“I’ll be back soon,” A little whimper escapes my mouth as my head unconsciously moves to a side

“Not soon enough,” His lips move down before going up again, leaving fire in their wake

My eyes flutter close and I let myself fall into him, my skin singing with sensations and my mind only anticipating where his lips would go next.

“My Elise,” Luke presses a kiss to my cheek, my jaw, my neck “Only mine.”

My muddled senses don’t let me reply. His hands linger at the hem of my shirt, I don’t tell him to stop, his warm arms slip up and around my bare waist making my breath hitch in my throat.

“Even if you don’t come back,” His voice is husky with possession “I will always find you. I will never let anyone take you from me.”

My mind comes in sharp focus, I move his arms from around me and he lets me before I turn around to face him.

Luke leans forward, my hands fall on the windowsill behind me, his arms cage me in place.

“You don’t trust me to come back?” I can’t hide the hurt from my voice

“No,” Luke says quickly. “No,” His voice softens “I trust you with my life, Elise. I just...”

He lets out a breath and puts his forehead against mine, his obsidian eyes look at me with so much affection, it escapes my mind that these eyes belong to something deadly primitive.

“Every time I thought of my mate, I thought she would run away from me. Like everyone else.” His voice is quiet in the fragile silence “You’re the first one to have seen me and not turn away.”

His fingers trail down the side of my face, my neck, my arm, obsidian eyes follow their path.

“This feels so surreal, Hazel, so perfect it doesn’t seem true. I’m afraid that I will close my eyes,” He closes his eyes, a furrow between his brows “And when I open them again, you will not be here anymore, you will not be mine.”

“This is real, Luke.” My arms wrap around his neck and place a soft kiss on his lips “And I will always be here.”

A faint smile touches his lips as he opens his eyes, the blue much more prominent than the black now.

“Keep yourself safe while I cannot, Mia Regia,” Luke says “I will be back to you as soon as possible.”

I grin at him “You said you’re not a king.”

“But I never said you’re not a queen,” he says, locking his lips with mine, making me feel like a true queen

## Alpha’s Hunt by Starlight chapter 50

### Chapter 50 Hasta La vista

I sigh yet again.

Trees run along the roadside as the car speeds ahead. My eyes stare out of the window dully. What is wrong with me?

I didn’t think I’d miss him like this.

Maybe this is karma for telling Luke you’d be glad to have some time being single again when you were leaving. I crinkle my nose at my thoughts. I shake my head as if trying to ward off the gloom cloud.

The SUV is enveloped by unbearable silence. The two guards sitting across me, dressed in dark suits look like they’ve swallowed gum.

No, I’m not going to act like a lovesick puppy. I’m going back to mom, to Carlos and Angelina and Morgan. My family.

That thought cheers me up a little.

Not much interested in making conversation with my guards, I content myself with the scenery outside the window. The sun is rising, s\*\*\*tering its golden light all over the earth. Only a millennium later, I see the familiar streets of

Minneapolis, the hustle of the city, and soon, we're racing down the earthen road to the pack estate.

The car stops and just as the doors unlock, I jump out of the damned vehicle and take a deep, deep breath.

"Ms. Attwood, we have orders to guide you up to the very entrance."  
One of the guards says in a deep, gravelly voice

I nod at him and start towards the main gates, holding myself back from breaking into a sprint. Once I cross the threshold, the guards bid me goodbye and turn away.

As if a leash has been broken, I sprint forward towards the vast gardens. Everything is exactly the way it was seven weeks ago.

No one to greet me, no celebratory preparations even though they had received word that I would be arriving today.

Why is the familiar behavior making me grin?

Because it doesn't matter anymore, and I don't want to feel sentimental about leaving this place.

I reach the omega quarters, the little building makes a rush of homesickness go through me.

I take a deep breath outside the door, my hands trembling from the onslaught of emotions. I grab the handle, turn and enter.

The living room is dark, even the window curtains are drawn. Frowning my brows, I reach for the light switch and flick it up.

“WELCOME HOME!”

I’m frozen in my place, stunned by the decorated living room, all of the omegas grinning at me. Angelina is holding a

huge cake in her arms.

“Elise my dear!”

The next moment I’m engulfed in a puff of motherly love as mom crushes me in her arms. I faintly register the tears flowing out of her eyes as she kisses my cheeks, my forehead.

“Mom, I’m okay.” A watery laugh escapes me as I wipe her cheeks

“That’s my girl,” Morgan says, patting me hard on the back, her grin as fierce as always

“Do you like it?” Angelina asks nervously, gesturing at the decorations

“You, all of you, I didn’t think,” words betray me, those b\*\*\*\*\*s and I hug mom and Morgan “I missed you all so much.”

“You missed your birthday,” Ka\*\*y says, coming up to me with a smile  
“So we thought we should make it up to you.”

“Thank you,” I’m saying, a little shaken by this happiness that has pounced on me so unexpectedly “All of you,” I gesture to everyone in the living room “This is more than what I would’ve ever expected.”

“You don’t need to thank us,” a scrawny boy says, I remember his name to be Victor “We should thank you, you’ve

given all of us something to be proud of.”

A loud clang of agreement rings through the air, everyone is hugging me, taking pictures, giving me cards of what

they think about my adventure.

You’re the bravest Omega I know.

I want to be as strong and resilient as you are.

You show them higher wolves that we Omegas aren’t less than anyone.

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I’m still marveling at the ingenuity of this whole ordeal when I hear a familiar voice;

“Seems like you’ve forgotten me, Elise.”

I whirl around, the cards still in my hand when I see him, dressed in his warrior’s uniform. Carlos flashes me his

usual crooked grin and the next thing I know is that I collide hard with him, wrapping my arms around his neck,

almost knocking him off his feet.

“How can I ever forget you, you b\*\*\*\*\*?” I ask, grinning widely

“You’re still the little s\*\*\* I remember you to be,” Carlos laughs, ruffling my hair

“Idiot,” I give him a mock glare

The party goes by in a haze of me telling my stories, eating cake, asking how things have been in the pack, telling them about the crowning ceremony.

A few hours later, I’m curled on my bed, relishing the familiar feeling of my head in mom’s lap, her hand stroking my head.

“You’re hair has gotten so damaged, dear.” Mom says gently “But it’ll be fine. I’ll mix up my herbal oil, it does wonders for the hair.”

I hmm, mindlessly trailing my fingers on the sheets, mind running a thousand miles per second.

“Mom,” I finally say “I met him.”

Mom’s hand stops moving, I hesitantly push myself in a sitting position, looking at her startled face.

Then she seems to snap out of her stupor.

“Who? When? Where is he?”

“I can’t tell you who,” I give her a teasing smile “But I met him on the Hunt, he’s dealing with some important stuff right now.”

“Who is he?” Mom takes my hands in hers, a wide smile on her face, eyes crinkled “What is he like? Tell me!”

“You’ll just have to meet him,” I laugh “But I can tell you what he’s like. He’s a dominating, bossy, perfectionist. But he’s good to me, he tends to get overprotective but I can sway his mind. Sometimes.”



“An Alpha,” Mom muses, I nod “What of your rank? I swear to all that is holy if he even thinks—

“No,” I say quickly “No, he doesn’t care about that. He doesn’t care about anything other than making sure I stay with him.”

“So where is he now?” Mom asks impatiently “When will he ask for your hand in marriage?”

“He’ll come to get us in a few days,” I tell her “But geez, mom, I’m not getting married so soon.”

“It’s the proper way, dear.”

We’ll just have to see about that, wouldn’t we?

“What does he look like?” Mom asks me excitedly, I shake my head “Come on dear, I need to know just how cute my grandchildren will be.”

Blood rushes to my face “Mom!”

She laughs and pinches my cheek “Just teasing dear,”

I give her a brooding look, she nudges me.

“Fine, just one thing,” I finally give in “He has the most hypnotizing blue eyes. There. I’m not ruining the surprise more.”

Mom squeals like an over-excited school girl. I can’t help but smile, adoration welling up inside me. soon, I’ll take her far away to New York, where she’ll be allowed whatever she pleases.

The door knocks, Morgan peeks in “Sorry to disturb the mother-daughter time, but we need to go Juliette.”

“Where?” I furrow my brows

Mom sighs as she gets off the bed and puts on her shoes “We have to go shopping with Luna, dear. You know Morgan and I always go with her.”

“Can’t you stay?” I ask, like a child asking her mom to sleep in the same room

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“I tried to sway her,” Morgan says with a sigh “But you know Fay, she’s stubborn.”

Mom presses a kiss to my head and leaves with Morgan, the door closes behind. I huff. I know why Luna insisted on going shopping just now, to let me know it’s not a big deal that I’m back.

Well, mother-in-law, I hope you can swallow your hate for me for your son.

I leave the Omega quarters and step out only to see two-pack warriors coming in my direction. They stop a short

distance away and exchange a glance.

“What?” I raise an eyebrow

One of them, a heavy-set man with dark eyes, Eamon, clears his throat.

“You have to leave, Attwood.”

“What?”

The other one, Kyle, holds out something for me. I take it and realizations hit me. My contract.

“The Alpha says that you and your mother are to leave in an hour.” He says

“But mom’s not even here!” I give them a fierce look

Eamon shrugs, Kyle only looks away before they both walk away, leaving me in a confused panic.

I race back inside the quarters and pick up the landline, remembering the contact no. Luke gave me I dial. the call rings. He doesn’t pick up.

“Damn you, Winters,” I grumble and dial Casper’s number. He doesn’t pick up either.

Is that part of that stupid ritual? That no one contacts them?

I slam the phone down. Think, Elise! You idiot, why didn’t you remember this? Maybe I can use the money mom saved for my wedding? Go with the original plan and stay in a hotel for a day or two? Luke can find me, I can give

Carlos the address of the place.

Nodding, I hurry to my room and pack all my things and quickly scribble two notes.

I hurry out of the quarters, a few thousand dollars in my bag. I run into Angelina on the way out.

“What are you doing?” she asks me, eyeing the bag

“Leaving this soon forsaken place,” I say “My contract, remember? I’m sure everyone knows of it.”

“Rumors.” Angelina nods, her brows furrowed “But, Elise, you can’t leave?”

“Seems like I am,” Easy words, coming to me as if they don’t mean anything

Her eyes become the size of the moon “But where will you go?!” She asks

“I have a place in my mind.” I give her one of the two letters “Give mom this, it explains everything.”

With a troubled face, she nods. I quickly go around her towards the pack warrior residence.

“Carlos!” I call as I near the training grounds

Beta Drake glares at me, then he barks something at Carlos, he mutters something before quickly jogging towards me.

“What’s up?” he asks, but his eyes flicker to the bag “Elise, don’t tell me you’re—

“Leaving,” I nod “I have to go quick, brother. But do me a favor?”

He nods, but the tension in his shoulders tells me he doesn’t like this.

I give him a little piece of paper “This is the address of the hotel I’m going to, when Luke comes back, you have to give him this.”

His eyes widen, but brows furrow “Why? What am I supposed to say to him?”

“Just, don’t ask questions,” I tell him “Give him this, tell him Elise says he’s an idiot for not picking up.”

## ADVERTISEMENT

His eyes widen further “I can’t say that to the Alpha Supreme! He’s going to have my head.”

Trust me, saying that might save everyone a lot of trouble.

“Just give it to him.” I say “Please.”

“Okay, okay,” he exhales “You drag me in the craziest things.”

I grin, adrenaline and recklessness mix in a dangerous blend in my veins. This is what I wanted, a chance to run free,

to put my unquiet mind to use, to follow all the crazy ideas that pop into it.

I’d be lying if I say I’m not enjoying this adventure.

I’d probably end up telling mom everything when she comes to the hotel.

I turn around, to see Angelina running up to us.

“Here,” she huffs “I got this for your birthday.”

She holds out a little packed box. I accept it with a smile and put it in my bag.

“Thank you, Lina.” I hug her “Don’t miss me too much, I’ll come to see you again.”

“Would they let you?” Carlos asks, his voice taut

I turn to him with a grin “I’d like to see them try to stop me.”

“Lost your head on the Hunt, Alice?”

I cringe as the familiar voice reaches me, slowly, not wanting to, I turn to look in the direction of the voice to see

Casper’s twin. Darcie’s grey eyes just like his, but lacking any of his joviality or kindness.

“Finally, we’re purging crap like you.” Darcie smirks, crossing her arms  
“It’s about damn time.”

I give her a passive look “Trust me, I’m the lucky one in that situation.”

“Smart talk all you want, Elise.” Darcie sneers at me “But now everyone knows what you are. A selfish b\*\*\*\*. People have it worse than you, but you just have to make it look like our pack has been horrible to you.”

Maybe seven weeks ago, I’d be angry at her words, wanting to prove her wrong, but right now only a humorless chuckle escapes me.

“You’re right, Darcie.” I nod, mirth filled in my voice “I’m a selfish b\*\*\*\*, one who would steal all she isn’t given.

One who’s learned to lick freedom off the knives since she wasn’t fed by a sp\*\*\*\*.”

I lean forward, my voice low and haughty when I say;

“And I don’t regret it.”

I straighten myself, ignoring the look of surprise on her face. Giving Carlos and Angelina a parting glance, I turn around, ready to start a new chapter of my life. Life is no longer dependent on the whims of strangers.

But my feet stop. His isn't the ending I want this chapter to have.

I turn back, a grin on my face.

“And I don't regret this either,”

My knuckles slam against Darcie's nose.

That moment is forever burned in my memory when Darice loses her balance, arms failing, and falls on her behind in an ungraceful heap.

I whirl around and sprint for the gates she yells for the warriors, a laugh bubbles past my lips and I know they can't catch me now. The one thing I learned on this Hunt is to run.

At the gates, I cast one final look back. Darcie's nose is swallowed, she's yelling something and Beta Drake is trying to calm her down. The warriors look amused and surprised, Angelina is grinning and so is Carlos.

Darcie's livid gaze meets mine. I grin at her and give them all a two-finger salute before I call;

“Hasta La Vista, b\*\*\*\*es!”