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"Adrienne?" I recognize the Alpha-to-be, Nathan, approaching me.

"Where the hell have you been?!" Here," he takes his jacket off and tosses it at me.

"Shit back."

He says it so demandingly, and with a pang of irritation in his voice. As if he's actually angry with me for making him go through the trouble to find me. Like it was my fault the tyrant picked me to carry off into the woods.

I glare at the jacket in disgust: the same way I look at him.

As repulsive as the idea of wearing his clothes is, I don't have much of a choice. I have to find out what he and his father are planning, and to do that, I'd have to speak.

After taking the jacket in my teeth, I glower at him pointedly until he takes the hint and turns around. The familiar sensation of my bones breaking, reshaping, then fusing back together overtakes my body. In the matter of a couple seconds, I'm standing on two legs again, my windblown blonde hair hanging down to brush the small of my back.

The sound of the zipper signals for Nathan to turn back around. I have to bend and pull at the jacket to get it to reach far enough to cover everything, leaving me in an awkward half-standing, half-crouching position.

"Problem?" He asks with a dumb smirk on his face. He, at least, has the luxury of pants.

"Looking at it," I snap without hesitation, making a point by staring him dead in the eye.

He growls, his cocky mood suddenly changing to one of vexation.

"Don't even give me your fucking attitude. Get your ass over here so we can go. The wedding was rescheduled to three days from now and I can't stand up there alone." His expression suddenly darkens, becoming more frighteningly seriously.

My jaw drops. After all that's happened, and he's still pushing this?

I notice him progressively coming closer, but at a slow pace, reminding me of a snake watching its prey. "I was promised certain things, Adrienne. And I fully expect to get those things."

My skin starts to crawl with the thought of whatever "things" could be running through his sick head.

"I already told you, there's not gonna be a wedding," I growl out, a shadow overlaying my own irises now.

He smiles, a devious gleam in his eye. "And my father already told you what would happen if you didn't. I wouldn't be able to visit you down there—nobody would."

My stomach drops at his words. I had forgotten about that threat until now. There truly isn't any winning scenario to choose from. One way I'm being forced into a depraved marriage, and the other I'd be stuck with a psyched out mate who may only want to sell me back to my pack for ransom. And then I'd be back to square one.

Nathan is just a few yards from me, making me tense with vulnerability. On normal circumstances, it wouldn't be an issue. As kids we went through the exact same training, learning and exploiting each other's weaknesses. But now, one wrong move and I'll be the equivalent of naked.

Right as I begin to feel panic set in, we both jump at the sound of a snarl so powerful that it shakes the ground beneath our feet.

Nathan is frozen in place, his eyes the size of saucers. For a second I think he's gaping at me, until I realize that he's looking over my shoulder.

Riot is behind me. His claws carve deep marks into the trees as he stalks past them, dragging his flexed fingertips over the bark as he goes. Large canines hide behind his parted lips, sharp enough to rip the flesh off bone with barely a graze.

His black eyes glow a deep ruby red, the same color I remember leaping from the woods the night of the ceremony. There's something threatening about them, something haunting. I can't help but to sense one crucial thing about them, and it's that those are the eyes of the wolf inside him.

A shiver goes down my spine when they land on me. More particularly, the jacket around me.

I want to say something but the words are jumbled in my throat. Before I can blink, my back is being thrown against the ground, a large figure on top of me.

The fabric screams as he rips it at the seams. His long claws frantically shred it into pieces until there's nothing left to cover my shame, leaving me feeling cold and exposed.

My arms come up to cover my chest while I cross my legs to hide what little they can.

I hastily curl into a ball by habit, shielding my abdomen from view more than anything. Covering my stomach is still second nature to me, despite my private parts being subject to the same jeopardy.

I timidly look up to see Riot standing over me. In one swift motion he pulls his shirt over his head, dropping it carelessly on top of me.

As he stretched his arms over his head, his body seemed to tell a story. The further the shirt went, the more things it revealed on his smooth skin. Three long scars ran diagonally across his leg in the form of a claw mark. Despite those flaws, he's sculpted better than a Greek statue; well defined muscles gliding beneath his skin with every movement.

Realizing a drop of saliva forming in the corner of my mouth, I tear my eyes away.

Stupid mate bond.

Without a second thought I cling onto the shirt for dear life. It's not exactly a full outfit, but it's better than nothing.

I brace myself to find those petrifying yet stunning eyes burning into mine, but Riot doesn't have any further interest in me. Instead his attention falls on Nathan.

He moves ever so slowly in his direction, like a lion tormenting its prey just for the fun of it. Except there's nothing close to fun about him. Anger rolls off his body in thick waves, enough to make anyone's nerves crack, even daddy's spoiled little brat.

Nathan's face is pale, just like it was the last time I saw him. Every step Riot takes forward, is another step Nathan takes back. He eventually realizes that there's no where to go. The initial state of terror must have worn off, because his attitude changes just like the wind.

"You're the bastard who crashed my party. Tried to take my pack," Nathan growls, that vein in his neck starting to twitch. Something that has become far too familiar to me.

He pauses, glancing past Riot and at me before back to his active threat. "I want her back. I'll pay whatever your price is, but she comes with me."

And then, just as all of his conversations go halfway through, the polite tone in his voice drops. It sours into one of mockery, "I get that it must get lonely in exile, but find your own Luna. This one's taken."

It seems as if the whole world goes quiet, waiting for what's to come. I breathe in, my heart pounding in my ears.

The calm before the storm.

Riot goes rigid.

Nathan's face falls.

Then the storm breaks loose.

A feral snarl tears from his throat, making me jolt with the natural instinct of danger. But I'm not the one who has to worry about that.

In the blink of an eye, there's blood spraying from Nathan's nose, Riot's knuckles having busted the dam. His neck turns at an unnatural angle and a loud, echoing pop makes me cringe back. But it doesn't end there. Riot continues throwing punches after punches, even after he's straddling him on the ground. Nathan struggles beneath him, in the end eating more fists than he deflects.

I notice the spine rising along Riot back, pushing up against the skin as it forms a bumpy ridge. A telltale sign of the shivering to come.

A jolt of electricity shoots through me, alarms going off at the sight. I've seen him as a wolf before, but he only had black irises then. He was in control for the most part. The red glow to them, however, means something entirely different. Something that I don't want to witness.

"RIOT!!!" The scream comes out before I can stop it, so unexpected that my voice breaks halfway through.

Maybe my wolf knows something I don't, because what I saw as pointless screaming made him stop dead. His fist comes to a sudden halt halfway to Nathan's face.

Riot's head snaps to look at me, on full alert. His wild eyes flicker, as if scanning for more enemies. Then, as if realizing what he's doing, he glances down at his victim, then back to me.

He comes towards me at a quickened pace, scooping me up off the ground without even slowing down. He cradles me like he did before, looking straight ahead and acting like he doesn't feel the sparks between us.

As I'm carried away with long strides, heart thumping against my sternum, I try peaking over Riot's shoulder.

Is he...?

A thunderous growl sounds out and Riot drops his arms down, lowering me so that I can't see past him.

His bare chest is warm and inviting. I find myself unconsciously nestling into him, my wolf starving for the sense of safety being near him gives me.

His scars are right beside my face now, peaking my curiosity. Gently, I begin tracing them with my finger, feeling the contour of the damaged tissue.

His body tenses at my touch, yet he refuses to acknowledge it. His jaw clenches tightly, stifling a reaction.

In an act of mercy, I drop my hand into my lap. Pushing his wolf again isn't a good idea. In fact, it's terrible one. Nathan might've learned the hard way, but I certainly don't need to.

Letting out a small sigh, I lay my head on his collarbone.

"It's Adrienne Gage."

He cranes his neck, and even though I can't see his face, I know he's looking down at me.

"What?"

"My name," I clarify, mindlessly studying the curves of his bicep. "It's Adrienne Gage."

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Oooh is anyone starting to warm up to Riot now? Her telling him her name is one of if not my absolute favorite scene in this book.

Thank you for reading!

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