

Crepes with Corrado

AZURA.

The door shut behind Leo, and I let out the breath I was holding. It was weird. I didn't know if I preferred him in the suit that he was wearing last night, his leather jacket, or in those sweatpants... 4 Fuck, this guy was far sexier than he should even be allowed to be. I missed my own workouts, but being pregnant and with everything going on I had fallen behind. I know that training during pregnancy is fine, as long as you don't put any frontal impact on the stomach. "Let's eat Azura, Daddy makes the best food." Corrado declared, drawing me out of my thoughts.

Leo made these...

I didn't even know what to think as I sat down, my heart still racing from the way he had brushed my arm on purpose.

What does he want from me? 2

I looked at the plate in front of me, crepes folded into triangles drizzled with Nutella, a dusting of icing sugar, and strawberries on top. So aesthetically pleasing. This plate looked almost as good as Leo did. Almost.

"Oh, it looks very yummy!" I exclaimed, smiling at the gorgeous little devil sitting there, smiling sweetly. 1

"It is, and Daddy even made it look nicer today. I think for you." He added thoughtfully, making my heart skip another beat. 4

"Hmm, he was probably worried that I could make better crepes than he can." I teased.

"Oh no, Daddy knows Azura can't cook." 4

Thanks kid. 2

"And you like to make that clear huh." I teased as I took my first bite. He grinned and nodded. "Oh, these are good." I had to admit it because they were perfect.

Damn, I could get used to this...

No, I can't because he's not mine. I wouldn't lie, the way he had spoken to me last night had remained in my mind. He wasn't a bad person, well aside from being a dick. "You're very lucky Azura, Daddy only cooks for me, but he cooked for you too." Corrado said, watching me eat. 2 I poured us both a glass of milk, each placing his next to him. "I sure am lucky, so what else can your Daddy do?" I asked, resting my chin on my knuckles. Aside from being deadly sexy, being incredible in bed and stop it Azura.

“He is good at everything! He is the best Daddy in the world! He always takes care of everyone; he is my hero!” His eyes sparkled with light and hope. 2 It was obvious that Leo wasn’t lacking when it came to being a father... I wonder where Corrado’s mama was... Did Leo let him see her? Or was he keeping him away from her? Or did something happen to her?

I pushed the thoughts away placing a hand on my stomach slowly. “Oh, I’m sure he is an incredible Daddy.” I replied, giving him a small smile. The fact that he even left him with me all alone, from the point he didn’t even allow me to be with him around Winona... was a big change. “Yes, and I think he’s very sad now.” He added, sighing.

“Sad?” I asked curiously.

He nodded as I picked up my glass.

“He broke up with Nikki, so he’s all alone now.”

My heart thundered as I froze.

He broke up with Nikki? I didn’t want to be one of those people who asked kids for answers, but... “Oh, how do you know?” I asked, feeling a tad guilty.

He looked at me as if I was asking a silly question.

“I know everything. She and Jackie were packing her stuff, she was crying, and saying Daddy broke up with her.” He finished off his pancakes and licked his lips. I grabbed a tissue and wiped his face. “Oh. Are you ok?”.

I didn’t know what to say... How do I react to that? Were they not in a committed relationship?

What had caused him to break up with her? Was it because of me? Who was I kidding? Leo wouldn’t choose me over her.

But this did mean Leo was now single... 2

Don’t go there, Azura.

“Yes, I’m ok, Nikki didn’t really spend time with me, so it’s ok! I’m just sad for Daddy, so sad.” Corrado sighed, watching me pointedly. “Will you be Daddy’s girlfriend please?” 13 I blinked as I stared at him, taking a few seconds to comprehend what he had just said. “I don’t think that’s for us to decide. Besides your Daddy and me... we...” I shook my head, unable to explain myself, and he simply looked disappointed. “Ooh, let’s have a race! Who can eat faster!”

I was able to distract him quickly. After we devoured our crepes, I washed up before putting the TV on for him, telling him I was going to quickly get ready. He nodded, and I got dressed superfast in a white vest top with leather pants, not sure if he was safe to be in a room alone.

PE VIILUTO

I don’t trust kids... If they are alone for even a minute, they can wreak havoc. Trust me, I’ve been there. Surprisingly, when I came back, he was sitting where I had left him and everything was in order

After that, we played tag in the apartment before having a pillow fight. I loved kids, and Corrado was a pretty well-behaved kid, but I knew if taught well he'd be up to lots of mischief! We had a lot of fun. He was just adorable. By the time we were done, the apartment looked like it had been hit by a tornado, but it was worth it. Corrado's laughter had been contagious, and it took my mind off everything I was feeling

A knock on the door made us finally get up from the pile of cushions that we had been lying on as he tried to tickle me.

I went to the door, pulling it open to reveal none other than Leo, one who was glistening with sweat, pouring water into his mouth from a water bottle. 1

For a moment time seemed to stand still as I simply stared at his gorgeous brown locks that were falling in front of his forehead. From his broad shoulders, his lats and traps were as defined as ever. His shirt clung to his narrow waist and deliciously defined abs. Then there was the front of those sexy sweatpants that

He cleared his throat, and I felt my cheeks heat up when he snapped his fingers in front of my face. 1

"I'm here for Corrado, if you aren't busy enjoying the view, how about you call him?" He mocked arrogantly. 1

"Na, I was just wondering how you weren't even blessed with one good feature. I'll call him." I lied, hoping I was convincing enough. 31 The reminder that he had broken up with Nikki returned to my mind and I forced it away. He stepped closer raising an eyebrow when he placed a finger under my chin. My heart thundered and I couldn't ignore the tingles that rushed through me.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?"

"Nothing." I managed to say, realising I had spaced again.

He narrowed his eyes, searching my eyes for an answer he wouldn't get.

"Corrado?" He called, looking away from me.

"Corrado isn't here." Corrado's voice came, and I could help but smile.

This kid was damn cute.

"Well, I was planning to take Corrado out for dinner tonight and a movie tonight. It seems like he doesn't want—"

"I'm here! I'm here!" Corrado came running. 1

His eyes were shining with excitement. "You mean you'll spend the full evening with me?!" He asked with barely contained anticipation.

"Yeah I am, if of course, you want to?" Leo raised an eyebrow, and Corrado nodded. "Oh yes please Daddy, I always like spending time with you!" He grabbed Leo's hand and smiled at me. "Thank you, Azura. I had lots of fun today." I smiled at him, crouching down and planting a kiss on his forehead. "I had lots of fun too." I replied, poking his little dimple, only to be rewarded with a bigger smile.

I suddenly felt overwhelmed with emotions. This was my pup's sibling... I looked up at Leo only to realise I was pretty much level with his dick and smoothly stood up trying not to think of anything explicit. "The crepes were pretty nice." I found myself saying. "They were pretty basic." Came Leo's cold reply before he led Corrado away. Once they were gone, I closed the door, looking around my apartment. Well, I guess I should clean up...

A few hours later, Winona had come with lunch, and I wasn't going to complain considering everything she brought was delicious. I was falling asleep on the sofa when I heard a knock at the door.

Who was it now?

I walked to the door, fixing the strap of my bra as I opened the door, only to be hit by none other than Leo's intoxicating scent. Our eyes met and he brushed past me not even waiting for an invitation.

"Sure, why not just come in without an invitation." I remarked, shutting the door, Leo turned towards me, totally unbothered by my remark. He was dressed semi-formal, in black jeans, with a smart white shirt that had its sleeves pushed up and a few buttons showing the necklaces that hung around his neck.

"I already did." He shot back arrogantly.

I frowned about to respond when he held out a phone.

I raised my eyebrow as I took it slowly.

"You can call your friends and family, that bastard will not be able to contact you. To make sure he doesn't even trace this back to you, the only numbers that can contact you are those on the phone already." He said as I stared down at the device. "The password is the same as your last phone."

"I'll be changing it." I stated.

Like hell, I would allow him to know my password... although I had a feeling a password wasn't enough to keep him out of it.

"Go ahead."

Our eyes met, and that intense silence fell over us. Fuck, there was no Corrado here to distract me either.

"So I—"

"I wanted to—" He said at the same time. We stared at each other, before he looked away for a second. "Uh, you can go first," I said, running my fingers through my hair. "No it's ok, what did you want to say?" He asked.

What did I want to say??

"I've forgotten." 1

He raised an eyebrow as he closed the gap between us, and I slowly stepped back, trying not to focus on how good he looked. "You really are crazy." "Yeah, I am, and am proud to be." I shot back, giving him a withering glare. "Do you always have your claws raised to attack?" He asked mockingly.

“Oh yeah, I’m ready to bite if I have to. So back off, ever heard of personal space?” I frowned as my ass touched the counter.

His eyebrow seemed to go up higher as he looked down between us, and I realised he had stopped two feet away...

“I think this is pretty sufficient... it would be a different story if I was closer.” His voice was low and dangerous, and when he stepped closer, I felt like I couldn’t breathe. My heart thumped when he placed his hands on either side of the countertop, his arms brushing my waist.

Oh goddess, what was he doing? “What did you want to say?” I asked, staring at him defiantly and trying not to focus on the fact that he had me trapped once more, and the way I could feel his body heat...

Focus Azura.

My words seemed to bring him back to reality, and he now frowned. Despite not moving back, his eyes were sharp as they looked directly into mine. “I spoke to Emmet who denied it. Strangely, I couldn’t differentiate whether he was lying or telling the truth.”

Did that mean he didn’t believe me? No! Emmet practically admitted to me that he had hit her and that I should mind my own business! I was about to speak when he placed his thumb against my lips, his fingers curling under my chin, making my core clench. 1 “Let me finish.”

I nodded slowly, very aware of his finger against my lips.

“I then spoke to Jackie, who unlike Emmet isn’t really good at lying. There is something going on between them, and I will get to the bottom of it. For now, I’ve removed Emmet from the position of Delta until I look into this properly. I need Jackie to speak before I can do anything, but rest assured I will not let anyone get away with abuse.” Every word he spoke was affecting me, he didn’t need to explain this to me. Yet here he was explaining it all to me and I sure as hell appreciated it. I nodded, his finger was still on my lips and when I parted them to speak, his finger brushed down my lower lip before he removed his hand, making me swallow. His eyes flashed when I licked my lips and I looked down, staring at his neck rather than those piercing eyes. “I... Thanks for letting me know. You didn’t need to and I actually appreciate it.” I replied, my throat felt far too dry, and it suddenly felt too hot in here. “I also wanted to apologise.” He murmured, frowning deeply. Apologise? I looked up sharply as he stood straight and stepped back. “For?” I asked.

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“For overreacting when I found you spent time with Corrado. Not only did I hurt you, but I abused my position as someone who is stronger “Oh please, I did equal damage.” I scoffed. “I’m just as strong as you.” Was he actually apologising? What the hell had he eaten? Wait, was he drunk or something? Something was up... This was too suspicious... “Yeah sure.” He replied in a tone that made it clear he didn’t think so. I crossed my arms now, looking at him defiantly. “Wana try me?” I challenged. “I already did.” Came his cocky reply. 2 Our eyes met, my eyes widening in surprise and my core knotted. Oh, this guy was totally messing with my head...

Chapter 32

Losing It AZURA.

"I meant in a fight." I muttered.

He raised his eyebrow.

"That's what I meant." He remarked. Wait no he... "Is your mind always in the gutter or do I simply get to you?"

Of course, you do. You damn annoying Rossi.

"Don't get so full of yourself." I scoffed.

"Am I wrong?"

"If I want my mind to be in the damn gutter, I have every right to keep it there. I don't need anyone's approval." I retorted, annoyed when he caged me between the worktop once more. "Even if it involves me?"

"Yes, because it's my mind, so whether I imagine you naked, or in a pair of neon pink boxers, that's my mind, my choice." 4 "Oh? So if I imagine you naked, that's totally ok?" "Why, do you?" I challenged. 1 He didn't reply, his eyes trailing over me before they slowly flicked up to meet mine, and I knew I had gotten my answer. I saw him swallow, his eyes darkening when they skimmed to my lips. My entire body was reacting to his closeness. Even with the bond that was hanging by only a thread, only in need of a few words from me to break, I could still feel the intense pull that came with it...

"You broke up with Nikki." I blurted out.

Wow nice going, Azura. 2 His eyes snapped to mine, and I felt him tense slightly. He suddenly moved back and turned his back on me.

"That's none of your concern." His voice was hard, and I felt a pang of pain wash through me. So did he blame me for that? "I came here to apologise and that's what I'll do." His voice was low as he turned back toward me, his gaze falling to my neck. "I'm sorry for marking you, and for rejecting you. I never should have done either."

Those words cut like a knife, but I did my best to hide the emotions that were threatening to drown me. "Both?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

His eyes met mine and he nodded.

"Yeah, both. I was clouded by my anger, and I was fighting myself and so I'm fucking sorry for fucking up your life with what I did. I've already begun working on tracking down this ex of yours and once I have... you can return home."

"Got it." I felt as if I had been thrown into a pool of icy water. "So, since you regret it all, I guess you regret fucking me too." I spat feeling my anger rising. "No. Why should I regret that?"

His arrogance made my anger flare. Who the fuck did he think he was?

I scoffed, closing the gap between us and shoving him, my heart was thundering and my head was beginning to squeeze as pressure began building. I was losing control of my anger "Why not? Because that didn't have any fucking consequences?" I asked icily, glaring up at him.

If only you fucking knew.

I wanted a reaction; I wanted him to lose his shit so I could lose mine. “Calm down.” His icy-calm reply came. “Don’t! Don’t tell me to calm down. Do you know how I felt after being fucked, marked, and then rejected! My wolf is still weakened! I don’t feel her as strongly as I used to! I was in so much pain that I fainted and you left me! I gave you everything, yet you were ok to fuck me even though you had a woman, making me feel even worse!” 1 He wasn’t reacting, not even stopping me from attacking him. I continued to shove him, wanting to see him stumble. “Do you know how I felt when I had to beg someone to give me a phone so I could call my brother! Do you know how it felt to see the rage in his eyes and begging him not to fucking find you because of who you were?!” His eyes flashed but he said nothing. “If you really regret marking me, then go mark someone else so I can have this off me!” I screamed, shoving him. “At least let me live my fucking life without having this scar as a fucking reminder of you!” Needing a way to unleash my anger, 1 extracted my claws, ready to plunge them into my own neck and rip off his mark, but before I could even dig my claws into myself, he had grabbed my hand, closing his large hand over mine and turning me. Pulling my back against his chest, his other arm tight around my waist as I thrashed around, my heart thundering. “Hush...” His voice was low, and even as I struggled against him, he refused to let me go “Don’t tell me to calm down!” I hissed, trying to elbow him, but unlike Emmet, he was far stronger. “Listen to me Little She-Wolf... I only meant I didn’t regret the rest of that night because it was fucking perfect. But marking you... like you said, I ruined your life and I know I did, I fucking did... and I regret the rejection because of the pain I put you through... I’m sorry, I’m fucking sorry. I want to be a better person than them, but I fucked up too... I’m no better. This has nothing to do with you.”

I stilled in his arms.

You’re wrong... it has everything to do with me... Nothing could break my spirit, but I was teetering on the edge of despair... I don’t know what I wanted... but earlier... when I knew he had broken up with Nikki, 1 hadi subconsciously held hope... “It has everything to do with me... because of who I am, right?” I said quietly. His face was so close to mine, pressed against the side of my head, and I felt ... broken.

He remained silent for a moment. “You regret rejecting me because of the pain... but you still wouldn’t accept me, correct?” He stayed silent and I got my answer. I sighed, pulling free *from* his hold. This time he let go of me and I turned, looking up at him blankly. “Just leave Leo. Your apology... isn’t enough. Give me back my life, take this pain away, and remove this mark from my neck, otherwise, you can fucking go to hell.” My voice was calm, yet it was laced with venom.

He didn’t speak and I couldn’t read his emotions. His gaze dipped to my neck for a second. Our eyes met before he turned away without another word. He left the apartment. The door shut behind him with a small snap that seemed to ring in the empty apartment. I turned away, gripping the worktop, my heart thundering as I tried to control my emotions. Regretted marking me... 5

Dickface.

I walked over to the sofa and sat down slowly.

It was my own fault for even allowing myself to lose control of my emotions. I don’t know how long it took for me to calm down, but it was dark outside. I stayed sitting there glaring at the table. I unlocked the phone he had given me, my hand shaking with uncontrollable rage as I found Dante’s number.

'I want the necklace,' 1

He came online immediately, and I stared at the phone, my heart raging. I saw the message change to 'read' but instead of replying, his call was incoming.

I answered, raising the phone to my ear. "I want the necklace." I repeated, my voice sounding menacing. "Okay, my temperamental miracle." I'm no fucking miracle. "You are. You sure are one of a kind." He teased in his deep, husky voice. "Don't try to get in my head, Dante. I'm not in the mood." "I'm not getting in your head, I can't read minds, I just know what you would say.

"I'm angry, Dante. So angry." I replied quietly.

"I know."

"Don't use that shit on me. I want to rip his mark off my neck, I want to leave from here and I want to."

"I know but don't act on anger. Azura, we often say things that may not be perceived the way we want them to be. Look deeper." 1

I closed my eyes. "You understand me right? Dante... It hurts. He makes me want to fucking give up." I whispered, tucking my legs up under my chin. "Since when can anyone make the Westwood Devil do anything?"

"Easy for you to say." I muttered. "You got this, besides he can't be so bad if he can get under your skin like that." "He's irritating and damn annoying. Arrogant and so... well let's just say a typical Rossi." I was feeling calmer talking to someone. "Well, we are pretty irresistible." I rolled my eyes and a pleasant silence fell between us.

"So still not seeing anything about your future mate?" I asked.

He let out a throaty chuckle.

"I don't know if I have one... you know how my wolf and I are... I don't know if the same rules apply."

"I don't think the Goddess will deprive her demi-god of a mate." I said softly.

I felt sorry for Dante. He held so much on his shoulders... He often knew things to come, and I wondered how much pain and sadness he has foreseen...

"Well, as long as she doesn't turn out as terrifying as you, I'm all good." He teased.

"So funny." I smiled though. "Thanks for ringing Dante, I needed it."

"Any time. I'll always be there for you." 1 "Hey, I'm older ok. You mean to say I'll be there for you."

"Nope, I meant exactly what I said. Now go be a good girl and watch some TV, or have a bubble bath. Whatever you girls do to calm down." A bubble bath did sound good... "Yeah, well we aren't men who go hitting things when angry...". Didn't I just do that?

He let out a small knowing chuckle. "Whatever you say." I thanked him before ending the call and decided to have a bath and text the girls. I just needed

to calm down...

Two hours later I was so much more relaxed. The tub had a heating system, and the water never went cold. I had some music on, and I felt so much more at ease. I even had a good chat with Sky and Kat, sadly Song didn't answer, so it was just us three. 3

Wanting to feel good about myself I pulled on a pretty lingerie set. Honestly, I needed to thank whoever chose this stuff, but the memory that it was paid for by Leo left a sour taste in my mouth, so I pushed the thought aside.

I was just moisturising my legs when I thought I heard something. I tilted my head, lowering the music.

There I heard it again.

"Leo?" I asked, grabbing the bathrobe that I had tossed on the floor earlier, I put it on, leaving the bedroom only to see none other than Emmet standing there looking beyond pissed. His aura was swirling around him, and unmasked rage contorted his face.

"So, you went and fucking snitched, and because of your fucking misconception, Leo suspended me from my position as Delta until further notice." He growled. In a flash, he was in front of me, grabbing my throat as he slammed me against the wall.... 8

"Oh, and guess what? Leo's gone with his kid. He won't be home for a while. Who are you going to run to now?"

Chapter 33

A Blinding Awakening LEO.

We were sitting in the cinema, watching a kid's movie, but I could tell Corrado wasn't enjoying it as much, as he was enjoying watching me with a huge smile on his face. I felt fucking bad, I was gone so often that he was regularly left without even seeing me on some days. "Not enjoying the movie?" I asked, looking down at him. He shook his head.

"No, I love it! I'm loving the movie because Daddy came with me." He smiled and I leaned down, cupping the back of his head, placing a kiss on his forehead.

"Me too. It may be boring, but I like that we get this time, you know." I remarked, adjusting his mini popcorn tray in his lap.

"Thank you, Daddy."

I gave him a wink before glancing at my phone. Azura hadn't left her room, which I was relieved about, but I couldn't get what happened earlier out of my fucking mind.

She was still hurting from all the shit I did to her... But she didn't get what I had meant, I regretted marking her because of my limited time... I know Jackie has told me that Kiara could probably heal me,

but I was unable to put aside my ego and ask them for anything. I didn't need their help, just for Marcel and all of them to remind me that I fucking owed them... 9

A couple of young women slid into the seats next to me. Whispering and giggling irritatingly, they had been seated elsewhere before they had left not long ago. The entire room was pretty empty, and I was certain they didn't pay for the seats they had now fucking taken.

Corrado's eyes turned toward them before he looked at me, frowning slightly.

"He's so fit."

"Damn and who's the kid with him?"

"Let me sit next to him." They were whispering quietly, but obviously, it was fucking loud in my ears.

Irritating as fuck.

I didn't spare them even a glance while watching the screen, despite half my attention being on Corrado.

"Hey, cutie." One of the women waved at him, leaning closer. Corrado raised his eyebrows, looking at me and then at the women again. "My Daddy has a girlfriend." He declared, and I almost smirked. 6 He had realised pretty young that women tried to talk to him to get to me, and he never stood for it.

"Um sure, what's your name?"

I was tempted to speak up, but watching my kid deal with them was far more entertaining. "I don't tell strangers my name. Sorry. Daddy, let's go home, Azura is waiting for you." My eyebrow shot up.

Azura? Didn't he mean Nikki?

"The movie?" "It's boring, and I don't like girls." He whispered loudly. 1 I sure fucking hoped the women were feeling fucking humiliated, and I stood up.

"Let's go kid." I lifted him up, walking out the other way.

"So why did you say Azura and not Nikki?" I asked, taking my phone out,

"You and Nikki broke up, so now we keep Azura as your new girlfriend." ;

My eyebrow shot up and I wondered if this kid was going to be a playboy growing up. 3

"Isn't that moving too fast? Nikki just left."

"No Daddy, because you and Nikki argue about more than football for many days now. So now we keep Azura forever." He declared as we left the viewing room. 3

Wow... and I thought I did a good job in keeping that shit hidden. 2

"She isn't an item that we can just keep."

"Why?"

I placed him on the ground as we both walked side by side.

I looked at him to tell him that you can't just own people, but the adorable look on his face stopped me. This kid was the damn cutest kid on the fucking planet, and he was mine. "Because she's a little scary."
3. "Azura isn't scary, Daddy! You aren't scared of anything!" He giggled. I was. Of losing you. Leaving you. 8

I took my phone out and looked at it again. I fucking felt at unease again and after last time I wasn't feeling good about her being there alone. Although I could see Jax was there on the steps, clearly alert, as his head was turned downwards towards the lower floor. 1 He was using a scent disguiser, and I knew even Emmet wouldn't notice him there unless he went up the stairs, so all should be ok...

"Kiddo, shall we get takeaway and get home? Maybe we can eat it with Azura?"

"Oh yes! Let's all eat together. Then you make Azura happy, and we bring her home." He replied as we left the place. "Perfect." I replied distractedly, as I walked over to one of the takeout shops inside near the cinema.

I placed our order distractedly, as I mulled over Emmet's reaction when I told him that he was suspended until further notice... (FLASHBACK) "It was her, wasn't it?" He asked, barely able to keep his hatred at bay.

I raised an eyebrow. "Whether it was her or someone else. I will follow protocol because we stand for what's right. As future Alpha and Delta, it's our fucking duty to be an example for our people. These are just the rules that we all need to follow." 1 "You spoke to Jackie, I'm sure she'll clearly tell you we are totally fucking fine." He spat. "Calm the fuck down, Emmet. Friend or not, I'm not going to break the rules for you." I warned, my eyes flashing. "You are going to believe a fucking Elite? One who has fucking reaped discord since she's got here. Tell me, who is her fucking mate that ain't accepting her?!" "Jax." I lied, knowing this meant I would have to tell Jax the truth, but he'd keep the secret. "Jax Adams? And you really want one of your strongest men mated to an Elite?" He looked disgusted. 2

"I've never stopped anyone from going to an elite pack or vice versa before, if they find their mate. She's been marked, what do you want me to do? Just send her back? The one who marked her needs to fix this shit... somehow." 1 "Who cares what happens to a fucking elite." He spat. 1

I frowned.

"She wasn't one of the ones who caused us any harm... She was a child when all that shit went down... There's no difference between us if we hurt those who are fucking innocent Emmet. This has nothing to do with her, but the fact you hurt Jackie, whether it was a one-off or not... It was a fucking crime. Marcel will be the final judge."

"We both know that Marcel is simply Alpha by title Leo, you are the real one in charge. This is all in your hands." Our eyes met and I stepped closer. "Yeah, maybe it is, and if so, then my decision still stands. Until I'm satisfied, you will not step into the Delta title again." "I'm your best friend, Leo." 1 "And like I've said a thousand times, I will never let the rules slide even for someone I consider my brother." I growled menacingly, my aura rolling off me. He was forced to submit and looked down. "You need me close to Marcel to make sure that he doesn't get wind of what else you do Leo." Was that a threat?

"I fear no one. What I do is for my pack, and if anyone double-crosses me... then they will fucking pay. Remember that." I ended the conversation, storming out. 2 (END OF FLASHBACK)

"Here's your order. Can I get you anything else?" The woman behind the counter asked. "No." I replied, taking out my card and paying.

"Thank you." Corrado said, picking up the bags with ease.

"You are most welcome." She flashed him a smile before I picked up the drinks, and we headed out to the carpark

I helped Corrado in and strapped him in.

"Seatbelts on." He said, making sure it was strapped in. "Daddy, I hold the drinks so they don't spill."

"You sure?" I was sure we may just have more spillage... He nodded confidently and I passed them to him, placing the bags on the seat next to him, and got into the car. Putting my own seatbelt on, something that I did when Corrado was with me, I started the car. I could feel him watching and could see the happy smile on his face

"We will watch another movie with Azura." He declared. "I think we should ask her to come to our apartment."

"Inviting girls home already?" "Yes, girls we like." He nodded. 5 I smirked as I put some clean music on before we drove out. I texted Jax, frowning, as I switched the view on the cameras again. We weren't that far from the pack grounds, but it was fucking crazy how on edge I was feeling. Emmet had a temper, and I fucking wished I had moved her upstairs to my apartment, or to Marcel's...

The screen lit up with Jax's reply and clicked on it. 'Nothing to worry about here, Alpha.' I left the camera on my LCD screen before calling Eric. "Hello, Alpha."

"Keep an eye on Emmet. He was pretty pissed when I suspended him as Delta."

"You suspended him?" He sounded shocked. "No, the fucking tooth fairy did. I just told you I fucking did." I muttered, making sure to keep my voice down. 5

"Ah sorry, yes of course."

"Keep an eye on him." I ended the call, finally within mind-linking range of the pack. No one had gone to Azura's room, and my eyes were fixed on the cameras on the screen. So I really needed to chill out... 1

That unease was fucking growing and last time she had gotten hurt...

I tilted my head frowning as I watched Jax on the stairs away from the floor, but he was standing on alert in exactly the same position he was moments ago...

Was the camera frozen? Or was he really not moving?

Jax.'

No reply. I parked up, grabbing Corrado from the back. He passed me the drinks and grabbed the food.

"Come on." I murmured, carrying him through to my underground cave.

No one had entered or left Azura's room. She'll be fine. Chill the fuck out Leo.

But I fucking couldn't.

"I can walk, Daddy." He smiled, clearly happy with being carried again.

"I know, kiddo." I gave him a faint smile, heading straight for the lift, up to my office.

'Winona, come to my apartment immediately and watch Corrado.'

"Yes, Alpha.'

She only lived a few floors down.

"Wait here, I'll bring Azura." I told him, placing him down in the open living space.

"Ok!" He said happily as he began taking the food out of the bag. "I'll set the table."

"Jax.'

Nothing I left the room, and instantly the faint smell that lingered made me cover my nose with my sleeve.

A sleeping drug...

I broke into a run just as my phone buzzed, I looked at it, Azura's door had been opened. I couldn't hear anything, the door shut just as I reached the top of the stairs, spotting Jax slumped on the ground.

A fire of rage rushed through me, and my eyes blazed as I ran down the stairs, my feet barely touching the steps. I skipped most of them, rushing to her door.

No matter how calm I was trying to be, the storm raging inside of me refused to calm down. I was fucking going crazy at just the thought of something happening to her.

Emmet's scent lingered outside, and I opened her door quietly just in case I was fucking overreacting, only to be met with the sound of Emmet's voice. "...gone with his kid. He won't be home for a while. Who are you going to run to now?" ! "I don't need to fucking run because I can deal with you myself." Azura replied icily.

I turned the bend only to see he had her pinned against the wall near the bedroom door, his hand around her neck, whilst she had her arms in front of her stomach defensively. Neither had seen me yet...

How dare he touch her...

"I know your secret." He whispered menacingly. 3

Her eyes flashed with fear, something I wasn't used to seeing in them. I was trying to contain the white-hot anger that was festering within me. I had never felt so angry in my fucking life. The urge to shift and rip him apart was taking over. My own heartbeat was beating violently, my claws out and it was then Azura's eyes snapped up, finally noticing me. A wave of relief filled her eyes. 1

I'm here.

"Let her go." I hissed, advancing towards him.

He froze, letting go of her as if touching her suddenly burnt him. His heart thudded as she let out a shaky breath.

'I need someone to come to Emmet's floor and apprehend him before I kill him.' I growled through the link. I was fucking shaking, ready to kill him. He turned to me, his face pale, his eyes blazing with rage and fear.

"Leo..."

"How dare you..." I growled. "You have fucking doomed yourself."

Jackie... Try to think of her...

It was futile; I had lost my grasp on reality and my self-control was slipping. All I could see was the blood dripping down her neck. The sound of the lift opening and footsteps approaching reached my ears, but my only focus was on the bastard in front of me. 2

Emmet swore, running a hand through his hair. "I'm your friend Leo." 1

"I don't care. You crossed a line that you never should have." I growled, advancing towards him.

"Fuck it... if I'm going down..." In a flash, he spun around, aiming a clean-cut roundhouse kick straight to her stomach. 11 My eyes blazed in pure anger. I was behind him in a flash, just as Azura screamed as she was thrown to the ground, clutching her stomach, my own growl of rage ringing in the air. I grabbed Emmet, punching him in the face, feeling something break. I didn't fucking care. I slammed him into the wall behind him, damaging the wall behind him at the impact. "What the fuck, Leo!" He groaned in pain. "You touched what's mine." I growled viciously, digging my claws into his neck as I brought my knee up, connecting with his stomach, feeling something break as he howled in anger. 3 His eyes widened, and pure fear flitted through him as he looked at Azura on the floor with realisation dawning on him. 6

"She's..."

"Emmet! Leo!" Eric shouted. I wanted to kill him, but at the same time, worry was seeping through me.

Why wasn't she getting up? "We got him." Ace's calm voice came, pulling me away. "Lock him up in an isolated cell with no one allowed to see him." I thundered, striding over to where Azura was on the floor, whimpering in pain. Her gown was slipping off her shoulder, but she didn't seem to care as she sat there clutching her stomach.

"Are you ok?" I asked quietly.

I never should have left her.

I gripped her elbows, ready to help her to her feet when she whimpered in pain.

"It hurts... no... no..." 2

I looked down at her, frowning.

Did she break a rib? "Let's get you checked out." I whispered, about to lift her when I saw the blood seeping down her thighs. 4 Where was she hurt? Did I fucking get here too late? She looked up at me,

her silver eyes filled with tears. 1 . “My baby can’t die.” 20 My eyes widened in shock and I stared into her eyes, my head spinning as her words echoed in my mind.

Baby...

I looked at her clutching her stomach, and suddenly my entire fucking world came crashing down around me. She was carrying our child. 9 Goddess, what have I done?

Chapter 34

Refusing to Fail

LEO.

“Your baby won’t die, not on my fucking watch.” I promised her, my mind racing as I tried to think of the best course of action. 2

She was looking at me with her eyes flickering from silver to blue, her heart thundering as she clutched her stomach. Her lips parted, but she was unable to put two words together.

I knew my medical shit... Although werewolves could take a hell more than a human, the trauma of his kick could have damaged the placenta. 1

“You are going to be ok.” I murmured, lifting her carefully into my arms.

Her heart was racing, her entire body shaking, and I had never fucking seen her look so vulnerable.

You fucking will be ok. ‘I need our top gynaecologist ready to check on a patient with blunt force trauma to her abdomen.’ I said through the link, the urgency in my voice crystal clear. 1

I ran from the apartment to the lift.

‘Winona I need you to go down through my office to my underground quarters. Just go through my office, I’ll open the entrance for you now. Go down via the lift. In the main room, there’s a drawer with the number 78X0 on it, on the left side. The second compartment in the fridge contains a box of syringes. I need you to bring them to the hospital right now!’ ‘Yes, Alpha!

I had never let anyone down there, and I just fucking hoped she found it. I quickly unlocked the office passageway from my watch. My own heart was thundering as I looked at the woman in my arms. She was frozen in shock, her hands shaking as she clutched her stomach, her eyes fixed on her bloody thighs.

She couldn’t lose this baby; something told me she could lose the world but not this child. It would destroy her.

The lift opened and I ran to the exit. ‘Dad! Dad, I need you to get Kiara here right now, her sister needs her.’ My voice broke as fear enveloped me. 22 I promised her that her baby won’t die... I was fucking going to keep that promise. ‘Leo what’s going on! What’s happened to Azura?’ Dad’s panicked voice came through the link. ‘Call Kiara now.’ I repeated, my voice strained with urgency. ‘She’s going to lose this baby otherwise!’

Baby... what... ok, on it!’ ‘Winona hurry!’ ‘I’m on my way!’ Her breathless reply came.

'We are ready for the patient. Room 30 second floor, Alpha.' My heart was fucking thundering in my ear as I ran to the hospital. My feet skidding on the tiled floor as I entered, before running to the stairs, taking her to the room that was ready for her. "Place her down!" Doctor Donna ordered as she stepped forward. I did slowly, she was unmoving, but the tears were now streaming down her cheeks. She needed all the strength she could get. What should I fucking do? "I'm going to do an internal examination." "Check her levels." "She's lost a lot of blood." I need to do something... Think Leo... "I, Leo Rossi, take back my rejection and accept Azura Rayne Westwood as my mate and Luna..." I said quietly, staring at the woman on the bed. 23

My wolf's approval filled my head, and a ripple of gasps filled my room. Azura's eyes snapped to mine as the bond came to life, from the edge it had been teetering on for so long. I felt it strengthen once more as that powerful pull between us returned.

If she marked me, it would reinforce her abilities... But I was dying... 2

She was strong enough to survive without me. But after the story Dad had told me about her mom and her own birth, I knew losing this child would be far worse.

I stepped closer and knelt down by the bed.

"Mark me Azura. It may give you the strength you need to heal."

I hoped so... I fucking needed this to work for her.

She looked at me as if trying to comprehend what I was saying.

"There's damage to her placenta... She might miscarry..."

Their voices as they whispered amongst themselves, were like screams in my head. Azura also seemed to have heard them. Her head snapped to mine, the fiery determination of a woman who refused to give up returned in her eyes, and she gave me a slow nod.

I stood up, before lifting her head from the cushions, perching next to her on the narrow hospital bed. With my other hand, I pulled my shirt back, allowing her access to my tattooed neck

Please be ok. "What..." Her voice was hoarse. "Do it."

I looked into her eyes for a second before she moved closer. "For our baby." She whispered before sinking her teeth into my neck. Pleasure erupted through me as I felt the sizzling intensity of the bond erupt inside me like an

inferno, and then that powerful tug that sent an explosion of fireworks through me. Her lips brushed my neck, and if the situation wasn't so complicated, this would have been entirely different...

Our bond was completed...

My aura surged around me and I felt my power growing. I just hoped hers did too... 1

00... 1

I could feel her storm of emotions through the bond.

The fear for her child. 1

The self-blame that she should have been able to prevent that kick.

Disappointment in herself.

She retracted her teeth, her tongue brushing her mark fleetingly before she dropped back onto the pillows just as Winona ran through the door. 2 “Here!” She held out the box to me and I took it from her, flipping it open. I was met with a blast of freezing cold air. “Give me a needle.” I ordered “What is that Alpha?” Donna asked, passing me a wrapped needle after a moment.

“Something I’ve been working on... It should speed up the process of healing.” My aim to try to find a cure... It wasn’t perfect, but what I did notice was that it healed external wounds, just not long-term injuries. I wasn’t sure how well it would work on her, but from my testing, I truly hoped it did the job. “There’s no such thing...” One of them murmured as I took the syringe and attached a needle to it.

I ignored them, looking at the woman on the bed. Even in pain, she was the most beautiful thing on the planet. 1

“Trust me.” I said to Azura. 1

I wasn’t a healer; I wasn’t strong enough to fucking prevent this... but... I moved her gown slightly, one of the doctors had already thrown a sheet over her legs before carrying out her internal examination.

Please fucking be ok

I forced my walls up, knowing she didn’t need any extra stress right now. All I could give her was my reassurance and strength, which I let flow through the bond despite the fear I was fucking trying to hide. She didn’t even fight or react, her hands on her stomach as I placed the needle on the side of her stomach, and injected her with the formula I had created.

Scarlett Westwood was the research specimen behind this... after the battle a decade ago, I had taken some of her blood for research out of interest. Trying to see the scientific build-up of her cells.

Right now, I hope the product of that research works more than ever...

If I could... I’d exchange my life for this baby’s...

Come on...

I slid the needle out when the syringe was empty, feeling lost. I had done what I could, and it was obvious the doctors could do nothing to prevent a miscarriage... I placed my hand on hers on top of her stomach, seeing Winona slip out of the room silently. I had given her everything I could... but it wasn’t enough, I wasn’t enough... fuck I never was... A haunting memory of long ago returned. Just like mom... She was pregnant when Endora began doing tests on her... She wanted to make the baby into a Wendigo before birth, thinking it would be more powerful... Creatures created by Endora’s sick mind and magic... 9

I know dad never knew of that pregnancy... and I didn’t plan to tell him, knowing it would just cause him more pain... 4

I tried... I always fucking tried but it was never enough. I looked down at the woman on the bed. Her eyes were closed as the doctor checked the baby's heartbeat.

I knew only a few minutes had passed, but it felt like hours. "Alpha, the heartbeat of the foetus is getting stronger, and she's stopped bleeding." Donna's shocked voice came.

Both Azura and I looked up sharply as Donna gave some orders. "I'll do a scan, but I think the Luna is ok."

The Luna. 3 Our eyes snapped to one another, her heart racing as she clutched her stomach.

It didn't take them long for them to get a sonography machine in and set up. She placed some gel on Azura's lower stomach, and I forced myself to remove my hand.

"It's going to be ok." I said quietly, seeing the tension on her face. 'He'll fucking pay.' 3

Her eyes snapped to mine but she didn't say anything, nodding slowly. "Perfect... Alpha that serum... I think it worked... We will keep assessing her to see that things don't take a downward turn." Donna turned the screen so both Azura and I could see the screen.

"Make sure you do." I ordered.

I didn't know what to feel... an unexplainable feeling washed through me as I looked at the curled-up baby, and the powerful blimp of its heartbeat. My pup... 1

Thank fuck... 2

I let out a breath as a wave of relief flooded the room.

I looked back at the woman on the bed. Our eyes locked, and she opened her mouth to say

something, but before she could, the door burst open. In came two women. Kiara Westwood, and a cousin of mine, Raihana Somers, sister of Rayhan Rossi. 7 "Zu!" Kiara whispered, as she placed her hands on Azura's shoulder, her purple aura swirling around her. "Ki..." Azura whimpered, grabbing onto her sister's elbows. "I'm here..."

I removed my hand from where it had been resting on her hip and stood up.

Her sister was here to save her. Dad and Alejandro were in the hallway, I could hear them talking. I really didn't want to see Alejandro... 3

And as much as I fucking wanted to stay here... I wasn't needed anymore.

I headed to the door, only for Kiara to speak.

"Leo, wait."

I stopped two steps away from the door and turned. "What is it?" I asked emotionlessly. She hugged her sister tightly before she moved back, cupping her face. "She didn't need me, she was already healed. Whatever you did... she's perfect." 6 I closed my eyes in pure fucking relief.

I didn't let our pup die... fuck, at least I managed to save one person. 2 "Good." I replied emotionlessly, not waiting for a reply, and exited the room.

The two brothers stopped talking when I stepped out. It had been like a decade since I had seen him... since the day I told them that they were too fucking late with their apologies.

Sure, they came to the pack and apologised, even curing those who had had lasting damage from Endora's abuse, but it had been too late. They could cure physical pain... but what about the mental pain? Alejandro looked me over as if he was fucking seeing me for the first time. Well yeah in a decade...

"Never knew I was such a fucking role model." He smirked. 16

I raised an eyebrow. We looked nothing alike. 3 "You are far from one. Excuse me." 2 I was about to walk off when he blocked my path. My eyes flashed as I glared at him menacingly.

"Do not fucking cross me. You are here for her, not me." 2

"I would be here for you too, if you fucking let us. It's been years Leo... how have you been?" I looked into his onyx black eyes. He had aged... His once full black hair was now salt and

pepper. We were almost the same height... "I was better when I didn't have to see your face," I replied. "Shame, you're just going to have to deal with it. I'm here now, on your invitation, and I don't plan to leave right away." Alejandro countered looking around as if he had just been fucking given something he had been deprived off... I had made sure they were not to step into this pack ever again... but I'm the one who had called them... "Then don't. Just stay out of my fucking way." I pushed past him. I didn't have fucking time for this. There were a lot of things I needed to deal with. 'Leo.' Marcel's voice came through the link. 2

'What do you want?' I asked without turning back to him.

'Don't leave when your Luna is in there.'

She isn't mine.' I replied, ignoring the pang of pain that crushed me inside. 'You are only fooling yourself...' I ignored him, walking away.

She'll be ok... She had her family... +2

I stepped out into the fresh air, lighting a cigarette as I exhaled, staring up at the sky.

Fuck she was ok. 2

I leaned against the wall, propping my foot against the wall and resting my head back. The relief was unexplainable... however with it came a tidal wave of guilt, she had been pregnant when I had manhandled her... what difference was there between me and that bastard? 2

I sighed heavily taking a long drag on my cigarette.

'Winona, where is Corrado?' s

'I'm sorry Alpha, I left him, but I'm almost back there. 1.

'Ok'

'Is... is she ok?' 'Yeah, she is, they both are.' I needed to deal with Emmet... But I needed to do that when I was calmer, because right now... all I fucking wanted to do was kill him.

Chapter 35 **These Emotions AZURA. Everything was a blur...**

Fear, horror, panic.

Leo.

I didn't know how, but I wanted him to fix this. He seemed to be the type to always know what to do. 2

I was always strong and didn't need anyone, but was it weird that he gave me a sense of strength and safety.

When he took back his rejection, I felt my wolf come to life in a way, feeling a cool wave wash over me... Then when he told me to mark him... I knew it was for this baby, and that's all that mattered to me.

Our baby deserved to live.

The strength I had felt. The pain in my stomach had subsided, and then whatever he had injected into me, seemed to work. I had felt a similar sensation to how it felt when Kiara healed me in the past. A strong surge of coolness washed over me.

He looked guilty, the worry in his eyes so raw and intense that I didn't know what to say. The way his hand rested protectively on top of mine on my stomach... I was about to say something when Kiara had come, but when she tried to heal me... nothing changed and when she spoke, I understood why.

Leo had saved our baby by himself.

The sheer relief I had felt was unexplainable. My baby was safe.

Thank you, Goddess.

Thank you, Leo.

He had turned away, simply saying 'good.' In that cold, emotionless voice of his. That cold exterior had returned with full force.

I now looked at Kiara and Raihana.

"How are you here?" I asked them.

"Your mate got Uncle to call Kia, and well, I was the teleporter here." Raihana smiled, her brown eyes warm.

Kiara nodded as she caressed my hair.

"Leo called you to this pack?" I asked, uncertain of what to think. "Excuse us." The doctor smiled politely, and all four women present left the room. "He did." Kiara smiled. "For you." My heart skipped a beat, but I remained silent.

I felt as if I wasn't in my body, feeling as if I was looking down on all of this. The most important thing was that my baby was ok. Our baby. "He sure has changed, I've not seen him in years. He's lost his pretty boy looks." Raihana remarked, making Kia smile. "It has been ten years since we saw him..." She said sadly.

Ten years... Yet he called them for me... Well, for our baby...

He did this for our baby, not me, and that's ok, because at least I know now that although he hates me, he cares for our pup... 2

There was a knock on the door, and I adjusted my gown before the door opened and there stood Marcel and Alejandro.

"Hey there." Alejandro greeted me, he cupped the back of my head and kissed my forehead.

"How are you feeling, Azura?" Marcel asked.

I felt a little guilty that he didn't know I was pregnant with his grandchild...

"I'm ok." I replied.

"And so is the baby." Raihana added as Marcel gave her a hug.

"I'm glad to hear that." He said quietly.

They made small talk, but I was unable to focus. The weight of the situation was heavy on my shoulders.

We had marked one another to save our baby... but... what about us as a couple?

It wasn't enough... It just... wasn't.

He didn't want me... But now that he knew I am carrying his child, would that change his mind? Because I didn't want that, I didn't want that to be the reason...

I just didn't

"Are you ok?" Kiara asked, running her fingers through my hair.

"Yeah."

I had my hand on my stomach under the sheet feeling relieved. Seeing our little baby on that screen again, and Leo's reaction, it was a moment that I don't think I'd ever forget.

I was a mess.

"Well, it's late, I think we should all head back to mine. You haven't come here in years, and it would be an honour to have you here. Azura, I think you are better off at mine too." Marcel smiled gently at me, and I nodded. "Sounds like a good plan, I think I'll spend the night with my sister whilst you two can catch up." Kiara stated, smiling at the men. "Ah, sounds like a plan." Marcel chuckled, although Alejandro didn't seem too keen on the idea, but he simply nodded, his eyes on his mate.

"I'm going to head back. Thank you for the offer though, but I haven't even brought my clothes or anything." Raihana said, with a toss of her long dark hair.

Marcel chuckled.

"Ah of course, how can I forget that you need your essentials. However, thank you for coming in time." 1

“Obviously I do, I have a reputation to uphold. Also, there’s no need to thank me, we weren’t really needed, but I’m actually glad to have popped down to see that ass of a Rossi after years.” She shook her head before smiling at me. “Get him on a leash, girl, you got it in you to get him in line.” 2

She winked at me as Kiara chuckled.

“Thank you, Raihana.” I smiled slightly, and she gave me a nod before she chanted a spell.

A wave of power filled the room, before she vanished.

Being the eldest granddaughter of Endora, she was the one to inherit that magic. Witchcraft was passed down from eldest daughter to eldest daughter. Endora herself never had a daughter, so it went down to her first granddaughter. She was a powerful witch, and the Luna of a pack as well.

“I need to clean up a little...” I said my legs were covered in blood, and I felt sticky. “Yeah, sure, but I think the fucking question is, how the fuck did you end up in hospital, to begin with?” Alejandro asked.

I froze mic

TATO

y blanket off and looked at them as all three turned to me.

Marcel frowned deeply.

“The Delta of this pack attacked her. That’s all I was told by my Beta, who has him in a cell until Leo deals with him.”

“Leo, not you?” Alejandro asked, taking out a cigarette.

“Baby... not in the hospital.” Kiara reminded him softly. I got off the bed, the blood that coated my legs a reminder of what almost happened.

Emmet...

“Fuck” He grumbled, shoving the pack back in his pocket. “Yes Leo, he is the one that deals with everything.”

“Yet you refuse to fucking give him the title. I told you to do it, I don’t care about the consequences. I’d like to see what exactly he does.” Alejandro told his brother as he went over to the box that Leo had left.

“I know...”

“What the fuck is this?” Alejandro asked. “That’s what he gave me to heal.” I said before entering the adjoining bathroom, wishing I had something else but this tiny gown to wear... I didn’t know how to feel, Emmet had known about my pregnancy which meant Jackie had told him... He had tried to hurt my baby on purpose. I won’t forgive him for that... and I wanted to know what Leo was planning to do about it...

It was much later into the night. I had showered before I changed into some clothes that someone had brought from my apartment for me. I had only a little dinner, not feeling up to it after everything that had happened. We had talked to mama earlier, although we didn’t mention what had happened, not wanting them to worry. I told Kia to fill her in when she was alone without Dad around.

I was now laying in bed in one of the bedrooms of Marcel's mansion, with Kia curled up next to me. She was fast asleep, her hand resting on my stomach protectively.

It was past midnight, but I was unable to sleep. I felt so restless...

Emmet's final words rang in my head. 'If I'm going down.. How sick was he to target an unborn child?

And let's not forget now Leo knew about this baby.

"Can't sleep?"

I turned my head, looking into Kiara's gorgeous eyes.

I sighed heavily, staring back at the ceiling.

"No."

"Want to share?"

"Well, I was thinking about Emmet, how could he target an unborn child? You know Kia..He reminds me of him... He was beating his mate and she was hiding it from everyone. She even denied it! He got angry because I told Leo about it."

Kiara sighed as she propped herself up on her elbow. "Mm... So it reminded you of him... You know, abusers try to justify their actions one way or another. I just hope this Jackie is strong enough to break away."

Unlike Indigo... "Yeah... I hope so too. I wonder what Leo will do..." "You two have marked one another... Maybe you could ask him?" She suggested gently. I had told her that earlier, but she also knew it was still complicated. "Not today... I don't even want to face him right now." I whispered. "What is it Zu?" She asked softly. I sat up slowly and stared at the bedding, shaking my head slowly. How do I explain everything I was feeling? "At least I know he'll be a good dad." I said, shrugging.

She smiled.

"Oh? Have you seen him around kids?"

I tilted my head.

"Don't you know that he has a five-year-old son? Corrado?" I asked curiously.

No, she didn't. The surprise on her face answered that.

"Oh... from an Omega or..." She closed her eyes, shaking her head. "I'm sorry I—"

"I don't even know who his mama is but it doesn't matter, he's adorable."

She seemed relieved, but I could see she wanted to ask me something,

"Shoot."

She smiled slightly before becoming serious.

"Did it... remind you of Atlas?"

Atlas, my half-brother... A sour taste filled my mouth. I realised why she'd say that...

I was being biased maybe, but Corrado was not born from an affair, or I at least hoped Leo was faithful to the mother at the time, and he hadn't been dating anyone else at the time.

"It's different." "He's a good person Zu..." She whispered, and I simply frowned. "I'm surprised Marcel never mentioned it." I said instead, changing the topic. "No he didn't... I'll ask him tomorrow... But then again, he hasn't said much about this pack, respecting Leo's wish. Marcel is just stuck in the middle, wanting this to work." She sighed before smiling gently. "Let's not worry about that for now... Leo cares for you. If he didn't, he wouldn't have called for me."

"Or he cares for his pup." I suggested.

Sasa

I was happy that he did, don't get me wrong... But at the same time, I don't think us as a couple would work... He already told me he regretted marking me... 1 "Talk to him." Kiara encouraged softly, almost as if she knew what I was thinking.

I nodded, not sure if I would as I turned my back on her. 1

"Yeah..." I said, closing my eyes.

She ran her fingers through my hair tenderly, and I appreciated her not pushing the topic. I was blessed to have so many who loved me... But didn't Leo realise, so did he? I saw the way he became distant when Kia and Raihana had entered... The way he just wanted to leave...

With Kia's comforting touch, sleep soon overcame me and I welcomed it...

I was staring at something intently through maybe a crack or bars... I wasn't sure...

I was terrified. I don't know why, but I was...

A shriek of agony reached my ears, and I began looking around frantically.

"Please stop! Don't hurt her!" A young boy's voice left my lips as my entire body shook with anger, frustration, and fear. 2

I began running, climbing over what looked like some rocks, and stared down into the dimly lit room. The sight before me made my blood run cold. There on the floor in a five-pointed star, surrounded by symbols written in what looked a lot like blood, lay a woman. She was pinned to the floor with four daggers, one embedded through her wrists and two through her ankles, This was dark magic... I could feel it.

My eyes blurred as I took a shuddering breath, and I wiped them in irritation.

Pain and agony were clear on her face as a dark, smoky shadow swirled around her. Everywhere it touched her, it sliced into her skin viciously.

"Please stop! Don't hurt her!" The strangled sob left me.

Where was I? What was this?

“Shut him up before I kill him too.” A woman’s voice hissed ominously, and it was then I saw her. Her back was to me. She was wearing a long black dress, her hair was halfway *down* her back, and she had her hands raised. She began chanting, and the room seemed to become darker. There was an immense evil around her, one that was beginning to grow around the woman on the floor. 2

A woman with brown hair and ashy skin. Skin that was littered with scars, burns, and bruises.

“Yes.”

Marcel?

It sounded like him, but it was a voice void of emotion.

“No! Dad, save mom!” I seemed to scream again, and it was then I realised what this was. 2

SCI

A memory

Not just any memory, but one that belonged to Leo.

I was in Leo’s head.

My heart was pounding as Marcel approached, pulling open the barred door and grabbing me by the collar. “You need to learn to control yourself, boy.” He growled. “Dad! Please help her!” He begged. Marcel shook his head, his eyes blank as he dropped me, or should I say, Leo, onto the ground.

“Lock him up.” He growled. “Please! Help mom!” Leo’s scream broke into a sob, and then something struck the back of his head. Jarring pain seemed to split open my head and my eyes snapped open. *My* heart was pounding violently as I looked around, I was back in the bedroom at *Marcel’s* mansion.

That woman was Endora. The one on the ground with daggers in her wrists and ankles was Leo’s mom.

I felt sick...

What had Leo been through and seen as a child... I sat up staring at the clock on the wall, unseeing with only one thought on my mind. What else was Leo going through? The fact that that memory or nightmare came to me meant Leo was still having nightmares of his past. I pulled my legs up tucking them against my chest and wrapped my arms around them.

But no matter what I did to calm my erratic heart, I was unable to, feeling tenfold more restless.

Suddenly the restlessness seemed to ease and I realised that it had been Leo’s feelings. It was hard to differentiate between my emotions and his. But he must have put his walls up just now.

‘Leo?’

‘What is it?’ His reply came after a moment.

‘Can we meet? I need to talk to you.’ I said quietly. I don’t know why I said it, but those emotions I had just felt were intense... I needed to see that he was ok.

Silence followed and just when I thought he wouldn’t reply, he did.

I'll be there in ten.' 'Ok' I slipped out of bed unsure of what I would say when I met him, but I don't think I was going to be able to sleep anyway. I guess here goes nothing...

Chapter 36

A Battle of Wills AZURA.

I had looked in the mirror ten times before convincing myself that the shorts and sports bra were totally ok to go out in. I put on Kiara's strappy black heels, not wanting to rummage in the bag that had been retrieved from my apartment, in case Kia got disturbed. 1

Damn, I loved this woman's heel collection... Last year I had liked a pair of snakeskin knee high boots of hers, and she had told me I could keep them.

Selfless as always.

After zipping them up, I made my way to the door, just when I saw my phone screen light up.

I was sure it was from Sky, she was the only one up at this time, but I wasn't going to cross the room when I had just reached the door. I'll get back to her later. 2

I slipped out of the room silently, making my way down the dimly lit hallway, tip-toeing down the stairs. I could see the light in the lounge was still on. Were Marcel and Al still awake?

Ok... I don't want them to hear me leaving. Wait, Al has like supersonic hearing; he'll know either way, and I had nothing to hide.

Right? Right I still opened the door super quietly and slipped out, only to catch sight of the glowing tip of Leo's cigarette. He was standing in the shadows across the huge front lawn, leaning against a tree to the side.

His eyes fixed on me.

And when I walked towards him, I felt very conscious that my tiny shorts barely covered my ass. Maybe I should have come out barefoot, I don't think the heels helped. What was I going to talk to him about? Why did I even ask if we could meet?

His eyes were no longer on my face, but rather skimming over my legs, a look of hunger flashed in his eyes before he looked away smoothly.

My heart thundered and the moment his scent hit me full force, I wanted to close my eyes and inhale it.

"Were you awake?" I asked.

Dumb question, obviously he was, because there was no block or force preventing me when I mind-linked him.

"Yeah."

At least he didn't mock me.

He was wearing a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt that clung to his body, emphasising his every ridge and groove. I forced myself to stop staring and looked into his piercing blue eyes.

“What did you want to talk about?” He asked, his voice was so ice-cold, that it took me aback.

He meant business.

Ok...

“What happens from here, like what Emmet did. I know you suspended him but he ”

“Is in prison awaiting trial. I was a witness to what happened to you, and Jackie will talk.” His voice was murderous, and the way he said ‘will talk’ made a shiver run down my spine.

“So you believe that he did beat her?”

“I believed you before, but now he has several more crimes added to that fucking list. Don’t worry, Emmet will not be getting away with this. Although I won’t kill him... I will make sure he can never hurt anyone ever again.”

“Great.” I ran my fingers through my hair. A silence fell between us, and the nightmare returned to me. I wondered if he had been dreaming about it... It wasn’t really my place to ask, but I wouldn’t deny that I wasn’t tempted to.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” He asked quietly.

I knew what he meant, about the baby.

I looked him square in the eye, frowning. “Why should I have? You left me, remember? rejected me too?”

“If I knew you were pregnant, I would have made sure.”

“Of what? That the baby is ok? I was taking perfect care of it, heck if it wasn’t for this baby, I wouldn’t have even agreed to stay in this pack of yours.” I cut in, sounding colder than I wanted to. “I never thought your Delta would have attacked me in your presence... I let my guard down...”

My anger faded and I placed my hand on my stomach, making Leo’s gaze dip down to it. Something in his eyes softened, and I could tell he wanted to say something.

“I didn’t think he would either... I’m glad you’re both ok.”

Both.

My heart skipped a beat but yeah... I needed to be ok for the baby right? “Thank you for saving our pup and for calling Kia, although I know you never wanted to have them here.”

“Yeah. I didn’t.” He replied, his eyes hardening once again. I was hurt somewhat, but that memory of his kept replaying in my mind... There was more to Leo than met the eye. But I shouldn’t care... right? I hated how the moment he was in my presence, my senses became clouded. “I had a nightmare just before I mind – linked you.” I said hesitantly. He tensed, his cigarette to his lips, but he didn’t take a puff, as if waiting for what I was about

to say. His heart was racing, and I knew now that I had started, I needed to end this.

"I saw what she was doing to your mother, how you were begging your father." "Don't." His eyes blazed as he looked up at me sharply.

His anger was raging off him.

"Leo... Does your father know what you've witnessed and been through?" His silence gave me the answer I really wished wasn't true. "You need to let it out, you need to tell him or talk to someone, anyone. I mean have you talked to anyone about your childhood? We learned about Endora at the academy, her heinous crimes against the wolves in her hold. But... even from what my family were told, there was no mention of you... does anyone know what you have been through and witnessed Leo?"

Silence.

He was a greater mystery than I had thought.

"Leo? I'll take that as a no."

"I'm not having this conversation with you."

"Well, you are because what I saw."

"Don't try to fucking get into my head." He hissed, tossing the cigarette to the ground and crushing it under his foot.

"It's obvious you don't want to talk about it but you really need to—" "No, I fucking don't. So as I said, stay the fuck out of my head." He growled. My own eyes flashed, and I stepped closer, glaring up at him. Even with these heels, I was much shorter than him.

"Out of your head?! I was asleep! I didn't go prowling around in there!" I snapped.

"Listen to me Azura, what you saw better stay the fuck between us." He threatened. "Oh? Or what? What will you do?" I challenged, knowing that this baby was my ultimate shield from Leo.

His hands were clenched and on any other occasion, he would have grabbed my chin or neck by now. He didn't reply, simply glaring back at me. "I'm warning you... tell anyone about that dream... and I will fucking do the same about your

ex."

I felt as if I had been slapped, the icy cold look in his eyes told me he would do it too... my heart thudded as I realised, he was blackmailing me. Like Judah... I don't know why it just... it left a sour taste in my mouth.

"Wow... I never thought you'd go so low."

"Then don't fucking try me." He shot back arrogantly.

"I told you that in confidence. You were the one who wanted to know and wanted me to stay, remember? I was going to tell Alejandro, actually, since he's here, how about I just go and tell him! I

don't fucking need you. And since they are here, I'll go back with them to their pack. Yeah, maybe that's better. I'm fucking done." I turned, ready to storm inside, when Leo

grabbed my arm, pulling me back. I gasped when he yanked me close, glaring down at me. An intense wave of sparks rushed through me, sending a delicious jolt to my core.

"Calm the fuck down." He growled.

"No, why should I! You can get pissed whenever the fuck you want, but I can't?" I growled, trying to break free, only for him to turn us and pushed me up against the tree. He let go of me, but before I could even push him away, he caged me between his arms, his legs trapping mine.

What the fuck was this guy made of? No matter how much I struggled he refused to let me go, instead, he simply watched me. "Keep struggling, I'm not complaining about the view." He growled threateningly and I froze, realising his gaze was on my breasts.

"Stop perving." I growled.

"Stop struggling." He countered arrogantly.

My heart was thundering as our eyes met, trying not to pay attention to the way his chest was almost touching mine or the way his strong thighs had mine wedged between his.

"You can't stop me." I hissed.

"Don't challenge me because I don't like to lose." His piercing eyes flashed and my heart skipped a beat at how close he was...

It was suddenly hard to breathe and a part of me wanted to act up to see what he would actually do, whilst another part of me was trying to remember what we were discussing...

This tension between us... This closeness...

His eyes dipped to my lips and he licked his own. His ball piercing glinted under the moonlight and the intense urge to play with his tongue tempted me.

Fuck he had such good lips...

Focus girl.

'I can hear your thoughts.' His animalistic voice came through the link and in my haze.

I slammed up my walls trying to come back to reality.

"Don't deviate from the topic... You expected me to share my problems... but you can't share your own?" I asked quietly. He remained silent, his steel blue eyes looking into mine. "Not even with your friends?"

Talk to me Leo.

Look deeper... Dante's words returned to me, and I looked at the man before me intently.

Leo had so much more to him than one would think. So many had things to say about him, at the academy especially. He was known to be ruthless and cold-hearted. The Rogue Alpha... That was the name they called him. Some who loved Alejandro so deeply even went as far as saying they hated him because he didn't accept the way of the King and his council. But how could he accept it when he didn't grow up the way those who made comments had? People were so blinded that they judged others without even listening or trying to learn the

full story...

"There is no one that I trust in this world."

Those words squeezed my heart even though he spoke like he didn't care...

I know that he didn't want me because of who I was... but he wanted this child. I also knew he was physically attracted to me, just as I was to him...

The choice of the path ahead was in my hands...

Chapter 37. **The Path Ahead**

AZURA.

Do I keep away from him, let him deal with Judah and leave. Allow him to see his child and somehow live without him? Or do I selfishly fight for him? Do I try to get through to him. because whether he likes it or not, his nightmares are now mine too...

When he loves... he loves deeply...

Marcel's words were true.

I know they were because I've seen the love he has for his son, the love and fear he had when I almost miscarried...

Even though he hated who I was, he still looked out for me and still cared to an extent, no matter how much he denied it.

What should I do?

A sharp wind blew, whipping my hair in front of our faces, and I closed my eyes. The screams from his nightmare returned to me and my eyes snapped open.

I would always be there for those who needed me.

He reached over, brushing my hair back, tingles skimming the surface of my skin at his touch. He brushed the strands back, our eyes meeting, and I tried to focus on my words.

"Well... whether you like it or not, your dreams are now mine. Your nightmares too... So whether you tell me or not, I'll find out everything unless you plan to never sleep again. So maybe I can be that person you can talk to, since there's not much you can do about it." I said, glad my voice came out clear and confident. His icy eyes flashed. "Then the question is can you handle it? Or will those nightmares drive you insane?" He asked challengingly. My heart was pounding and when I shifted position, I froze feeling his hard shaft against my hip.

Goddess...

Do not look down Azura. Do not!

Well it was clear he couldn't focus on anything but his dick when he was this close. Seems like this sexy Alpha sure had it bad... Even if it was just sexual.

I smirked as I looked up at him, realising right now I was the one holding power. Reaching up, I flicked a strand of his chocolate locks that flopped onto his forehead.

"I'm already insane, if you've forgotten."

I thought I saw a faint smirk on his lips, but I wasn't sure if I imagined it.

"I'd appreciate it if whatever you saw, you kept it to yourself." He said quietly.

"As long as you promise to tell me everything yourself then."

His brows furrowed, and I raised my eyebrow.

"What's it going to be, little Alpha?"

He narrowed his eyes, gripping my chin in his fingers. "Don't antagonise me or..." "Or what?" I challenged softly.

My core clenched and I felt him throb against my hip.

Fuck...

My heart was racing, and he was the one to break eye contact first.

"Fine. Just keep your fucking gob shut."

I rolled my eyes as he suddenly let go and turned his back on me.

"Deal." I replied, staring at his back. "So later, in the morning, you'll tell me?" "Fine... Also... Corrado was hoping to have dinner with you. If you could come by later..."

"Won't you bring him to Marcel's? I didn't know they didn't know about him, I mentioned him to Kia..."

He muttered a swear.

"They don't need to know my business." He growled.

"Leo... I know you don't like Alejandro... but at least bring Corrado." I asked, stepping in front of him.

Trying to ignore the obvious hard-on that he was supporting.

"We are not having this conversation." He growled, his voice was firm and harsh. Maybe I really was pushing it...

"Fine. I'll come down for dinner tonight. Make sure there's plenty of food."

"Sure." He said, surprising me.

His gaze flickered down to my stomach for a moment before he turned and walked away.

I sighed, watching him vanish into the darkness before I headed back inside, realising I had shut the door and now it was locked.

Oh great...

I knocked lightly, hoping someone heard, and that not everyone got disturbed.

Anyone but Al... anyone but

The door opened to reveal none other than Alejandro, a cigarette in his hands and a smirk on his lips.

"You owe me fifty." He remarked. I raised an eyebrow as Marcel appeared behind him. "What for?" I asked suspiciously.

"Marcel here thought his son was going to take you home... I told him there's no fucking chance he's going to get off his high fucking horse." I raised an eyebrow, looking between them. "So you two were peeping out the window like two creeps? No offence Marcel." He chuckled. "None taken. Actually, that was Alejandro, who had heard you leave, I assure you we weren't watching."

"Good, not that anything happened." I stated, my stomach fluttering.

Yeah... aside from him having me pressed up against the tree... "Yeah, that's why you're carrying his pup." Alejandro remarked. I narrowed my eyes

"You're one to talk, remember Kia with Dante? Leo is far more like you than either of you will ever admit." I declared, stalking to the stairs.

"So, you admit that he does remind you of me."

"Eww no."

"Was that an insult to me or the fucker?"

I didn't respond to him, smiling faintly as I ran up the rest of the steps to the bedroom I was sharing with Kia. I felt lighter and somehow, I was looking forward to tomorrow.

I entered the room, shutting the door behind me, I removed the heels, and I slipped back into bed. I reached for my phone, remembering the text from earlier.

I was surprised to see it wasn't from Sky but from Song. She was always asleep by twelve latest, I hoped everything was ok with her.

I unlocked the phone and clicked on the message.

'Hey girl, how are you holding up? I missed talking to you, so thought I'd drop a message to let you know.'

I tilted my head, and quickly sent a reply.

'I'm great, a lot has happened, but I'll fill you girls in tomorrow. Thanks for checking in on me. Love you.'

"Ok, I'll be looking forward to it.'

I placed the phone down, my mind drifting to Leo and what happened outside, when I suddenly stiffened and turned back to my phone.

Song always replied with 'Love you too, Hun.' I picked up the phone, an ominous thought creeping into my mind as I stared at the last message.

She was online...

I pressed call, letting the phone ring as I held it to my ear.

No answer.

: "The number you have called is unavailable..."

I hung up only to see her typing. "Sorry Hun, just got into bed, so tired. I'll text you tomorrow. Love you." I let out a sigh of relief and shook my head.

Fuck, I was getting too paranoid. I placed the phone down feeling exhausted after that super long night and let sleep overcome me once more.

Chapter 38. The Choice to Make

LEO.

It was the following day, and after crushing Corrado's heart last night, I felt fucking awful. He had been asleep on the sofa when I returned, the food uneaten still on the table. He had gone to sleep hungry...

So, the first thing I did this morning was promise him that tonight we were going to cook together, because Azura was going to come over. That had cheered him up and I was going to fucking make sure nothing fucked this up this time around. I had left him with Winona, they would go buy the list of groceries I had sent to her. I was currently in my office at headquarters, waiting for Jackie.

Last night I told Eric to make sure she stayed in her apartment until she was called for. Emmet was in a cell which would stop him from linking anyone and before I talked to him, it was Jackie I needed to deal with first.

The knock on the door made me look up, before it opened to reveal Eric, Nikki and Jackie. Jackie's eyes were bloodshot, and it was obvious she had cried a lot. Eric looked sympathetic, but I already had a word with him regarding Emmet. He had been there when shit went down anyway, and he knew what Emmet's temper was like. The two had never seen eye to eye often enough. 1

"Did I ask for an entourage to accompany her?" I asked. "She's in a state, Leo." Nikki said, her own eyes shadowing when they fell to the mark on my neck. 4

Even with the tattoos on my neck, her mark wasn't hidden away... I won't deny that I examined it closely. It was a heart of fire in two shades, half was silvers and blues whilst the other was navy and blacks. It may look like a heart created from flames, but if you look closer, you could see that it was in fact, two wolf heads nuzzling together with fur made of fire. 14

Hurt flashed in her eyes before she looked away, placing her arm around her sister.

"I'll wait outside." Eric said, giving a small nod.

I waited for the door to shut, as both sisters took the seats opposite to me.

'Is it true that Azura is pregnant with your child?' Nikki's voice came through the link 2

My eyes flashed as I looked at her.

'You know the answer to that already.'

'Wow.' Her voice was bitter and irritated.

If Jackie wasn't here, I would have fucking snapped, but I didn't want to stress her out even more.

'We did nothing wrong. She is my mate. My fucking mistake was not ending it with you that day I got back. For that, I'm sorry alright, so let's end this shit now. We are over.' I replied icily. 'I don't want to have this conversation with you again, so move the fuck on.'

Her eyes glistened, and what fucking irked me was that her sister was in a state, and she was far more concerned about me. 6

'Leo, you have ignored every message that –

"Leave." I commanded. My eyes were enough of a warning, and she simply shook her head before standing up, and storming out. Once the door snapped shut behind her, I stood up and walked around the desk, leaning against it next to Jackie.

"I know this is all hard and although you are probably fucking confused about the entire situation, I need you to be honest." I said leaning closer. My hands threaded together in front of me as I rested my elbows on my thighs.

She looked up at me, her eyes filled with glittering tears.

"I'm so sorry, I didn't know he'll try to hurt her. If I knew you were her mate, I would have told you about the baby." She sobbed, her face filled with guilt, before she broke into tears.

I frowned, not expecting that. "You knew about the baby?" I asked. She nodded, "She said to me to keep it quiet, because you knew who her mate was and that you might tell him, and he wasn't a good person... and when I found out she was mated in this

pack, I understood it. I'm sorry." I

"Don't apologise, you kept her word..."

Wait... did Emmet know... 1

My heart thumped, remembering Emmet's words.

'I know your secret.' "Jackie. Did you tell Emmet?"

Her guilt-filled eyes met mine and she nodded.

"I never thought he'd hurt her, especially since he knew..." She whispered.

My eyes blazed as white-hot pain lashed through me.

He kicked her in the stomach.

He intentionally targeted our pup. "Do you know where he hurt her?" I asked her, my voice shaking slightly, as I did my best to contain the searing rage that was rushing through me. "He kicked her in the fucking stomach." 2 My voice was dangerous and menacing, and her face paled. She shook her head, clamping her hands over her mouth. "No... he—no... It's my fault, I shouldn't have—" * "No. It's his fucking fault, and he will pay for it. Emmet will not be pardoned for his fucking crimes." 1

A sob left her as she crumbled in front of me, a woman who had been broken by her mate and his actions. "What have I done... Emmet... why did he do this... Leo what if you let him go, don't let him stay in the pack. Exile him and —" **

"Do I look like a fool to you? If you set a criminal free, he will come back for revenge. This wasn't an accident or a crime committed by misjudgment, but one he carried out intentionally. Emmet not only abused you, but he also tried to harm an unborn pup and a pregnant woman. It doesn't matter if she is the rightful Luna of this pack, or the fact that that was my child he tried to hurt. They are crimes that I'm not going to forgive, whether they were against an Alpha, or an Omega, and he will be punished." My voice was cold but despite my calmness, there was no fucking way I was going to pardon him. 4

When an enemy walks free, they are a danger just waiting to happen. Emmet will stay in prison for life, or at least for the next thirty years, before I decide what to do with him... or... someone else does...

"Will you kill him?" She asked in a hoarse whisper.

"I want to. I want to rip him from limb, to fucking limb for what he did. Don't forget Jackie, he was like a brother to me too, but I won't do that, because it would cause your downfall if I did." "I replied quietly. "He hurt a baby." She was crying again, rocking on her seat. I moved away from the desk, and instead crouched down in front of her.

"Jackie." I took hold of her arms, hating seeing her like this. "Tell me, how long has he been hurting you. Please don't lie." She didn't remove her hands from her face as she continued to sob, her pain and anguish clear. "It was on and off... Maybe it started a year after we were mated. It was just a shove or slap here and there, but then it became more frequent." She whispered, her voice breaking. So for a few fucking years... "And not once did you think to tell me or Nikki?"

"He was your friend, and I love him." She looked torn.

"Friend or not, I wouldn't side with someone because of who they are... I would have sided with the truth."

Yet despite Azura just being a young woman, you straight up rejected her because of who her parents were. I sure was a fucking hypocrite. 2 "I'm sorry I said that Azura lied that day. I owe her an apology and for spilling her secret... I'm sorry."

"The question is what will you do now? Emmet will be tried in front of the pack, and he will be fucking imprisoned, rest assured. But now it's on you. Will you stay as the mate of an abuser, someone who tried to kill an unborn child. Mated yet apart, or will you let him go and build your life once more?" I asked softly, I knew she was in pain, but she needed to make the decision. "It's not that easy, you mean

rejecting him right? The pain of rejection after marking is devastating.” She whispered brokenly. Gone was the smiling woman who always cared for others... I just wished that she could smile

genuinely, not a fake mask whilst suffering inside. • “Rejection is terrifying...” She whispered. I know how painful rejection was... and I hate that I fucking put Azura through that... but what now? Do I somehow find someone to break the bond, so she can live when I die? I forced my attention back to the woman in front of me.

“I know it isn’t, it will hurt, but with time those injuries will heal. He is an abuser Jackie, you deserve better.” I said quietly, giving her arm a gentle squeeze. “Whatever you decide, I won’t judge you... but he will remain in prison for his crimes. The rest is up to you.” 1

She nodded brokenly. It wasn’t going to be an easy decision, but it was up to her now. “Whatever I decide, will it affect anything else?” She asked, quietly wiping her cheeks only for more tears to fall.

“Only for yourself.” I replied.

She nodded, and we fell silent.

I stood up, leaning against my desk, and lit a cigarette.

“Leo... the Queen is here... Can you ask her for help?” She asked hesitantly.

My eyes flashed, and I frowned. “No, and I don’t fucking want you mentioning that shit again.” I made sure to avoid Kiara, knowing she could fucking sense when someone was in pain. I needed them gone from here... I had already talked to Marcel, saying they needed to leave. I didn’t want them overstaying their fucking welcome... 5

She didn’t reply, simply nodding. “Can I have a week.... To decide?” She asked, fiddling with her fingers.

I nodded. “I haven’t talked to him yet either, so I don’t fucking kill him in the process. I need to cool down first too.”

She looked at me sadly and nodded. “I’m sorry that he betrayed you too... I know you trusted him...”

“That’s life, people come and go... You can’t trust anyone, not even those who you may consider your own.” 2

“Not always, please don’t let Emmet’s betrayal remove you further from those who love you.” She pleaded gently, almost fearful. I didn’t reply, my face an emotionless mask. “One week then... if you want to speak to him before that you can let me know. No one is to see him without my permission, and that includes you.” I said dismissively, not wanting to delve into my own matters.

“Ok” She replied quietly, getting up and walking to the door. “If you need to talk, I’m here and there’s many in this pack who will willingly lend an ear,

don’t bottle that shit up inside.”

“You too.” She forced a smile, although I knew she was ready to break into tears again. The door shut behind her and I smoked my cigarette, lost in thought.

I wasn't ready to talk to Emmet yet. I had visited the confinement centre earlier, but I didn't go into his cell. He had been sitting on the bed, hands cupped behind his head, unmoving. But I wasn't ready... not yet... I needed to calm down first. I had spoken to Jax last night, and it was fucking obvious he hadn't even realised when the drug had taken effect. Only Emmet would have the answer to what his aim was...

He wasn't meant to know Jax was there watching over Azura, but he had known he was there, and drugged him. So I wanted to know why he had targeted him, was it because he hadn't wanted anyone watching, or because I had lied that he was Azura's mate? Either way, I'd fucking find out when I go to see him. I glanced at the time, I had been notified that a car had come to pick up Alejandro and Kiara, and that they would most likely leave soon.

Good.

I had a meeting to attend regarding the buyers of the shipment too. Plus, I had done some more research on this fucking Judah. I returned to my underground cave and began dealing with what I had to. Once this entire shipment was sold, I would have enough funding for all the pack pups. Enough for them to be settled, and live the life I wanted for them. I spent the next few hours trying to find more details on Judah, I had already sent Dan to see what he could find...

I was going to get to the bottom of this shit, one step at a time... 1

It was now evening and although the day had been fucking long, I couldn't deny that there was something about the evening to come I was looking forward to. For starters, the look on Corrado's face when I returned on time. As he stood there in an apron and chef's hat that he must have picked up today, and it was enough to make me smile.

Winona had everything washed and set out for me, and from what I could tell, the place had been cleaned, not to mention it smelt of something citrus and deep.

I had got to work cooking and giving Corrado small jobs, knowing I didn't have much time. Winona had set the dishes before she had left us to it.

I hadn't really given Azura a time and so I had mind-linked her telling her to be here for seven. She had replied promptly, and now I was fucking feeling as if I was running out of time. "So Daddy, what have you cooked for Azura?"

"For us." I stated.

"Yes, and for Azura." Did he have to keep saying 'for Azura?' I gave up arguing with the kid and added the diced peppers to the pan. "Spicy rice, grilled tandoori chicken, chips, and chilli cheese bites."

"Daddy, you didn't cook the cheese bites." "No, but you love them and I'm still popping them in the air fryer. That counts as fuc cooking."

He giggled and nodded, knowing I had almost swore.

"Ok! I hope Azura likes it, Daddy... What if she doesn't." He stared at the food, and I raised an eyebrow

“I thought you liked the food I cooked.”

“I do, but what if Azura doesn’t?” “And who cares, I’m sure she’d eat whatever considering she can’t even cook.” I smirked.

“Oh yes. Azura can’t cook... then she will like Daddy’s food.” 2

Yeah, she fucking will.

I left the chicken on the griddle pan, and told Corrado to take the drinks from the fridge to the table. That would keep him busy long enough for me to get changed into something else. I left the lounge, and entered my bedroom. I entered the bathroom washing my face before I took out some black jeans and a black t-shirt. The bedding had been changed in here too. Running my fingers through my hair I returned to the lounge only to see Corrado fixing his shirt. He turned and gave me a megawatt smile. 2

“Do I look ok, Daddy?”

“You look great.” I replied as his eyes now examined me.

He frowned. “Why is Daddy not wearing something nice?” “I’ve been working all day kiddo, I like what I’m wearing.” “It’s not a dinner outfit. Daddy, you look like a bad boy. Azura likes people who look smart!” , Na, she liked me just the way I fucking was. 3

“Well, the main thing is you look cute and smart, and this dinner is for you right?”

His smile returned with full force, and he nodded.

“Oh yes!” 1 I took the chicken off the grill and placed it onto the bed of salad, before covering the platter, and checking the chips. The door went and I stiffened, just the thought of being around her was extremely appealing, yet fucking confusing. Corrado ran to the door, waiting for me to open it. I crossed the room and opened the door. Her scent filled my senses, and I couldn’t stop myself from looking her over. She was wearing a duck egg cropped off-shoulder knit top, with a black denim skirt, paired with over-the-knee heeled boots. The subtle touch of make-up only emphasised her gorgeous features. She was dressed to kill, and with her looking as sexy as hell, I knew this was going to be one fucking hard dinner. 2

“Hey boys.” She smiled, before crouching down and passing Corrado the gift bag that I hadn’t even noticed she was carrying. I

“Hey Azura, oh thank you!” Corrado replied, peering into the bag before giving her a hug.

“You are most welcome!”

She stood up slowly, her gaze now turning to me, and it was fucking obvious that she liked me in whatever. I almost smirked when she couldn’t stop herself from running her eyes over me appreciatively. 1 “Not going to invite me in?” She asked, her voice sounding dangerously seductive.

Our eyes locked before I stepped back slightly, giving her enough space to brush past me. The dangerous sparks of the bond surged through me at the light touch before she followed Corrado into the apartment. I shut the door, my eyes on her ass as she sauntered over to Corrado who was already giving her a tour of the place. Damn those legs were fucking fine...

Well, this sure was going to be ten fucking times harder than I thought.

Chapter 39. A Sizzling Dinner

AZURA.

Corrado was thrilled to see me and was showing me the entire apartment. The delicious smell of food was making me lick my lips, or was that his scent? I wasn't sure... either way this place smelt divine.

Kiara and Alejandro had left after lunch and although I'd miss them, I was glad I at least got to see them for a short while, Kiara's parting words were to take care of myself, and the baby, along with a not-so-subtle comment to talk to Leo and try harder... In what way... well I knew what she wanted and hoped for.

Think before acting Zu.

Marcel had asked if I wished to stay at the mansion, but I had politely declined, deciding to return to the apartment beneath Leo's.

The short conversation I had with him now replayed in my mind.

(EARLIER THAT DAY...)

"Thank you for everything." I said looking at Marcel, we had just walked Al and Kia to the pack borders.

"I'm afraid I didn't do enough, but I can assure you Emmet will be punished for what he tried to do. I know my son, and I know he has a level head on his shoulders most of the time." We walked alongside each other as we made our way back.

"I know..." I said, placing my hand on my stomach.

Leo would protect this pup... "I am happy that I'm going to be a grandfather again." He smiled, and I smiled back

"Yes, I just fear that this one might just be a little monster brewing, with parents like us."

I wanted to say like Leo... but I know I was psycho too.

Marcel let out a chuckle. "Well kids aren't always like their parents; Leo is nothing like me or his mother for that matter ..." His smile faded to a softer, tender one, and I knew he was remembering her. "Petra was a very caring woman, with a good heart, strong yet gentle at the same time..." 3 A frown creased his brow, and he sighed.

"Are you ok?" I asked hesitantly.

"Of course... just my time with her and the memories are so vague... fleeting even, because I don't remember much... She died when Leo was still rather young..." (END)

The memory of Leo's dream had returned to me, and I wondered how much Marcel knew, or didn't know

Didn't he have a right to know?

“And this is Daddy’s room!” Corrado’s excited voice brought me out of my reverie. “Corrado.” Leo’s voice came with a subtle warning. I skimmed the room, there was no sign of a woman living there... I guess Nikki really did move out... I glanced at the bed and couldn’t deny that a pang of jealousy and pain rushed through me at the thought of them both in that bed. I might be pregnant with his pup... but I had never slept with him.

Not that I wanted to.

Although, I don’t think I would be able to sleep if he was in my bed. 1

Urgh, focus Azura.

Now I really sounded like a hormonal pregnant woman.

“Ok Azura, let’s go have dinner, Daddy worked very hard!” He took my hand, tugging me to the table, and I followed.

I could feel Leo’s eyes on me. I had literally gone through everything before selecting this skirt, and it would be lying if I didn’t admit that I had chosen this skirt on purpose. I knew that Leo had a thing for my legs, and it was pretty satisfying knowing I had that hold on him. I really didn’t know what I wanted, or what the future held, but it was kind of fun to see him struggle to control himself. I also wouldn’t deny the fact that I enjoyed his attention. I looked at him as he placed a platter of grilled chicken on the table, along with a bowl of chips. There was a platter of rice and some nuggets too. Goddess, the food looked so damn good.

“Daddy cooked.” Corrado declared, and I smiled. “Your Daddy is pretty good at a lot of things, right?” I asked, ruffling his hair. “Oh yes. Daddy is good at everything.” 3

He nodded and I made the mistake to look at Leo, who was placing a wooden tray containing four sauces on the table. Why was seeing him in this setting so crazily hot...

I know Raven found Liam cooking hot, but I never got it, I just felt like, yay I am going to get food in front of me... but then Leo.

His eyes snapped up to mine and my heart skipped a beat.

I’m sure I had the block up... right? 1

I almost heard the purr of approval from my wolf under his intense gaze. A man looking at me with pure hunger.

Eat me, please. 2 No, don’t. Go away bad thoughts! “I never knew you were a good host.” I teased, pushing the thoughts of him shirtless out of my head. Corrado patted the seat next to him and I slid into the chair. “I’m not.” Leo replied coldly, sitting down.

“Well... this meal speaks otherwise, or am I just lucky?” I had to take a picture... “Yes. Daddy only cooked for Azura and me.” Corrado agreed as I quickly took my phone out. “That is very nice of your Daddy.” I said snapping a picture of the table. I almost got Leo in it, and I wasn’t going to complain if I did. But then he sat back, tilting his head as if he knew what was running through my mind. ‘Don’t worry, I didn’t want you in the picture.’ I said, putting my phone aside. He raised an eyebrow

'I didn't say anything.'

"I know that look." I said out loud.

"Do you now?" He countered.

I would have said more, but I could see the huge smile on the little gorgeous chipmunk's face next to me.

"What would you like to eat Corrado?" I asked instead.

"Chips and nuggets!"

"Chips and nuggets it is!" I placed both things on his plate before adding two nuggets and a handful of chips to my plate, before helping myself to the rice and two pieces of chicken.

Yes, I can eat, and I will eat a lot! I only ate less when I had to cook.

Leo began adding food to his plate last, that same arrogant look on his face. "So Corrado, I heard you wanted to eat with me?" I smiled down at him, taking a bite of my food.

He nodded, swallowing his mouthful.

I'd be damned... this chicken and rice were to die for. Damn the guys got skills and not only in the bedroom. "I did, but it was Daddy's idea." Corrado continued, with a suspiciously innocent look on his face. "He wanted to eat with you too." S "I didn't." Leo added, frowning at me.

Oh, I couldn't let such a good chance to tease him pass me by...

"Aww, are you sure Weo?" I cooed teasingly.

A flicker of something crossed his eyes as Corrado and I giggled.

"Weo! Daddy's name sounds funny!"

"When I was little, I couldn't say the R and L sometimes, unlike you. So Leo would have been Weo, you would be Cowado." I smiled, remembering I was pretty old when my speech became fluent. There were even a few people who found the way I talked irritating, but no two children were alike. I remember when I finally got a grasp on the letters, I didn't want to use them out of stubbornness. Besides, Liam fell for everything as long as I spoke like that.

"It's cuter than how you speak now." Leo remarked, snapping me from my thoughts.

"Want me to call you Wittle Weo?" I asked with a devilish smirk.

"No thanks unless you want me to call you Lola." 3

Lola? "Lola is a pretty name, and so is Weo!" Corrado added. "Who is Lola?" I asked suspiciously, narrowing my eyes and watching him eat a forkful of chicken and rice.

I was so damn jealous of that fork right now...

"Figure it out." He smirked.

"I plan to." I replied, annoyed with that dumb smirk on Wittle Willied Weo's face. 2 Ok he was far from little but still...

I moved my leg, tensing when it brushed against Leo's knee. Our eyes met, and the intense pull between us only seemed to heighten... I slowly moved it again, only to knock it against his other leg.

I was sure his legs weren't this close seconds ago...

I raised an eyebrow, moving my legs away as I picked up a drink bottle and poured myself a glass.

"What do you want to drink?" I asked Corrado.

"I will have the apple juice; you should ask Daddy too." 1 Ok I think this boy was up to something. Even Leo was frowning at him, but I wasn't going to break a kid's heart. 1

"Tell me, Wittle Weo, what drink would you like?" I asked sweetly, earning a glare from him. "I can help myself." He replied, icily biting the metal cap off a bottle of J20, and taking a swig. "Daddy, we have to be nice to Azura, she's our guest." "Yes, Wittle Weo, you got to be nice to your guests." I repeated. 'Keep calling me that and I fucking swear I will remind you how far from little I am.' His growl came through the link, sending pleasure to my core. 4

My entire body wanted exactly that... and maybe a part of my mind too... 'Well, I don't remember. Guess there was nothing to remember...' I replied haughtily as we continued eating. The image of his dick was still clear in my mind... Oh fuck...

My entire body was a mess of nerves, and that dangerous desire that was pooling between my legs was growing. Damn it Azura, focus.

I did my best to focus on Corrado after that, and when dinner was over, both Leo and I got up at the same time to clear the table.

Leo was about to say something, but I cut in.

"I'll do it, you cooked." I said when our hands brushed, and his gaze raked over me.

"Fine, you can put that sexy ass to use." 1

We both froze, and I could almost see the annoyance on his face at himself for letting that comment slip. 1

'Nice to know you think it's sexy.' I remarked, brushing past him, my bare shoulder brushing his arm.

"Don't push it.'

This wasn't meant to be going like this... And how the hell were we flirting when there was a kid watching us with such intensity that you couldn't miss him.

"I'll help!" Corrado offered as he stood up, about to take the drinks to the fridge.

"Let me wipe your hands first." Leo said, taking a hand wipe and crouching beside his son.

I watched them, feeling my chest tighten at the faint smile on Leo's face, the adoration on Corrado's, and the way Leo wiped his face too. He was a good Dad... I looked away quickly, washing the dishes.

My own dad was perfect, the best dad anyone could wish for, and I wanted my baby to have that...

Once the table was wiped, Leo took out a platter of dessert shots. "Daddy didn't make these." Corrado announced, "I chose them from the shop all by myself, Winnie let me."

"Yeah, I can tell." Leo remarked, as we looked at all the colourful desserts.

"They look yummy," I said as Corrado ran to get spoons.

"What drink do you want? Hot chocolate, coffee, or anything?" Leo asked our eyes meeting. "Milk" I said smirking, as something else milky white came to mind... "Is your mind always in the gutter?" "I didn't say anything." I retorted, my gaze dipping to the front of those jeans that hugged his perfect legs. He stepped closer, about to reach for me when Corrado's little figure stopped, observing us intently.

"You didn't need to; your eyes speak loud enough." He replied, turning to Corrado. "You got the spoons?"

"Yes, I did..." He said, pretending to yawn. "I'm so tired too." 3 "Oh yeah?" Leo asked sceptically. "You wanted Azura here, and now you're ready for bed?" "Yes! I want Azura to put me to bed, please? And then you can put Daddy to bed too!" 20

I couldn't help but burst out laughing at that. &

"Corrado..." Leo warned him.

"But Daddy, we had a plan." He whispered, motioning for Leo to crouch down. Leo sat down, lifting him onto his lap. 4 "There was no plan, that was just you being you. Now, which one do you want?" Leo asked, placing him down on the seat beside him.

"I want this one."

While Corrado helped himself to what looked like a strawberry mousse, Leo walked over to the kitchen to make himself a drink.

Leo switched the coffee machine on before grabbing two glasses and a bottle of milk from the fridge.

"Thanks." I said crossing my legs as I helped myself to a custard and cake shot with lots of sprinkles on it.

He poured two glasses of milk. Was it just me or was seeing a tatted hunk with his biceps on show doing something so casual, and still looking so damn sexy, a huge turn-on? His eyes met mine as he slid the glass closer. "Thanks, for the meal too, it was really tasty. I'm pretty impressed." I said, eating a second spoonful of custard.

"I would say anytime, but I really don't want you to make this into a habit." He replied arrogantly, as he walked over to finish making his hot drink.

"Make it a habit!" Corrado added happily.

“Yeah and just think, when you’re feeding me, it’s not only me you’re actually feeding.” I added when he returned and took a seat next to Corrado.

“Yes, Daddy Azura can’t cook, she needs you to cook!”

Leo was now frowning.

“I don’t cook daily Corrado, but yeah you actually can’t cook, so what are you eating?”

“What do you mean?”

“Meaning are you getting the nutrition you need?” Was he really going to grill me on that? ‘The baby takes what it needs from the mother, so you don’t need to worry, your baby will be fine.’ I said through the link. ‘Yeah, but you need to keep yourself fed and strong too or have you forgotten that part?’ ‘I’m fine, Winona has been giving me food, and I make really good sandwiches.’ ‘Yeah, I’ve heard of your sandwich-making skills.’ He replied mockingly. I frowned. ‘Don’t mock me, I might just make a sandwich out of you.’ I threatened; then blocked him out simply enjoying the dessert.

“Can Azura mind link Daddy now? Does that mean you joined our pack?” Corrado asked innocently. 2

This kid sure was smart...

I looked at Leo deciding it was best if he answered this one. “It’s a little complicated kiddo. Now, how about you finish your dessert?”

He looked at us curiously before nodding.

“Ok, Daddy.” Leo didn’t have any dessert, simply drinking his coffee. We fell into a comfortable silence, and I looked at them both wondering what the story behind Corrado’s birth was? Where was his mama?

“I’ll go brush my teeth and put my pyjamas on now, I’m so sleepy! Azura, I will call you when I’m ready.” Corrado declared, finishing off his milkshake and supporting a cute milky moustache.

That part, emphasising how tired he was, made it clear he wasn’t tired. “Ok! Call me.” I gave him the thumbs up, before he gave Leo a big hug and then ran off. “He never wants to sleep usually.” Leo remarked. “He’s a good kid.” I replied quietly as he disappeared into his bedroom.

Leo nodded.

“He is, although I don’t really get to spend as much time with him as I want.” “I guess he gets that, considering you are practically running this pack.”

“Yeah.” Leo said, placing his cup down. “Was he ok that Nikki’s gone?” I asked, feeling a sliver of guilt rush through me.

Leo looked at me and shook his head slightly.

“Yeah, he didn’t really care, they weren’t really close, which I guess is for the better.” “I can’t believe that, he’s really social and lovable.” “Towards you, and that’s why he thinks I should keep you.” Leo replied frowning, emphasising the ‘keep’. I smirked, leaning forward. “Not jealous are you, that he has taken a liking to me so soon?” I teased “Not at all.” He replied, our eyes met, and I couldn’t stop myself

from asking the question that burned in my mind. "Where is his Mama?" His eyes flashed, before he looked away.

Shit I shouldn't have asked.

"I'm sorry, if you don't want to talk about." "It's not that... I've just never told anyone the truth about that." He spoke very quietly.

"Want to share? You already know my secrets." I said, sitting forward.

His gaze dipped to my cleavage, and he leaned forward, taking hold of my chin. My breath hitched at his touch, and he ran his thumb across my bottom lip, sending sparks rushing through me. The urge to bite down on his thumb was intense. "Maybe I will... but right now... someone's watching us with a little too much attention." He whispered huskily. My eyes widened and I jerked away, only to see the shadow of the little minion down the hall. "I'll go to put him to bed." I said, standing up, "Then I want to know that story." "Fine." He said leaning back. This time when I walked away, I didn't mind taking it a little slower, giving him a good view of my behind in this mini skirt... A little extra sway in my hips wouldn't harm anyone.

I couldn't wait to know what the story behind Corrado's mama was, and I hoped it helped me understand Leo a little more... 3

I smiled when I saw Corrado scrambling into bed and almost laughed.

Oh, he was such a mini-me.

"Oh hello Azura, I was just going to call you." He lied innocently. 4 "Oh, I'm sure you were. Now, how about a bedtime story..." 1

Chapter 40. Something I've Never Shared LEO.

I agreed... I don't know why I fucking did... I just knew that she wouldn't betray my trust or mention it to others. She might be crazy, but she's my type of crazy, and the one I know who wouldn't do anything to hurt anyone on purpose, in serious matters anyway. I mean I wouldn't put it past her to try to slit my throat in my sleep if I pissed her off but at the same time, I knew the type of things she'd keep quiet... 5 I knew if she knew about the fact I'm dying, she would try to do shit even if it meant breaking a promise. But something like Corrado's truth... she wouldn't tell anyone. 2

Even Marcel didn't know and regardless of that truth, it changed nothing. I cleared the table off, taking a bottle of whiskey and two glasses to the lounge area. As a werewolf, I know drinking did nothing to a pregnant woman, so a glass or two won't fucking hurt.

Why did this feel too intimate? 3

I sighed remembering the vague memory from long ago, 'Thank you, Weo' back at Alejandro's wedding... Her shoe had slipped off, and I remember slipping it on for her. I remember thinking she was cute... Who would have thought, the confused little she-wolf would turn out to be mine. 7

I looked at the bottle in my hand, considering putting it away, only for the sound of a door shutting to reach my ears, followed by the sound of her heels on the floor, making me look up. She came into view, stretching her arms, only to make her top ride up slightly, showing off a little more skin.

Damn, she looked so fucking good...

Her eyes met mine and she seemed to become more serious, as she lowered them slowly. I was fucking forgetting my own rules... All I could see was her... 4 I was right, we should never be in a room alone together. "Whiskey? Hmm maybe Corrado was right; it wasn't just him who wanted to spend time with me." She smirked as she came over before sitting on the sofa and crossing those sexy legs of hers. I poured two glasses, giving her an emotionless look "Don't kid yourself. I just need a drink if I'm going to spend another couple of hours with you." I mocked arrogantly. She raised an eyebrow challengingly. "And here I was under the impression that you were super smart. I never knew whiskey could help take the edge off anything for a werewolf. If this was absinthe, I'd get it." She countered.

Was I fucking losing my brain cells? 2

She wasn't fucking wrong... But I blame her... She was the one who fucked with my head.

"It'll keep me occupied." I replied sitting down, leaving a gap between us and trying not to stare at her legs.

She reached for the whiskey glass, and my gaze fell to the tattoo on her wrist —the word 'Strength'.

It was as sexy as the rest of her. What I liked best was that she didn't need to try attention... Just like at the club, even with the strippers swinging on those poles, it was her who had caught my attention... Before I even knew who the fuck she was.

"Occupied by what? You aren't scared to be around me all alone, right?" She looked at me with those big eyes of hers, and I knew that she fucking knew the effect she had on me... just the way I had an effect on her.

"Careful there, Little She-Wolf, you don't want to play with fire." I warned, picking up my own glass and sitting back.

I knew she fucking loved to play with fire... 1

I looked away, downing half my glass as she sipped on hers slowly.

"So, tell me about Corrado's Mama." She said softly, turning so she was facing me, one of her legs now hooked behind the other.

Corrado's mother... It was obvious what she was thinking.

"There isn't really much to tell... it doesn't change anything." She didn't respond, and I frowned deeply, remembering the past...

"I was in Germany, making allies and building relationships regarding work when I tracked down and found my mother's pack, or at least what remained of it. She had actually come to England to study, ended up meeting Dad and her family never heard from her again... She was an Alpha's daughter... They had come to look for her, but they assumed she was dead feeling the pack link break. Her parents and brother were killed years ago when their pack was destroyed. Her nephew, Stefan Herrmann, a cousin of mine, he was the one I ended up finding but they were living like humans. There was only a handful of them left, his father had made an enemy with a neighbouring pack, and unlike here, where Alejandro

does keep the rest of the packs under control, it was a fucking mess over there. This enemy of theirs had murdered the rest of the pack, and he told me he wouldn't stop until they were all dead." 2

I downed the rest of the glass, remembering that time. Once again, I failed... 3

"I told him I'd help deal with the bastard and they were welcome to come to England and join our pack or at least reside here until they were safe. He agreed as his mate was pregnant too." . I looked at her and it was obvious she wasn't expecting this. What did she think, that I had gotten some random woman pregnant? I was fucking careful, well I was until it came to her...

My gaze dipped to her stomach. It still felt fucking surreal that she was pregnant.

"I was getting the necessary preparations made for their travel. The men and I would track down Karl. But then Stefan rang and told me that Adele had gone into labour. The phone was suddenly cut off, and I knew something was wrong. I got back there just in time to witness that bastard killing them all... he didn't even spare the children." . I still remember the dead bodies... But it was nothing new... I was used to seeing the dead...

I'm glad she was silent because now that I had fucking started this... I wanted to just say it at once.

"I got there just in time to see him kill Stefan, Adele was curled on the floor losing so much blood. I still remember the numerous stab wounds they supported... It wasn't just any blade, but a Jagdkommando tri-dagger, a weapon that's fucking difficult to heal from due to its fucking shape. I killed him, but I was too late to save them. I was about to leave that scene: the fire was spreading, but then I heard a heartbeat..." "Corrado..." She whispered. 2 I nodded, remembering how I had run to Adele, rolling her onto her back, to see the bundle in her arms, still connected to her by the umbilical cord.

"She had just given birth to their son, and he killed them. She had been covering his mouth to keep him silent, but I'm sure if I hadn't killed Karl he would have killed the baby too. So I brought him back, named him, and told everyone he was mine. He is mine, and that's how it will always be, I don't want him to ever think otherwise because, as far as I'm concerned, he was always meant to be mine." 7

My eyes flashed dangerously as our eyes met, I knew she wouldn't tell anyone, but I could see that she wasn't expecting that.

Her shock and sadness were clear through the bond.

"He is yours." She said, placing her hand on my thigh and giving it a squeeze, sending a wave of calmness and pleasure through me. "and I think your decision is perfect... Maybe when he's an adult, and if you ever wanted to tell him that's ok, but I don't think he needs to know as a child... Sometimes I wish I had never known about Indigo and Fred... I don't get my parents' love for her... I know it's nasty of me, and Corrado's situation is different, but all Corrado needs is you and he loves you. You are an amazing father, and I'm sure you'll be an amazing father to this one too..." 2

I looked at her, my own emotions a storm and saw the sadness in her eyes. I never expected her to say that.

Sure her dad was a fucking idiot, but what about her biological mom?

"I don't want anyone to know, I trust you will keep it a secret." I said quietly. "One hundred percent. You don't need to worry about that. There's more of a chance for me to rip your dick off than spill your secrets. I mean, I didn't even tell anyone about your dick piercings..." She pulled a face and shut up. "Got it." I smirked, and silence settled between us. I swallowed, pouring another glass of whiskey for myself and downing it at once. "So... you got some issues with your past too huh, and I don't mean your fucking ex." She sighed heavily and stared at her hands, removing it from my thigh. Wish she hadn't. •

"Yeah... I guess so. Maybe it's selfish of me, but I always felt like everyone loved her. Sure, maybe they did, but to me... I feel like she only cared for Fred, not me, like she didn't really care if I died as long as she had him." The pain and bitterness were clear in her voice. "Mama and Dad love her; they always try to talk about her and incorporate her into things. I hate that. I don't like her. I wish I could tell them that. They are my parents, not her. She was far more

worried about her mate. I'm glad Alejandro sent him away to his death. I bet if he was alive. I'd be dead too..."

I frowned slightly, I could tell she hadn't told anyone about this. "You need to tell your parents that, otherwise it's just going to keep on eating you up inside," I said, placing my glass down. She raised an eyebrow.

"You're pretty good at giving advice. Do you ever take it yourself?" 2

"I'm too smart to take advice, I know when I'm being an ass or stubborn. But I'm a hypocrite like that, and I don't really fucking care." I replied arrogantly. 3

I saw her bite her lip and I almost smirked.

She sure loved a dickhead. 2

"Still." She said, resting her elbow on the back of the sofa as she looked at me.

Did she realise that her top was just about covering her boobs? Any higher and I'd be able to see those underboobs. Not that I'd mind...

"Talk to them. It's the only way they will get it, and I'm fucking certain they will respect your wishes. Elijah and Scarlett are not unreasonable people."

"Yet you dislike them." 1

I frowned.

"I dislike all packs who grew up differently than mine."

"Yet did you know that Mama went through a lot of abuse at the hands of her father? She was so young, and he realised she healed fast, so she became his punch bag or should I say target for torture ... I don't know the extent, but she suffered a lot... You know Leo... look around. There are many people who could probably relate to you." "Yeah probably... I just." 1

I just what?

Why did letting it go suddenly feel like it would be easier? 2

I was tired of the bitterness, the hatred... the distrust... 3

I know what my issue was, and I didn't want to risk it... She moved closer, running her fingers through her hair. "Leo... I understand that what happened was wrong... but Rayhan regrets what happened... I know it's not ok, and that the damage done will never be reversed, but holding onto that hatred... is it helping?" She asked, her leg brushing mine. I tilted my head, looking at her for a second, before staring ahead refusing to answer. "What are you afraid of?" She whispered, making me tense. A wave of coldness rushed through me, and I frowned, reality hit me hard. I had opened up too much.

"Nothing. I'm afraid of nothing." I growled coldly, only for her to place her hand on my shoulder, refusing to allow me to move away.

"You just proved that you are by denying it."

I turned my glare on her. "Don't push it." I warned, standing up and turning my back on her.

I had gotten too relaxed... what the fuck was I doing? 4

I walked to the window, staring out at the glittering lights of the pack below. Her scent was fucking intoxicating, clouding my judgement and I was beginning to regret even telling her about Corrado. That was a secret I should have taken to my fucking grave...

But it was too late, I had already told her.