

## Scars by Jessica Bailey Prologue

Gideon

"I'm sorry, she's gone. There was nothing I could do." The doctor says to me.

"Nothing! There's nothing! Bring her back!" I scream with every part of my being. I knew before he said anything. I felt her in my heart say goodbye and let go. At that moment, an unimaginable pain radiated to my core.

"I wish I could, but she's already gone. You know she is. Right now, you don't have time to grieve. They need their dad." The doctor directs my attention to the two newborn baby girls also screaming at the top of their little lungs. How am I going to do this alone? In an instant, my world changed but not how I had seen it happening. My mate died giving birth. She had pre-eclampsia and couldn't hold on after the birth. She gave me two beautiful baby girls, Rose and Daisy, smiled at them then left this world.

All I wanted to do was rage and destroy everything in my path. I was a warrior. All I know is how to fight my way out of problems. I couldn't comprehend how she was gone, and I was alone; I couldn't fight to save her. She was gone. I looked down at my two daughters screaming for their mother, and all I could do was cry. Me, the Alpha of the Druid Guard, sobbing as hard and as loud as my two baby girls. Two girls, what am I going to do.

How am I going to raise two girls! I don't even know how to change a diaper yet. Their life rushed through my mind as they grew. Would I be able to teach them necessary girl things? What are necessary girl things? I can teach them to fight; I can teach them how to lead an army of warriors, but that's it! I have never felt so hopeless and helpless in my life. These two tiny little girls already broke me.

They were all I had left of my mate, my last connection to my love. I could not blame them for what happened, but I wanted to. I was hit again with a wave of sadness as I realized these two beautiful babies would never see their mother smile at them. They would never hear her voice reading them a bedtime story. They would never listen to her laugh at their silly antics or feel her warm embrace. Could I do this be both mother and father?

With the help of the nurse, I picked up my tiny daughters. I gave them each a kiss. "I promise to give you all that I have. I can't promise I will be perfect, or I won't make mistakes, but I will give my life for yours to keep you safe. We are all we have now." I tried to stop my tears from flowing again, but I failed. Trying not to let my tears fall on my daughters, I lay them back into the bassinet. They had stopped crying and wiggled their little arms towards each other till they were holding hands. I sighed "at least they will always have each other." I sat down in a chair next to them, just watching them sleep. A little paranoid, they would stop breathing honestly.

As I sat there, I knew I need to help myself gain control over my grief. I needed to complete our family bond. As much as it hurt, I need to live for my daughters. I extended my claw on my left hand, slicing a small cut on my right, and then as gently as possible, pricked both of their big toes. I touched each of their tiny toes to my cut, letting the smallest drop from each of them enter my cut. I felt them enter my soul at that moment, and the silver of hope and love started to heal me. I looked down at my chest right where my heart is, and I could see my daughter's family mark forming a white rose and a white and yellow daisy. "My tiny flowers, you have no idea how much you have saved your daddy," I whisper.

The doctor was right. I didn't have time to grieve. I had to live on no matter how much it hurt. It hurt, my mate mark burning the moment she left this world. I looked at my mark, and it was already fading. I had to focus on my girls now. I could lose myself in the pain and sorrow that was eating away at my very soul. My mate would never forgive me if I didn't live on and push through for our children. I just wasn't sure how to do it, where to start. I guess I will be fighting, just not with my fists, claws, or fangs. I'll be fighting my broken heart from giving up, just not sure how yet. I only had my little flowers to help heal me.

## Scars by Jessica Bailey Chapter 1

### Chapter 1

Amelie

"I, Amelie Ashwood, Reject you, Tate Cozad, as my mate. I REJECT YOU!" is what I screamed right before I took the silver blade that I just dipped in a bowl of my own blood to my mate mark. The searing pain my body and my wolf felt was like my heart was being ripped from my chest while being hit by a bus. I guess not all new starts are bright and shiny. The physical pain was unbearable, but my mind was clear. "I did it. I'm free." I passed out naked, bloody, and alone but free; after ten years and I was, I was free. I had just done the unthinkable I completed the rejection ritual marking myself as a mate rejecter, a pariah in my community. I not only rejected my mate but my old pack, my whole identity to that point gone. I was again marked but not like others, I now will carry the black scar created by the silver blade, and I rejected the mate made just for me by the goddess. I am now considered a "Scared One."

The sense of loss was foreboding. As I woke, a flood of mixed emotions rushed through me. The physical pain had dulled; now, it was time for my broken heart to finally let it out. Not only am I a Scared One, but I lost the ability to shift. I did not lose my wolf, Inari. She was there, just weak. We were both aware of what the full consequences of the rejection ritual would mean and do to us physically. We did not care. We needed to be free. I pulled myself up off the damp cave floor. I couldn't stand yet, and I was barely sitting up. My mind wandered to all that I had lost at the cost of my freedom from my mate bond.

I had left my father's pack to join my mate's pack. I had built a life for myself and my mate. I had a small shop where I made and sold my jewelry designs, but that was gone now too. More like taken, I had to pay the Rejection price to pack Alpha Mason to leave. It's hard, but I don't regret it. I'll make this work somehow. I get up from the cold cave floor, my strength returning a bit, and put on the clothes I had prepared for myself.

As I put on my bra, the strap dug into my fresh wound. I had yet to look at the ugly damage that I would now live with for the rest of my life. I have now been marked as a rejecter, a home destroyer, a bringer of misfortune. I didn't care. My now ex-mate would have none of the pain and suffering I did, and his mate mark would fade away. It would be a lonely life of judgment for me now. That's why most mated pairs stayed together even if things were bad. We wolves are a social species, craving a pack and family. I did too, but not the pack I had, not the life I was leading.

As I finished getting dressed, I thought of what would be next for me. I did not have much going for me. I was broke as I lost my business. I wasn't young; I'm 30 now, I'm marked as a rejecter. What I just did is rare; rejecting a mate itself is not rare. It happens, but it's customarily done before mating and marking. After marking, it rarely happens. Growing up, one old woman lived on the edge of town that bore the rejecter mark. We were all scared that she would come into our rooms at night and curse us or eat us. I was to live my life like her now. On the outskirts, alone. Well, at least it will be peaceful. I can garden, my second favorite thing to do. I can still work on my jewelry and start an apothecary business. I will have to hide that I am the owner as no one would dare buy goods handled by a "Scared One."

Before completing the rejection ritual, I was re-added to my father's pack. It helps lessen the pain that the mate rejection ritual causes. I looked down at my shoulder to see my deep green Ash Tree mark; it gives me some strength to keep going forward. My one saving grace was that I was the eldest daughter of the Ashwood Pack Alpha, the largest pack in the Northern Midwest, one of the most influential in North America. I didn't have much else; my father loved my siblings and me. I was an all-around oddity in the werewolf community. I was the Alpha's eldest daughter born before my parents found their mated pair. My mother, Ann, was the daughter of my grandfather's Beta. My parents grew up together and thought they would be mated. They were not a fated mated pair. I was raised in my father's pack but was also accepted by my mother's pack, but her mate, Alpha Logan of the Black Hills Pack, didn't want to raise another Alpha's child. He didn't hate me, he loves me but, he didn't want another Alpha in his business; having me in the pack would make things complicated. I was left with my father and his mate Celest.

Most pups are not children of desire but children of destiny. I was looked at in my mother's pack as a mistake, something that should not have been born. Life on the surface was better in my father's pack. No one dare say what they were thinking to my face; instead, I was politely ignored. My stepmother was an exception. She loved me as if I was her pup and treated me as such, and would not allow others to treat me differently. As I grew, I worked to earn the respect of the pack elders, which made life

easier. My younger siblings, bright and happy, bathed in love and care every day. I envied that, but I could not deny spoiling them myself. The youngest was the heir, James; he and I were 13 years apart in age. My sister Hope and I were 11 years apart. I loved every minute of it; to them, I was just their sister. The Luna had complicated pregnancies and lost many pups. Of course, I was whispered to blame as I was a curse and the pups died because of me. My father and stepmother did not believe in the old tales and ran the Ashwood Pack with more progressive beliefs. Honestly, my father, Alpha John, was more of a businessman than a warrior. His Luna was the same; they fought with their brains.

I found my now ex-mate when I was 20, a few years later than most she-wolves, but I was excited. As someone who should not have been born, I thought I wouldn't find a mate at all. I felt validated! I was meant to be in this world! The goddess had created a mate for me! He was older, which was not uncommon for males to find their mates in their mid-twenties. Females, on the other, had commonly found their mate before their 19th birthday. Of course, I was almost 21 when I found mine. He was tall and slender, not the regular heaping hulk most male wolves are. He was an artist, as was I, intelligent and passionate. His dark brown loose curls came to his shoulders; his features were sharp and angled with high cheekbones. His eyes were like a winter sky right after snow—soft blue with a feeling of briskness that took your breath away.

“Mine” my wolf screamed! I could not wait to know his name and he mine. “Mate, what is your name?” I asked.

“Tate, and yours, my mate?” he asked as he leaned in for our first kiss, not able to hold himself back.

“Amelie,” I was barely able to whisper my name before he took my lips. I was in heaven.

His passion and skill were amazing. With the slightest touch, I would melt and be sent into fields of pleasure I never dreamed of. I saw myself growing old with him having a family, just a simple ordinary life with my destined mate, but those blissful days didn't last.