

## Scars by Jessica Bailey Chapter 21

### Chapter 21

Amelie

I gasp, and my eyes shoot open! I breathe heavily as I look around the room. I'm in the infirmary again. No one is here this time. "Why do I keep waking up here, damn it!" I say aloud. I try to get up, but I have cords and tubs stuck to me and in me. "How long was I out for? Yeah, that tube has to come out." I was referring to the catheter coming from under my gown. The only thing I can think to do is mind-link, Dad. "Dad, can you get a nurse to come unplug me? I think I'm charged up now." My sarcasm let him know I was OK.

"Amelie! You're awake! I'll have someone right there. We are coming up to see you too. Don't try running off now." He chuckles at the end.

"I'm still plugged in. I can't really run around yet." I chuckle back. He ends the mind link, and a minute later, a nurse and the Doctor come in.

The Doctor looks at all the monitors first, then looks at me. "Well, Miss Amelie, you gave us all quite the scare. I would suggest staying away from silver for a very long time."

I look at him perplexed, "Doc, I know I've been through a lot the last month, but I'm fine now."

He looks at me and purses his lips. I can tell he's contemplating something, "I think it best for the Alpha and Luna to tell you. We'll make you more comfortable for now."

They proceed to untangle me from the mass of tubs and cables, and finally, I can relax again. Then, I hear footsteps coming down the hall. It took them longer than I thought. My father opens the door he is accompanied by James and Celeste.

"Celeste, I thought you were still in Texas for a bit longer?" I look at everyone, confusion written all over my face. Celeste and James look at Dad.

With a calm, soft voice, my father says, "Am, you have been in a coma for 25 days. It's October 15th; we are in the last few days of the Harvest Moon Festival."

"WHAT! Why? Why was I in a coma for that long? I was a little shaky after the ritual, but I was awake." What did my body go through! I was not even aware of how much danger I was in.

"We should have waited longer to perform the ritual. You had only just recovered from the fight with Tate, the wolfsbane, and the silver cuff. You got silver poisoning. You

survived because you had small exposers for your jewelry smithing.” Dad is blaming himself; I can tell.

I don’t even know what to say at this point; I’m just stunned. I quickly reach out to Inari. “Inari, are you awake? Are you OK?”

I can feel her stir in my mind, “Yeah, I am here. I think I am OK. Can you hear me clearly?”

I am smiling, and a tear rolls down my cheek. Finally, I say out loud, “I didn’t lose her; Inari is there. I can hear her clear as day.” Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

James looked at me with a huge smile and a tear in his eye, “I glad you’re going to be OK. Why didn’t you tell me! I would have gone with you?”

“Dad and I thought you would try and stop me. This was something I had to do. I didn’t think I would almost die...again, but I’m still here.” I reach out and take his hand.

“Well, dear, you should rest. The festival will be over in a few days, and by then, you will be out of this bed and back to normal. I will need your help planning the Blue Winter Moon festival. These two are horrible at planning.” Celeste points to dad and James. I know she is trying to make me feel normal again.

I smile in appreciation of the gesture, “It sounds like we need to make it better than last year.”

Dad rolled his eyes, “OK, you two, let’s let Amelie rest. Bye, kiddo, I’ll check on you later.”

They all walk out of the room. I am alone again. Well, we are alone. “Inari? I don’t think we can shift, but do you think you are fully sealed?”

“I don’t know. We can still communicate fine, and I can hear the mind link. I can still see out of your eyes too. Should we try hearing and smell?” I can feel her nervous excitement.

I take a deep breath, “OK, let’s try it out! Hearing first.” I’m just as nervous and excited.

I close my eyes and focus all my energy on my ears. I am trying to hear what’s going on outside the room. Ever so slightly, I can hear people in the hallway. It’s muffled at first, but as we focus, it gets clearer. The nurse is talking to one of the housekeepers about the Harvest Moon festival. “I can hear them, can you?”

“I can, and I am not completely sealed. Let’s not try increasing our senses of smell. I don’t think you have gotten a shower in 25 days. I don’t think sponge baths are cutting it.”

We both laugh. We may not be able to shift, but Inari was only partially sealed. We had time to look through dad's books and find a possible solution. For now, I just want to rest. Let things get back to normal.

Gideon

It's the same for every festival. My pack works. Other Packs put on grand celebrations and have elaborate traditions. Our duty is to make sure all those celebrations are protected and nothing is interrupted. I take on home base coordinating all the teams. Everyone in the Druid Guard knows how to fight, even the Omegas. Some may not like it or are good at it, but I will not let us be a target.

We still have many ongoing investigations. We have a rash of Rouge attacks still happening, and even a few missing wolves we are tracking down, but the biggest one is finding Tate Cozad and his mother. He's been quiet, laying low too low. Someone is helping him, but who and how? Amelie was never far from my mind. I still had dreams about her—the same one she's naked out in the mountain clearing. Full moon shining down on her as she talks to the plants. Sometimes I can still touch her. I run my hands through her wavy brown hair as it shimmers under the moonlight. I touch her soft cheek and start to trail my hand down her neck, and then I stop at the black scar. I look at her face, and she's dead in my arms. I normally jolt out of bed. What she's been through haunts me. I've only met her a couple of times in passing throughout the years and didn't even notice her until her brother's heir ceremony. It's just this odd feeling like she should be with me.

I shake it off and link with my field team. "I expect reports within the hour. Any call-outs or issues I need to be aware of?"

"No, Alpha." I hear in unison. I close the mind link.

"Alpha." I get an alert through mind-link.

"Yes. Go ahead."

"Alpha, this is Matt stationed at the Ashwood Pack. Miss Amelie Ashwood has awakened from her coma. If I get any more details, I'll send them over."

"Thank you, Matt. You are dismissed."

"She's awake." I can't help the smile that comes with those words. I'm just glad she survived, that's all. She is a fellow Alpha's child; that is the only feeling I have of her. I push it out of my mind and open my laptop, waiting for the reports from my team. It's another typical festival week. It is all work as usual.

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## Chapter 22

Amelie

It's been four months since I woke up from a coma. Life has its own new normal. I don't wear anything with a wide collar anymore. I felt like I was being choked at first, but now I feel naked if I am not covered. I have resumed my jewelry smithing again. I started an online business, and it's expanded my clientele. I have a lot of humans requesting silver. I tell them that silver just doesn't speak to me as platinum does. It gets them off my cases. Inari and I have been practicing our enhancements. It wasn't as easy as before, but we can still do it, and we are getting stronger. We can even increase our strength a little now. It will be spring soon, and I have started the seedlings for planting in a makeshift plastic greenhouse.

I go out to the greenhouse out to check on the seedlings. Then, for the first time ever, I decided to try and grow Red Roses from hips. It was much more complicated than I thought and only one germinated. I also decided to plant white Daisy. I always grow chamomile and feverfew but never the larger cousin. So big and happy. With daisies, you had to be careful where you plant them. They can quickly take over an area. It was funny how one flower was so delicate and took so much work to grow while the other if allowed, would dominate a flower bed, but they both brought so much joy. I just wanted to watch these tiny flowers grow forever.

I decide to finish up and go back inside. It's about lunch, and I'm starving; I've spent all morning working on custom orders. I go up the back stairs and find James sitting at the counter with his head down, lying on his folded arms.

"You doing OK there?" He looks a little upset.

He lets out a big dramatic breath, "Yeah, I am fine. This heir training is getting old. I want to take a break."

He had been working hard and had just turned 17 not long ago. "Ask dad if you can take some time off to visit Hope in Texas."

He grunts, "I can't. Alpha Gideon will be here in 8 days to start my investigative and military training. After that, he'll be here for a month." He had his hands on both sides of his face resting his elbows on the counter now. He looked like he was hold up his head.

I can't help but laugh at the over-dramatic teen. "Well, he's someone dad trusts, so listens to what he says. Are you hungry? I'm going to make something for lunch. What sounds good?"

He perks up, "You're cooking for me." It's common knowledge that I am the best cook in the family, but I cook what I want, and everyone else has to take what they get. So I do not extend an offer like this often.

“Hey, now it’s just lunch, not a 6-course meal. Don’t go crazy, or I’ll resend my offer.” I give him a side glance.

“Well, if you are limiting my options, I guess, I will have to go with your double-decker sandwich with a fried egg.” His stomach rumbles after saying it.

I laugh, “I guess I better get on that before your stomach eats itself.”

It’s been a pleasant day so far; I didn’t mind making the sandwich for James. It warmed my heart watching him devour it. It also made me kind of sick, too; teenage boys were so messy. As we sat there and finished our sandwiches, I couldn’t help feel that I was missing something important today. That someone significant wanted to see me. I didn’t know who or why I felt like that.

“Hey, James, what’s the date today?” Maybe it was a special day I didn’t remember.

“It’s February 26th. Why?” I thought about the date. It wasn’t anyone’s birthday; it wasn’t either parent group’s mate anniversary.

“No reason.” I went back to eating my sandwich.

Gideon

“Happy Birthday, girls! Daddy loves you so much,” I whisper as I give them kisses to wake them up. I always tried to make their birthday a happy day and spend the whole day with them no matter what. It wasn’t just for them but also for me. It was also the day Mandy died.

“Daddy, we are big girls now.” Daisy scolding me with her bedhead sticking straight up. If she knew how funny I thought she was, she would get so mad.

“Morning, Daddy. Do we get cake today?” Rose asks so softly with so much hope. This girl loved sweets, but she never got hyper like other kids. She so sweet and cute I know my men sneak her candy when they visit the Packhouse.

“Yes, Rose, you will have cake tonight after dinner. Tyson, Shay, and Easton are coming, and so are Marcus, Jorden, and Ryan. See, your friends are coming over to have cake with you.” The girls are up and picking out their outfits at this point. They decide on Princess dresses. It’s their birthday. I’m not going to tell them no.

Rose looks up at me and tugs on my shirt hem, and lifts her arms, “I thought you were a big girl?” I pick her up.

“Nope, I am just Rose.” She settles in my arm and her head on my shoulder.

“New mommy will be here soon. Daddy member, your promise. You have to be nice.”  
The new mommy thing again. Well, it’s their birthday. Let it go.

“I’ll be nice, I promise. When is your daddy not nice?” I kiss her head. Daisy now tugs on my shirt and wants up, “I see you have changed your mind.”

“Nope, I’m a princess.” She is so strong-willed.

“That you are.” I kiss Daisy on her head as well.

“Daddy, new mommy likes flowers. Can we grow flowers for her?” Daisy looks at me with a bit of worry in her eyes.

It doesn’t hurt to grow some flowers, “Sure, we can grow some flowers, but it will have to wait till after daddy’s business trip, OK.”

“OK, daddy.” They both say in unison.

We play together in the playroom, just the three of us all day. At night my Beta and Delta bring their families over for a small dinner and, of course, cake. It’s a small, quiet birthday, but it’s meaningful to use. After playing till they drop I put them to ben in my room. Not because they wouldn’t sleep in their room but because this was always the most harrowing night of the year for me. I didn’t want to be alone, and they gave me the strength to keep going. I step out onto the balcony.

“Mandy, honey. It’s been three years now since you left us. The girls are getting so big now. Daisy is full of spunk and ready to take on the world already. Rose is quiet and sweet and charms everyone she meets. I see a lot of you in them. We miss you every day and thank you for giving me the most precious gift of all of them. I love you.” It had been three years. My mate mark had faded to a faint bite outline. It lost all its color. The girls needed a mom, and I needed to love again. Before I turn and step inside, I look back up at the moon. It’s a crescent and looks like the Luna Mark. “Selene, I beg of you grant me the blessing of a second chance, mate. One who will love the girls as much as their mother would. Someone that will be patient with me and help heal my broken heart. I offer my blood as a sign of my sincerity.” I bit the tip of my thumb and let a few drops fall to the ground. A few tears roll down my cheek mixing with the blood on the ground.

I turn to go back inside, and a gust of wind blows by. I could hear it whisper to me. “Soon” as it disappeared. I stopped stood there for a second.

I calmed my heart and said, “Thank you.”

With that, I went inside and carefully got into bed. As soon as sleep took over, I was in the mountain clearing with her again. I didn’t fight it; I wanted to be there.

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### Chapter 23

Gideon

“Alright, I’ll be back in a month. I’ll still be following up on cases daily and expect reports as usual if anything happens with the girls’ mind-link me immediately no matter the time.” I use my Alpha aura as I leave my last command to Tyson and Marcus. “Are we clear?”

“Clear as mud.” Tyson can be a bit of a smartass.

Marcus rolls his eyes, “yes, Alpha, the twins are in good hands, and so is the pack.” Marcus was a bit more serious.

I take a deep breath. “Please have Shay and Jordan face time me with the girls every night. I’ll let you both know when I arrive.” I was known as a cutthroat and brutal Alpha, but when it came to my daughters, I was a sucker. I get into the driver’s seat of the SUV. I am bringing two of my elite team with me to assist in James’ training. It’s about a 4-hour drive so we should arrive midafternoon.

For the past eight days since the twin’s birthday, my recurring dream of Amelie has changed. She is always in the mountain clearing under the full moonlight, but now, she takes my hand as I am reaching out for her. With my hand in hers, she brings it to her lips and kisses my knuckles, then brings my hand to her cheek. I pull her in and hold her close. I can never make out what she says. Her mouth is moving, but I can’t hear anything. I lean down and kiss her, and then I wake up. As soon as I wake up, I want to go back to sleep; I long for more. I need to calm down. I’m going to be around her for a month. The last thing I want to do is offend Alpha John. I know everything that has happened to Amelie and that the whole family has been through a lot, plus the youngest daughter moving to Texas to be a Luna. I need to keep my distance and be professional.

I have never been this unfocused in my life. I know I asked for a second chance mate from the moon goddess. I have been lonely raising my girls alone, and I find Amelie irresistibly attractive. My head is truly a mess, and I’m walking into my own Honey Trap.

I see a town coming up ahead. I decide we need to stop. I need to stretch my legs and get some fresh air before continuing the next two hours. I pull into a gas station; I go inside and grab a coffee, hoping it will help me focus. As I am walking out, I notice a little old lady selling small bundles of violets. She looks up at me and smiles.

“Violets are one of the first flowers of spring and a symbol of faithful love. Purple violets are for new love. Doesn’t your new love deserve some?” She picks up a bundle tied

with a white ribbon. I don't tell her no, I don't say a word for a moment, just give her a dollar and turn and walk away.

I stop and turn back to her, "Thank you." And keep walking just looking at the little bundle of purple flowers.

I get back in the SUV and put the violets in the cupholder. My men look at me oddly but don't dare say a word. We continue the rest of our drive. The Black Hills is true wolf country, and it feels great. We turn down the road toward the Ashwood Pack, and I look down at the bundle of violets in the cupholder. I didn't even know what I am going to do with these. Why did I buy them? My brain was a severe hazy. I take a deep breath. The Ashwood Packhouse is insight, and I pull in front of the main entrance. Alpha John is waiting for us. I stop the car, and before I hop out, I look at the bundle of violets again. I want to bring them with me, but it feels awkward. I leave the violets and get out of the SUV.

"Alpha Gideon, welcome back!" Alpha John reaches out and shakes my hand. He looks like he's aged five years in the short months I haven't seen him. "How was the drive."

I pat him on the shoulder, "Thank you for have us. I'm excited to train the new Alpha; where is James?"

"He's helping his sister in the greenhouse. He will meet us inside. Since only a few of you are here to train the next Alpha, I invite you and your men to stay in my family wing. It will be easier to train James and handle meals. Matt is preparing your rooms. He's been a great help." I am stunned Alpha John is having us stay in his family wing of the Packhouse. It's well known he keeps it closed off, allowing his family to live privately.

"It's a great honor to be invited into your home. We'll move the vehicles and unload." I signal to my men to get back in the SUV. We move around to the family wing entrance. I look back at the violets again. "Oh hell." I pick them up and put them in my jacket pocket. I'm sure I smashed them in the process. I get out of the SUV and follow Alpha John inside.

This is the first time I have been in the Family Wing. I was surprised how much it felt like a typical home. I expected it to be all white and grey and extremely modern, like the Packhouse Wing. It was not like that at all. It was warm and comforting. A large family portrait hung above the fireplace. It looked about ten years old as James was just a boy missing his front tooth. The furniture was brown leather and overstuffed. The walls were off-white, with floor-to-ceiling windows facing the woods and so many house plants made the room feel almost like it was outside. It felt like a family home. A stairway leads to the two floors above with a dark wood banister that lined all the way around. It was fantastic you could walk out of your bedroom every morning to the full view of the woods.



“You all will stay on the third floor. My family is on the second. James’ room is the first one at the top of the stairs. I’m sure you will be dragging him out of bed in the morning.” John laughed. Alpha training is long and hard, and starting when you are 17, still being very much a kid at that age makes it more challenging.

I laugh, remembering my own training, “Well, I think we were all that way. I cannot even count the number of times my father had to drag me out of bed for training.”

Suddenly, I am hit with the incredible scent of honeysuckle, it’s stronger than before, and it’s mixed with something unexpected, the mate pheromone. You can only smell the mating pheromone of your mate. My heart rate starts to rise. It’s my second-chance-mate; I can tell she’s standing in the doorway to my left. I am nervous to look because I do and don’t want it to be the one person I can’t get out of my mind.

I turn. It’s her It is Amelie, and she is standing in the doorway in shock. I know she smells what I smell and feels the same pull. I can see it on her face. Ulv takes over; he walks over to her, “Mate!”

I can see her chest rising and falling quickly as she says, “Mate.” She steps back and turns and runs through the kitchen and out the back door. Before I can run after her, someone grabbed my arm. I turn to look, and it’s Alpha John.

“Stop. Let me talk to her. Wait for her.” He uses his Alpha aura on me, which worked somehow, but I’m so confused and happy all at the same time. I just nod my head, and he goes after his daughter. And leaves me in the doorway.

## Scars by Jessica Bailey Chapter 24

### Chapter 24

Amelie

“What just happened,” I ask Inari. I am completely in a panic.

I can feel Inari’s excitement. We are not going through the same emotions right now. “We have been blessed with a second chance, mate. I didn’t think it would be possible. The moon goddess must have wanted to correct what happened. We have a new mate! Go back in. Go back in.”

I try to calm down when I see dad and Celeste coming down the back stairs. “I’m OK. Just in shock. I’m fine.” I try to reassure them.

Celeste rubs my back, “is it true? Is Gideon Alois your second chance, mate?” I can hear a mix of happy excitement and nervousness in her question.

“Yes, there is no denying what that was. It was the mate pull and sent. I didn’t know it could be that strong.” I am still trying the calm down and catch my breath.

“How do you feel about that, kiddo?” Dad is more concerned. A lot has happened to me in the past six months, and I am now mated to the Druid Gaurd Alpha, meaning I will become a Luna.

I look at him. I am honestly at a loss, “I don’t know what to think or feel right now. I’m just trying to process.”

“That’s understandable. Just calm down. Let’s go back inside and talk with Gideon.” I jump back at dad’s suggestion.

“I just need some space right now.” I turn and run for the tree line. I need to go to my spot and clear my head.

I cannot shift, so I’m walking the slow way to the clearing. The whole time Inari is just telling me to go back and repeating mate over and over. “Please stop! I just need some quiet for a little bit.” She hisses at me but stops yammering and reseeds to the back of my mind. I’m almost to the clearing. It’s early March, it’s still chilly, and all the plants are just sprouting.

I sit down on a rock and just look up at the sky and scream as loud as I can, just letting it all out. I don’t hate Gideon; I don’t know him. I’m not scared of him, but I’m afraid of the relationship. Tate’s and I relationship was only good for three years before it went terrible. I don’t want to live through that again. What if he ends up hating me? I have this ugly black scare now. Can it be overwritten? How can I even look at him, knowing what I’ve been through? I just sit and think.

I’m pretty sure he has kids from his first mate. Am I ready to be a stepmom? How old are they? Will they even like me? Why was I mated to a warrior? I am an artist by trade, a gardener, and a cook by hobby. I don’t know anything about fighting. Well, I guess I could not say that, but that’s the only fight I’ve been in. I’m no expert. I hear a twig snap and lookup. It’s Gideon.

“How did you find me?” I don’t know if I’m ready for this talk.

“I followed your scent, and I’ve seen you here before.” He looks away shyly.

I gasp and put my hand over my mouth, “the night of the Heir Ceremony. I thought someone was out there. You saw me... naked!” I turn beet red.

“Yeah, I did.” He pauses, “can I sit next to you?” He looks embarrassed. Why is he embarrassed I was the one naked.

I let out a breath, "Yeah, I guess we have a few things we need to talk about." I scoot over and pat the space next to me. I was not going to run away, and it was not fair to him. We are both in this together.

Gideon sits down. I can tell he wants to touch me but is holding back. I appreciate he is being a gentleman. "Well, I guess we should get to know each other. How do we want to do this?" I stop and think for a second. "Oh, I got it. Let's play truth or dare."

He smiles at me, and I about to die. That smile is beautiful. I can smell his strong eucalyptus scent, and I am instantly at ease. "Truth or dare? Like the kids game?"

"Yes! Don't be a stick in the mud. I can't have a mate that can't have a little fun." I smile back and push his shoulder with mine. He's a mountain of a man and doesn't budge.

"OK, I'll bit. You go first truth or dare?" I can tell he's just as nervous.

"Truth." I am not ready for a dare yet.

"Why did you run away from me?" I can see the hurt in his eyes. I feel horrible I wasn't trying to hurt him.

"I was scared. Not of you but of the mate pull the whole mate thing. I know you are aware of what has happened to me and so I got scared and ran. I'm sorry." I look down, hoping he accepts my apology. I look back up, and he's just sitting thinking for a moment.

"I understand that. Honestly, Ulv took over, and it was pure instincts for me." He takes a deep breath out.

I give him my best devious look. "OK, your turn, truth or dare?"

"I'll keep it going, truth." He chuckles at me. His laugh and smile warmed my heart. Slowly I was letting my guard down.

This will be easy. I have a million questions, "How did your first mate die?"

"You noticed. Mandy died three years ago due to complications in childbirth. She gave me beautiful twin girls. They just turned three eight days ago, and their names are Rose and Daisy." He is beaming with love talking about his daughters. I think about what he said eight days ago. I felt off that day, like someone was missing me like I should have been somewhere else. Their names, too, I felt obligated to grow roses and daisies this year. What games are you playing, moon goddess? I don't want to say anything. I'll sound crazy, so I just hold it in. I was being pulled to him and his family and didn't even know it. Or was it just a happy coincidence?

“OK, Amelie, I gave you my truth. Now it’s your turn. Truth or dare?” He wiggles his eyebrows at me.

I giggle like a little girl. He honestly makes me feel at ease, “OK! Let’s see what you got! Dare!” I am feeling confident suddenly.

He thinks for a second and looks at me with a smirk; I look back at him, tilting my head at him. “I dare you to let me kiss you.” My eyes widen; I was overconfident. I stand up, but he pulls my arm back, and I fall in his lap. My heart is about to beat out of my chest. Apart from me wants to run away, but a more significant part is holding me back. It wants to stay with him. He wraps one arm around my waist, and with the other, he reaches up and touches my cheek. It’s the first skin-to-skin contact. My body instantly is set on fire. Just his touch has me weak. He pulls me close and gently kisses my lips, waiting for me to kiss him back. I can’t help myself.

I quickly wrap my arms around his neck. I cannot help but feel the intense sparks coursing through my body. This was nothing compared to Tate. This was stronger intoxicating. I feel his tongue roll across my bottom lip, and I pull it into mine. I can’t help but let out a moan. His’s kiss alone was thrilling. His deep green eyes flash red as he pulls me in tighter. I run my hands through his sandy blond hair. I feel his right hand go up the back of my shirt. The feel of his ruff hand on my skin leaves a sensation I didn’t know I would enjoy. Then both hands are under my shirt, and his hands are on my ribs right under my bra, holding on to me. I know he’s holding back and waiting for permission to keep going. I have to pull back. I wasn’t ready to show all of me. I remove his hand out from under my shirt and lean back a little.

“But the dare wasn’t over yet.” He says coyly and nuzzles into my neck. I could already tell I was not going to be able to get enough, ever. I had to slow down before I lose my composer.

“Let’s head back. We can take our time getting to know each other. It’s not like I’m going anywhere.” I give him a gentle smile. I didn’t know what the future would hold, but I know I would be with Gideon whether I wanted to or not. Inari and I couldn’t survive the rejection even before the mating process and marking.

He touched my cheek again, and I lean into his hand. “You have no idea how many times I’ve dreamed about being here with you, holding you and touching you. I don’t know if this is real or a dream.” He pulls me in for another kiss. I gladly let him take my lips a few more times.

I pull away and stand up. “It’s not a dream. Come on. I’m hungry, and I am sure you are too. I’ll make you something. I’m sure everyone else has eaten already.” I pull him up; well, I try. It’s like a mouse moving a lion. He chuckles and stands up, pulling me into his arms as he stands.

“You can ride on my back. I’ll leave my clothes behind that tree.” He points to a nearby tree that is way too small to provide him cover. “No peeking.” I can’t help but laugh. I am amazed this giant warrior Alpha is kind, sweet, gentle, funny, and my mate. Oh, and I was peeking! He saw me naked it was only fair!

I act like I am looking the other way as he takes off his jacket then pulls his henley over his head. My jaw drops; I forgot how perfect he was, remembering back to the heir ceremony. “Thank you, goddess, for this new beginning!” I can’t help but look with thirsty eyes. He looks over his shoulder, and I quickly look away. We are playing a silly game of cat and mouse. He takes off his jeans, and all that is left is his boxer briefs. They hugged every curve, and I just wanted to grab that perfect butt.

This was bad. After our kissing than watching him undress, I could feel myself wanting him more and more. I am sure he could tell, even smell it, but he wasn’t pushing me farther. I appreciated that. The underwear comes off, and yes, the back of him is perfect. He looks over his shoulder again, “Hey, I said no peeking.”

“Oh, shift already!” I snap. If he stands there naked any longer, I don’t think I can take it. He shifts. I go and pick up his clothes and greet his wolf. “Hello, you must be Ulv. You’re beautiful.” I reach out to pet him, and he nuzzles into my hand.

“He’s perfect. Maybe one day we can run together. I can’t wait to mind-link with him.” Inari was in love. Ulv was a stunning black wolf with ruby red eyes. He was larger than my dad’s wolf too. He turns and crouches down.

“Oh, you are calling me short!” He looks at me and tilts his head like yeah, I am. I get on his back, and we head back down to the Packhouse. We stop at the tree line, and I set his clothes down behind a large tree. He gets dressed, and we start to walk back. He moves closer to me with each step and takes my hand in his, interlocking our fingers. It’s a small thing, but it feels so inmate. Is this what the mate bond truly feels like? If it is, I don’t want it to stop.

## Scars by Jessica Bailey Chapter 25

### Chapter 25

#### Gideon

We walk back hand in hand. It feels so natural, and, wow, she is beyond beautiful. Every time I look into her eyes, my heart races. I can see a storm coming. I know once we get comfortable, I’ll see those flashes of topaz like lightning. She is kind, caring, and nurturing, and I see how her siblings regard her. “Thank you, goddess, for hearing my call.”

I put my hand in my jacket pocket as we walk back, oh the violets. Do I give them to her? I peek at them, and they are smashed. I don't want the first gift I give her to be smashed floors. So, I try to stuff them back in before Amelie notices, but I'm too late.

"What's that you're messing with?" She stops and looks over.

I close my eyes and drop my head. I pull out the bundle of smashed violets, "Um, on the way here, we stopped at a gas station, and a woman was selling little bundles of violets. I felt for her, so I bought one." Part of it was the truth. How do I tell her I was thinking of her when I did not even know she was my new mate.

Amelie takes them from my hand, smells them, and smiles. "Did you know violets are edible? I think we have some blackberries in the fridge, and I'll make some blackberry and violet syrup for breakfast tomorrow. How does that sound?"

I'm floored. She the only woman I know that can take a bundle of smashed flowers and make breakfast. I can't mess this up; she really is too perfect. "I've never eaten flowers before, but I'll trust you." We continue walking back. I take her hand in mine again. I never want to let go.

We go up the back stairs, and we are in the family kitchen. John and James are at the small dining table. "Oh, you two are back. We already ate without you. I am sure Amelie will make sure you're fed. Matt is showing the men to their rooms. Am, call your sister later. She and Celeste are talking now." He chuckles. I knew what he meant. Hope and Celeste were waiting for all the juicy details about Gideon and me.

"I'll call her in a bit. I'm going to make something for us to eat right now and some syrup for pancakes tomorrow." James perks up.

"You're making breakfast tomorrow? What about lunch and dinner?" His eyes are wide with greedy hunger.

Amelie laughs loud and is almost doubled over, "I hope whoever your Luna is, she can cook or at least follow my recipes." She calms her laughter and looks at James seriously, "I'll think about lunch and dinner. It will have to depend on the training report I get from Alpha Gideon." She looks at me and winks.

I wink back, "Young Alpha, don't ruin my opportunity to eat my mates cooking. I expect you out at the training field by 8:30 AM!"

James looks at us with a discussed look on his face, "you guys are gross already!" He gets up and walks out. Amelie is now doubled over, laughing harder than before.

"One of my favorite things in the world is teasing him." She turns and looks at me with a sweet smile. "OK, are there any foods you don't like?"

Food has always just been a way to fuel my body. If it tastes good, it is a bonus. So, I've never been a picky eater. "No, I am open to trying anything." She turns to open the fridge. Then walks into the pantry.

"Do you like mushrooms?" She pops her head out of the pantry.

"Sure, never had a problem with them." She walks out with a container of rice. I sit down on one of the stools in front of the counter and just watch.

She opens the fridge again. She pulls out stake, mushrooms, onion, some pea pods, sour cream, and parmesan cheese, a jar of brown goo stuff, and two tomatoes. What was she making? I was watching, but I'm more of a sandwich guy, so if I can put whatever on a few slices of bread, I'm good. We have a few cooks for the Packhouse, but it's never anything fancy. My teams need a lot of protein because we shift often. This was a whole new world. How would all these things come together?

"Do you not like risotto?" Amelie caught the perplexed look on my face.

I've never heard that word before, "I don't know what risotto is. So, I can't tell you if I like it or not." I feel a bit like a kid watching their mother cook, just in awe and wonder.

She giggles at me. "Well, you will get a lot of new things with me." She smiles slightly, pushing a loose hair behind her ear.

"Yeah, I guess you're right." I didn't know how someone could come across as strong and delicate at the same time, but she does. About 20 minutes later, she sets a bowl in front of me and sits down on the stool next to me. My bowl is much bigger than hers. "You could have given yourself a bigger portion."

She looks at me and giggles again, "you're almost three times my size. My portion is perfect. Eat up, tell me what you think."

I look at the bowl. It has stake strips and cooked tomatoes on top of rice mush mixed with vegetables. "Umm... you left the pods on the peas." Did she forget a step?

"Those are snow peas. You eat the pod and peas. Are you five? Stop staring and try it." She raised her right eyebrow at me. I didn't want to disappoint my mate, but this looked weird. I picked up my fork and tried it. First, just the stake on top. It was perfect, and the tomato and some brown sauce had a great savory flavor. Next, I tried the rice and vegetables under. It was great! The different textures and flavors are playing off the smooth and rich rice. It was amazing.

"This is good. How did you come up with this?" She laughs.

"I didn't. Some Italian did a long time ago. It's good, right?" She knew I was a basic food eater, and she wanted to see how far she could push me. I did not mind it at all. It let me have a glimpse into who she was.

Amelie puts her fork down and turns on her stool, and looks at me. I am mid-bit with my fork in my mouth when she says, "why don't you bring your stuff down to my room. I think we should try to get to know each other as much as possible before I go back with you. I want to know you more before I become a Pack Luna and mother. Everything in my life just changed in a day, and I want to take this time while you are here to at least ease into our relationship. I don't think you are going to reject me, and I'm not going to reject you, so I don't know... what do you think?" She let her guard down for just a moment, and I could see how fragile she really was.

I put down my fork and caress her cheek and pull her forward slightly. I kiss her on her forehead. "I would love that. We can go at your pace. This is a lot for me too. I have a confession to make." She looks up at me with wide eyes; I could see the storm in them was calm at the moment. "Ever since your brother's Heir Ceremony, I have dreamed about you. I think I already knew then that you might be my second chance, mate. I do not know how or why I was drawn to you. After our dance that night, I went for a run to clear my head and to get you out of my mind, but I ended up finding you at that clearing. I could not look away from you. I thought you were the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. You always seemed to be on my mind. So, I told myself coming here today, I needed to keep my distance and not disturb you, but once I smelled and saw you. I knew you were mine."

A tear rolls down her cheeks; she stands up. I'm still sitting on the stool. She leans in and wraps her arms around my neck, and softly whispers, "Thank you." I wrap my arms around her waist and just hold her for a moment. I had already started falling in love with her months ago. Now I was permitted to see that love through.

"Ahem," we look behind us, and standing in the doorway is... well... everyone.

Amelie pulls away, "What? You didn't bring popcorn to the show." Her feistiness was back in an instant. She sat back down and continued eating.

"Alpha, we have completed the training schedule and would like to go over it after lunch, Sir." Matt stands at attention, trying to move the conversation quickly.

"Yes, James, are you ready to go over your training schedule?" I ask. He's still in shock a bit and just nods his head. "Good, meet my team and me in your father's office in 30 minutes. Matt, Move my things to Amelie's room if that's OK with you, Alpha John."

"Oh, you don't have to worry about that. Celeste already had that done after you two came back holding hands." He puts his arm around his mate's shoulder and smiles.

"Thank you, Luna." Amelie shyly looks away from everyone.



“Yes, Luna Celeste, thank you for your consideration.” Celeste smiles and nods. I also turn and focus on my food. When they all leave, Amelie starts snickering and trying to hold back her laughter.

“Well, I guess it’s not like we were hiding anything.” I can’t help but laugh with her. Finally, we finish up, and I help her load the dishes in the dishwasher.

“I’ll see you a little later. I need to meet everyone about the training schedule.” I don’t want to leave her, but I have to. I know we will have more time tonight.

“OK. I’ll see you at dinner then.” She grabs my arm and stands on her tiptoes, and gives me a peck on the cheek. I am elated. Now I didn’t want to leave. I smile and kiss the top of her forehead. I could get used to this. I leave to go to Alpha John’s office.