

## Scars by Jessica Bailey Chapter 71

### Chapter 71

Gideon

“Thank you all for coming over so late.” It’s after midnight, but this cannot wait. “Matt, thank you for leaving your new mate. I know in her current state, that must be very hard for you. I promise we will make the wolves who did this to her pay.” We all take a seat in my living room. Only two lamps are on. They strain to fill the large room with light leaving the corners bathed in shadows.

Matt nods, “Thank you, Alpha. Right now, I know I need to be here to assist in the information exchange. It’s the best way to Help Bailey.” His eyes speak volumes as they peer around the dimly lit room. It was like he was hoping the perpetrator would bust through the door and give him the fight he so desperately wanted.

“Right, let’s get started with what we found out on our trip. Marcus, please bring up the file that Alpha Flynn gave to us.” I knew everyone was on edge and ready for war if that’s what it came to. We needed to get through this debrief first.

Marcus opens the file and begins to review it. “They call themselves ‘The New Moon Alliance.’ They have two Alpha Council members Lars Sibley of the Death Valley Pack and Jace Kentwood of the Kentwood Pack.” Marcus looks over at Jordan. He already knows how she feels about the Death Valley Pack’s involvement. He felt it through the mate-bond on the way back.

Jordan stands fist clenched tight brows furrowed, “We know that the Death Valley Pack’s Beta Gavin Bryant was the one who brought the non-affiliated wolves to attack us. I also think they murdered my father” There’s silence, and it feels like the room grew darker.

“That’s a long way from Nevada just to drop off some wolves.” Tyson’s attempts to lighten the mood falls on deaf ears. He would have dropped dead if looks could kill from the way Marcus was staring daggers.

Marcus rolls his eyes and continues, “They also have three Elder Council members as well. Odell Hyde of the Clear Lake Pack current Alpha Bence Hyde, Thomas Cage of the Ozark Ridge Pack current Alpha Marshall Cage, and Emit Skye of the Silver Dawn Pack current Alpha Ajax Skye.” Elders in the Elder Council were all former Alphas or Lunas. Each pack also had a small Elder Council to help the Alpha family with running the pack.

“What!” Amelie yells, jumping to her feet.

“Shhh! Keep your voice down. You will wake the kids.” I pull her back down to my side. I put my arm around her back as we sat.

“Emit Hyde was my grandfather’s best friend and one of the longest-standing alliances with the Ashwood Pack. That can’t be true.” Amelie fists the sofa cushion. Her anger is pulsating off her.

“We will need to talk to your grandfather.” I sigh and rub circles on Amelie’s back to calm her before she rips the sofa cushion apart.

“He’s still in France with Grandma. I’ll talk to dad.” She releases the cushion and leans into my shoulder. It worked.

“The rest of the New Moon Alliance are Travis Payne of Dark Wood and Dale Nichols of the Red Star Pack, as we already suspected. Then we have Wade Darvin of the Motor City Pack, Reed Tarlo of the White Ridge Pack. Last and also the ringleader Nox Jericho of the Blue Crescent Pack. Those ten packs make up this alliance.” Marcus sinks back into the sofa, pulling Jordan close to his side. She’s still upset about her birth pack. I can’t blame her for that.

“There’s more information to come. We caught one of their inside men in the Koray Pack. His name is Theo, and his son Owen was kidnapped, and he was forced to help move around money for them.” I lean forward. “I promised we would save Owen.”

Amelie sighs, “If they know Theo’s been compromised, they will probably throw Owen in with the other kidnapped pups.” She turns to look at me with tears in her eyes, the dim light playing with the glassiness. “They make pups who haven’t shifted fight each other for food and survival. A lot of pups die in the process. I don’t know how they have gotten away with it for so long.” There’s so much sadness coming from her. I’m also shocked at what I’m hearing they are not just kidnapping but abusing children.

“Luna, Dr. Michaels gave me the results on all the tests they ran on the non-affiliated wolves. I went back to the hospital after dinner to drop off snacks for them, and the Doctor gave the file to me.” Becky timidly hands a file over to Amelie and me. As soon as it’s in our hands, Becky sits back down next to Benjamin.

Amelie opens the file and starts to flip through, “What? Oh my gosh.” Tears are trickling down her cheeks. She hands me the file.

I take a breath, “They were drugged with concentrated levels of amphetamines, a low dose of LSD, and anise or canine catnip. They also have been dosed with low doses of ketamine. The Doctor doesn’t know how long they have been drugged with the ketamine since all of their heads are shaved. She can only test body hair.” I toss the file on the table. This is part of how they control them; it’s sick.

Matt stands up and starts pacing. “Matt, we will get them. We know who they are, and I know how they got the drugs.” He stops and turns to me. His breathing is heavy, and I can his wolf flash in and out of his eyes, pleading with his Alpha to let him go and kill the wolves who harmed his mate.

“The portfolio of the investment club has a pharmaceutical company in it. It looks like they own majority shares. Normally, I don’t like to mix wolf business in the human world, but I think we can use this to our advantage. We can use human laws to shut down or at least distract them. Let’s dig into their human employees and get them to turn evidence over to the FDA. We can use this time to track down where they are holding all the kidnapped wolves.” I pinch the bridge of my nose, trying to think through a plan.

Tyson stands and also paces. It’s not nervous pacing he’s thinking, and each physical step is a step of his plan formulating. “We should do the same with the other companies in the portfolio as well. They will probably contact Theo to sell and buy others or move money around. If Theo does it right, he can tip off the FTC and get them for insider trading. The Council members could be suspended until the human legal troubles are over. If we are lucky, they will start to turn on each other and reveal all the hiding places they are keeping the victims.”

Amelie reaches into her pocket and unfolds a piece of paper. “We also have this.” It’s a drawing of the moon cycle with the center silhouette of a howling wolf.

“How is a drawing going to help?” I’m perplexed.

“This a drawing of a tattoo. Faris, one of the non-affiliated wolfs drew it. He said he saw it on a lot of the wolves who held them captive. We believe this is how they identify each other. It’s always in blue ink on their forearm.” Amelie hands me the drawing.

“This will help narrow down who joined and who has been forced to help them. This is great!” I can’t believe they are dumb enough to mark themselves. They are making it easy.

“I wouldn’t celebrate just yet.” Tyson pauses. “We have identified 20 in our pack with tattoos.”

I feel like the wind has been knocked out of me. “20! I want a full list by tomorrow afternoon. We will need to check with each of the Delta Force captions as well. If a satellite branch has been too compromised, we will have to shut it down and recall everyone.” I slump back into the sofa. The weight of the plan ahead was making the already long day longer.

“I think we should send the non-affiliated wolves to my step-father’s pack.” Everyone stops and looks at Amelie. On the surface, it’s not a shocking statement, but to suggest we cannot keep them safe in our own pack!

Amelie stands up, "Hear me out. We already have 20 members of this stupid New Moon Alliance here in our home. If the alliance finds out the non-affiliated wolves are still alive, they could be killed, or it could derail our bigger plan." Amelie pauses. "Logan is old school in his punishment of disloyalty. Gideon, you know how many times he's been called in by the Elder Council. He's strict, but he never violates the law. He would kill any Black Hills Pack member who betrayed the pack, and he would be justified in doing so. He also has the largest territory to hide them on."

"Luna, please don't send Bailey away. She needs me." Matt drops to his knees, pleading.

I know all too well how desperate that feeling of needing to keep your mate close to protect them is. "Bailey can stay, but once she's out of the hospital, you will move into the raked wing with Benjamin and Becky. She will need to wear a wig for a while and cover her tattoo with clothing or makeup. She can learn from Becky how to help run the Packhouse staff."

"I would be happy to teach her. She will be the same rank as me, so she should have a job with the ranked she-wolves." Becky's smile is beaming through the dim room, making it seem brighter than it is. I can visibly see Matt relax at knowing Becky will be guiding Bailey.

"Let's meet in my office tomorrow after breakfast." I am beat. I just want to go to bed. My brain cannot take any more information. "Everyone get some rest."

Everyone gets up to leave, and Amelie and I head to our room. As soon as we are in our room, I head for the shower. I want to wash this day clean with hot water and soap. Once I'm out, I toss on some pajama pants and crawl into bed next to Amelie. All I want to do is hold her close and fall asleep.

Amelie sits up and utters the four-word every male wolf or human hate as soon as I get under the covers. "We need to talk."

Shit, my night just got longer and not in a good way.

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### Chapter 72

#### Gideon

"Ulv, did we do something? Why does she want to talk?" I think back to before I left, I know we had a disagreement, but we resolved it.

"No idea. Run! Mate is scary!" I can feel Ulv panic at the words. 'we need to talk' never ends well for the man who hears those words. I think fast.

“Am, baby, let’s go to sleep. I just want to hold you while I sleep.” That’s great. I’ll be the loving mate. Will she drop it?

“Gideon, we really need to talk. It’s important.” Amelie’s words cut me. I’m doomed.

I have no choice but to give in to my fate and hope I survive what comes next. “What do you want to talk about?”

“It’s about the girls.” Amelie looks down at her hands in her lap. I’m panicking.

“What’s wrong? Did something happen?” I’m about to jump out of bed and go to their room and check on them when Amelie grabs my arm, pulling me back.

“Gideon, I think the girls are special. Do you know what I’m talking about?” I sit back down on the bed.

“Well, of course, they are special. They are spawn!” I give her a cheeky grin and a wink.

Amelie slaps my arm, and it stings my bare skin. “That’s not what I’m talking about, and you know it.”

“Am. I honestly have no idea what you are referring to at all.” I cross my arms over my chest.

“Gideon, I know you are not that dense or blind. You must be in complete denial. Please tell me you have realized the twins are blessed.” She raises her brow and tilts her head.

“You sound like a crazy person.” I give her back the same look, which gets me another slap on the arm. It’s the same spot; it’s turning red.

“OK, I’ll spell it out for you.” She huffs at me. “While you were gone, the girls slept with me. They had a nightmare, well I thought it was a nightmare. They told me about the rouge attack. I had to ask a few questions, but they knew about the attack, the tattoo, and that the Blue Crescent Pack was involved.”

“OK, I think your Luna power has fired your brain. I mean, they are kids. They have scary dreams and say odd things that’s what kids do. Let’s just go to bed.” I lay down and pull the covers over me.

Amelie stands up in bed and pulls the blanket off me. “Gideon, they called the people with the moon cycle tattoos the ‘blue people’ because they had blue ink on their arm. You told me before how they would bring up ‘new mommy’ all the time, and you cannot deny that all the things they told you sounded like me. Ask Ulv. I know he feels it. You might be in denial, but your wolf knows.” She steps off the bed and goes into the bathroom.

“Ulv, what is she talking about?” It’s not true. It can’t be.

“They are blessed with sight. There is no other way to put it.” Ulv is so casual about it, like it was no big deal.

“What! Since...when... never mind.” I slump down from the bed to the floor with my knees crooked and my forearms resting on my knees.

Damn it. Amelie is right. I did know. I’ve known since they turned one before they could talk. I’ve always thought they could mind link each other too. Maybe that part is just a twin bond. They would point or sign things or act oddly. I told myself it was because they were brilliant and daughters of Alphas, so that’s why. I just wanted them to live a normal happy life.

As daughters, they didn’t have to deal with the dirty underbelly of werewolves like my heir would. They could be my sweet little princess, my light not tainted by the darkness in this world. Being blessed with sight is more like a curse. Visions of unspeakable things are forced in front of their eyes. Would all that darkness one day dime their light? Would it wilt my little flowers? I cannot stop the tears that slowly fall down my face.

Amelie comes out of the bathroom. I look up at her, and she rushes to me, dropping to her knees next to me on the floor. She wraps her arms around my shoulders. “It’s going to be OK.”

“I can’t stop the horrible things they will see. I can’t take it away. How do you explain to a three-year-old that some people hurt others for stupid, selfish reasons? How do you tell them the world we live in is so messed up but to be happy?” I cover my eyes with my hand in an attempt to stop my tears.

“We will have to take it one day at a time and show them all the good that’s in the world too. The world is not all bad. There is joy and happiness as well. We can show them together. Their visions are not all bad. They saw me.” Amelie is now crying too.

“They also saw your rejection ritual. They saw you almost die. Their biological mother dies, then they have to watch their stepmother almost die before they meet you. How is this a blessing?” I can’t stop the tears. I’m sure I look pitiful right now.

“But they also saw us together happy. Otherwise, how would they know I was going to be their mom. Not everything the goddess shows them is bad. We have to trust they can handle it.” Amelie wipes away my tears with her thumb. I feel like a child myself right now being comforted.

“I don’t want anyone else to know. You know what will happen if it gets out. They are blessed with sight. They could be in danger. I don’t know if I can protect them.” I break down sobbing. The thought of losing them or harm coming to them and not being there to protect them breaks me down to my soul.

“Hey. Look at me!” Amelie grabs my face between her hands and forces me to look into her stormy grey eyes. “You have me now. The goddess doesn’t make mistakes with Ashwood mates. I am their mother now. You DO NOT have to do this alone anymore. Lean on me; I’m stronger than you think.” She kisses my forehead and pulls me into her for a hug. I have never felt more reassured or at peace in my life.

“Seriously, what are we going to do?” I let out a deep breath.

“I agree we can’t let anyone else know. I think we need to sit the girls down and tell them that when they ‘see’ something like the blue people or anything, they need to tell one of us right away and no one else. From there, just one day at a time.” Amelie pulls me in tighter.

My mind is a mess. I take a deep breath of Amelie’s honeysuckle sent to help ease my mind. I pull away and stand up. I offer a hand to Amelie, and she takes it. I pull her to her feet. “I can’t sit here. I need to check on our little flowers.”

“They are sleep.” Amelie slaps my arm again.

“Owe! Stop that—your slaps sting. I’m not going to wake them. Just stick my head in to check on them.” I step toward the door.

We go across the hall, and I slowly open their door, making sure not to make a sound. I step into the room, and I see them cuddled together in Daisy’s bed. I wonder if the day will ever come that they sleep in their own bed or want separate bedrooms. Somehow, I doubt they will have separate bedrooms. I put my arm around Amelie, and she leans her head on my chest.

Amelie bond-links me, “They look so peaceful right now.”

“They do. Blessed with sight or not, how do we know that the decisions we make are right?” I link back.

“We don’t. We just have to do the best we can and hope it turns out OK. Just like every other parent.” She leans up and kisses my cheek.

“We are about to have four. Two sets of twins...what are the odds.” I look down, and Amelie is scowling. “What?”

“You’re not the one who has to carry them in your body. Look at this bump. I’m huge already. I’m three months along now, halfway, and I look like I’m going to give birth tomorrow.” She presses lips into a thin line, still scowling at me.

“I think you look sexy?” I pull her close, kissing her head and squeezing her butt. I get a raised brow in response.

“I look like I’m trying to shoplift a basketball.” She’s so cute when she pouts.

“You’re carrying twin Alphas with double Alpha bloodline. They are not going to be small.” I start to lead her out of the twin’s bedroom and back to ours.

“I get they weren’t going to be small, but at this rate, they will be born with a full beard and ready to take over the pack. I have to pee again.” Still cute when she pouts.

We get back into our room, and Amelie goes to the bathroom again. I sit on the edge of the bed, lost in my thoughts for a moment.

“She’s not going to leave us. We won’t lose our mate this time.” Ulv breaks in.

“Mandy didn’t survive childbirth of twins. Now we are in the same situation. I don’t think we can raise four on our own.” I fall back on the bed, running my hand down my face.

“Our mate is strong. She’s a pure werewolf, and she’s also the strongest Luna I’ve ever felt she will survive.” Ulv’s confidence is reassuring, but I can’t help the small grain of fear that’s crept in.

Amelie comes out of the bathroom and crawls into bed. I get in as well and get under the blanket. I pull Amelie to me, and she rolls over, so her back is against my chest. She grabs my hand and places it on her baby bump, and I can feel the boys moving.

“Birch, Aspen, your daddies’ home. Can you feel him?” I feel a little foot push into my hand. I smile. My boys can feel that I’m here.

“Birch and Aspen? Is that what you are calling them?” I kiss her shoulder.

“I think their marks are literal like the girls. I think it’s their names... it feels right, doesn’t it?” She looks at me over her shoulder.

I rub her belly, thinking. Rose, Daisy, Birch, and Aspen, it does feel right. “I guess it does. OK, boys, settle down for the night and let your mom sleep. Good night, Birch and Aspen.” Amelie giggles. “Good night, my storm.”

As we lay there, letting the dark of the night lull us to sleep, I know tomorrow will be heavy with work. Our plan will go into action. I will take down the New Moon Alliance and find Tate and Karen, or I would die trying.

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Chapter 73

Amelie



“Ding, Ding, Ding,”

“Oh, my oven timer!” I snap my head out of my thoughts, turn off my timer, and pull out the spice cake cupcakes from the top oven. I’m in the middle of stress baking. I’ve been at it for hours. It’s challenging to garden right now with my belly; bending over that much kills me. I didn’t feel like working in my shop at the moment, and I really wanted some oatmeal raisin cookies, so I went to stress baking. I didn’t stop with just oatmeal cookies. I’ve made snickerdoodles, chocolate chip cookies, brownies, blondies, pecan pie, peach cobbler, now spice cake with a vanilla bean cream cheese frosting. I’m going to get some cinnamon rolls going next. I can let them sit overnight, and we can have a family breakfast with cinnamon rolls tomorrow. Where is the yeast?

As I’m looking for the yeast Gideon breaks through the mate-bond, “Am, my storm, can you come back to my office?” Gideon’s tone is sweet and gentle, but I don’t want to go over the plan details again. My head is spinning.

“No. I’m busy.” I cut him off before he could say anything. I block the link.

Inari cuts in, “We should go to mate.”

“Oh, you are talking to me now.” I snap back. We are not seeing eye to eye right now, and she stopped talking to me.

Gideon mind-links me instead. He knows I always keep it open for the pre-school teachers to contact me, damn it. “You know I can find you easily through our bond, my Luna.”

“I’m busy,” is all I answer back.

Fifteen minutes later, Gideon is standing in the doorway of the kitchen. He walks over to the counter and picks up a cookie. “What’s all this for?”

“For whoever wants it.” I continue working on the yeast dough.

“Why are you mad at me? Is it because the plan changed? Did I do something?” Gideon stuffs the cookie in his mouth and picks up a brownie. I know I said they are for whoever wants them, but I don’t want to share.

“Stop eating everything, or there won’t be any for anyone else.” I huff. “I am not mad at you. I’m not mad. I’m…” I pause, let out a breath, and lean back on the counter. “I’m conflicted.”

“What? Conflicted about what?” He goes for one of the cupcakes, but I swat his hand. He starts eating the brownie.

“Those need to be frosted.” I pick up a piping bag and begin to frost the cupcakes. “I’m conflicted because even though they are traitors and criminals, I don’t like imprisoning them and shipping them off to my stepfather. I understand why he suggested taking them over the non-affiliated wolves, but it still bothers me. Are we no better than them locking them up interrogating them? I know Logan, and I know he will go to the extreme to get more information out of them. I also know he’s going to teach those methods to Riley. I’m sure he’s already called my dad, and he’ll take James over there as part of his heir training. It’s just this endless cycle. I know they are criminals, and they should be punished. I just hate this whole thing.” I step back from the cupcakes and look up at Gideon. I can feel tears filling my eyes.

He’s still chewing the brownie, “Muhfee muaah fhaaam.” I can’t stop the giggle that escapes. It felt good.

“Finish chewing your food first I can’t understand you at all.” I pull a glass from the cupboard and pour him some milk. “Here. Drink this, then talk.” My eyes almost roll out of my head. He looks like an overgrown child. Still cute.

He drinks the glass of milk in one gulp, “Milks the best with cookies and brownies.” He smiles but still has brownie in his teeth. I laugh so hard. “What?”

“You have brownie stuck to your teeth still.” He gets more milk to help wash down the brownie.

“What I was trying to say was that you have to remember what they did is not like what we are doing.” He swishes around the milk in his mouth. There went my sliver of peace back to the main topic.

“How is it not similar? We are locking them up, and they will be interrogated and tortured.” I fold my arms across my chest.

“What they did was malicious and vile, and they did it to children. They have killed people! They have killed children. They tried to force you to miscarry and attacked you and the twins. They should be happy I’m letting them live.” His voice raises toward the end, and I can feel how angry he is.

“That’s why I’m conflicted. I know what they did and what they are capable of, but I can’t help the other part of me that wants to protect them and keep them safe. It sounds crazy, and I don’t know how to handle it. So, I’m stress baking. OK?” I slump down to the counter, my hands covering my face.

“Amelie, look at me. I know you are loving and kind, and that’s why you are a great mother and Luna, but we each have our part, and mine is to protect and dole out punishment. What has happened has affected our pack and us and families and packs all over the U.S. It’s my job to stop them. That’s what I pledged to the Council, and my father and his father before him pledged also. It’s what our sons will promise. To protect

our kind from harm even from harming ourselves.” He walks over and wraps his arms around my belly, rubbing it gently.

“I just hate that James and Riley have to be a part of it. They are still kids themselves.” I let out a breath in a huff.

“Amelie, they are Alphas’ in training. They both carry a heavy responsibility. They are lucky they have their fathers to teach them. My father died before my training was finished, and I had to take over early. Both your father and stepfather helped me when I needed it, but it was still challenging. I know your brothers will be taught to uphold our laws because that’s how they taught me.” He nuzzles the back of my neck. I know in my heart he’s right, but it doesn’t stop this feeling of guilt for inflicting harm on them when they are my responsibility as a Luna.

I take a deep breath of his eucalyptus sent to calm my mind. “OK, finish telling me about the Aruna Banquet plan. I know that’s why you wanted me to come to your office.”

Gideon turns me around, so I’m facing him, “We are holding a real and a fake one. This will be your’s and Hope’s first Aruna Banquet. Your father doesn’t want to take that away from you both. As you know, the Ember Moon Festival Ball will be hosted by Alpha Conor Amaris of the Amaris Pack in Vermont. Alpha Conor is also an Ashwood descendant, so that couldn’t have worked out better for us.”

“OK. Vermont in the summer is nice.” I give a small smile. It will be nice to travel with Gideon again. “What about Rose and Daisy? Are we bringing them or leaving them here?”

“They will stay here where I know I can protect them. I already don’t like putting you in danger, but at least you can defend yourself.” Gideon takes a step back and leans on the opposite counter. “Tyson, Shay, Benjamin, and Becky will come with us. Of course, Benjamin’s elite unit will be joining us. We will plant them as wait staff to spy on our special guest. Your father already selected who from the New Moon Alliance to send invites to.”

“I’m assuming Nox Jericho will be in attendance?” I roll my eyes. I honestly don’t like the Jerichos.

Gideon chuckles, “No. We did not send Nox an invite. We did not want it to seem obvious that we are on to him, plus we are hoping for two things.” He gives me a devious grin. “One that he tries to crash the party. Two that it causes conflict within their little alliance.”

“Nox is an arrogant ass, so both are possible.” I sigh and pinch the bridge of my nose. “So, we are hoping to gather intel on where to find the kidnapped wolves.”

"That's the plan." Gideon takes a step forward and places his hands on my shoulders. "I need to ask you a big favor."

I raise my brow and tilt my head. "Oh. What kind of favor?"

Gideon rubs his hands up and down my arms. I know it's going to be bad if he's already trying to soothe me. He's pushing his feelings of love and security through the bond. "Before we send out the traitors to the Black Hills Pack, we are going to interview them."

"OK. What does that have to do with me?" I did not like where this was heading.

Gideon takes a deep breath, "I want you to interview Von Jericho with me."

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Chapter 74

Amelie

Gideon takes a deep breath, "I want you to interview Von Jericho with me."

"What! You have lost your mind!" I shake his hands off me.

"Am, please!" He grabs my wrist as I try and walk away.

"Why the hell would I want to talk to her at all? Let go." I try shaking his hand from my wrist, but he pulls me into him. It's not possessive or angry. It's pleading. He needs my help. I can feel the pull I try to fight.

"She's in a cell. She knows she's not getting out, but she's also not talking. I want to get something anything, and I know she is our best shot at finding at least one location of the kidnapped wolves." He wraps his arms around me. I know I'm going to give in but not without making him work for it.

"Again, why do you want me there?" I cross my arms, forcing space between us. He better give me a good reason.

"Because seeing you will make her more emotional, and she's more likely to slip up and give us something if you're there. I know you don't want to see her or any of the traitors, but they are the first ones we have caught. They have valuable information that could save lives. You know, if we move too quickly, they could just kill all the kidnapped wolves and destroy the evidence. Or they might have more Council members in their pocket we don't know about. I need you." He cups my face in his hands and gives me a gentle kiss. He's playing dirty.

I give him a death glare, “fine, but I want an extra family meal the next three weeks.” I’m at least getting something out of it.

“Deal!” He picks up a blondie and starts eating it.

“You are going to ruin your dinner.” I sighed, shaking my head.

“I trained and shifted twice today. I need the calories.” He picks up two chocolate chip cookies.

I just give him my best ‘really, you are taking two more’ look. All females have that look.

“Two for the road, let’s go.” Gideon gives me a wink. I take off my apron and follow Gideon. I did hate this, but if I could help save lives, then I have an obligation. We make our way to the cells. Again, in true Druid Guard fashion, there is an actual jail block. The outside of the building looks like a giant cube surrounded by barbwire. The building doesn’t have traditional windows but small slats thought out the walls. It’s dark gray and just gives me the creeps. As we walk through the guard post, Gideon finishes his last cookie and takes my hand.

We make our way to an interrogation room. Before we enter, Gideon stops and turns to me. “There is a plexiglass wall between her and us. She has silver cuffs on, so she cannot break the plexiglass. That also means she is basically human, so our aura will not work on her while her wolf is dormant.”

“I understand.” I take a deep breath. Gideon’s sent calms me. I feel Inari stir again. I guess she wants to be a part of this. I wish I could just let her deal with this.

Gideon opens the door, and as soon as I step in, Von screams, “Great, you brought your breeding whore!” Well, this was going to be lovely.

Gideon growls, “Watch your mouth. That’s not how you speak to your Luna.”

“Hahaha! Luna, she’s just a slut. Everyone knows how her first mate dumped her. Ooooo, Alpha, you picked up an Ashwood bitch for your breeding stock.” Von’s words don’t phase me at all. They are just desperate attempts to get one of us to react.

“Well, Von, it’s so nice to see you again. I see you took my advice and used your brain, but I didn’t mean treason, kidnapping, and murder.” I take a set-in front of the plexiglass.

“I would have been ten times the Luna you will ever be. I’m not worried about it. I will be one day.” She scoffs.

“Wow, you have to tell me how you somehow plan on getting out of this? My father, stepfather, brothers, and mate will not let you go.” I shake my head.

“And my brother and father will kill all of you!” She says in a high-pitched mocking tone.

Gideon steps forward, arms crossed in front of his chest, “I would like to see him try.”

“Oh, he will, but before he does, I’m going to make sure you watch as I rip those bastards from her belly! Bitch couldn’t get pregnant for ten years, and then suddenly, she’s carrying fucking twins! I’ll enjoy killing them too.” Von walks as close to the glass as she can before her restraints are yanked taut. How does she know I tried to get pregnant before with Tate?

Gideon gets close to the glass, “I’ll rip your brother’s and father’s head off before they can come near my mate.” Von just laughs and laughs.

“Before you can touch them, you have to have proof. Something I know you are lacking!” Von laughs mockingly.

I go out on a limb, “We have enough to go the Councils.”

“HAHAHAHA!” Von’s laugh is loud and menacing. “The Councils will not touch my brother! Let’s just say some have a lot to lose if my brother is harmed.” Damn it. They have manipulated more Council members. How is the question? We know that five have joined their ranks but how many are being forced like Theo? Or is it blackmail?

“What has your brother done to Lacy Newman?” I ask. Will they try and use Lacy like they are Owen?

“She’s just a breeder bitch like you! Just a tool with the right resume. Others are not as resistant to our methods of persuasion as you.” Von gives me a sick smile. What? I’ve thought for a while now that my mate-bond with Tate was fake. Was I being coaxed into my feelings and didn’t realize it? How?

As I sit there, I narrow my eyes and just stare at Von. How could she be OK with all that her alliance was doing to our own kind? I just couldn’t understand how someone’s moral compass could be so misguided. I’m just staring, thinking. My conflicting feels I had previously melted away as I slowly realized she is just one of many faces of evil I’ve confronted in my life, and before this was over, I would stare down many more.

Von stares back at me and charges for the glass. She starts yelling, “Oh, you think you figured it out! Aunt Karen always said you were a dumb bitch, but maybe you’re not that dumb.” Von mocks me again, giving me a pouty face and laughing. She just referred to Karen as Aunt Karen. They’re related! How? I quickly compose myself from my shock.

I needed a few more bits of details before I could fully connect the dots. “Why kidnap children and make a fake rouge army? They are children, you sick bitch!” I scream. Gideon wanted me to get Von worked up well. Here it is.

“Disposable soldiers are all they are. They don’t matter. Who cares if a few hundred pups go missing? Someone will have another and another. It’s the right of an Alpha to have others serve you. It’s our goddess-given right! If I want them to die, they will die.” Von looks and sounds crazy! She’s too far gone for saving.

“Von, you don’t realize what’s happening, do you. Let me educate you. You see, you are going to be transported to the Black Hills Pack’s cells. It’s an old, abandoned gold mine Logan has personally put together. You see, what’s so unique about it is you don’t get put in a cell. You are just chained to a wall. There is no bathroom. You sit in your own filth. You will get food and water when Logan feels like it. Oh, and your hands are chained so close to the wall you can’t shoo away the rats that come to nibble on your toes. You can’t fall asleep, or you might have holes gnawed in you by morning.” I stand up. I turn to head to the door.

“I won’t be there long. My brother will find me. Then I’ll be coming for you.” She says the last part in a sing-song tone. “No matter what, he’s coming for you and those twin girls of yours, Alpha. They will make for great breeders one day.”

“If your brother has a death wish, let him come. I’ll be waiting.” Gideon growls out. I know he’s holding back, but someone mentioned harming his family. I see Ulv flash to the surface; they are mad. We need to leave.

“You can’t stop it. It’s coming soon. You won’t even see it coming.” Von snarls. Pacing the length of the chain restrains.

I decide to take over the conversation. “The mine is not on any map, and it is in the middle of nowhere deep underground. No one will hear you scream or smell your scent. You will just disappear like you never existed in the first place. Which would have been better for everyone anyway.” I know that last part is mean, but I was done with this she-wolf.

Gideon walks to the door, and we are about to leave when Von starts screaming. “I WILL KILL YOU! ALL OF YOU!”

Gideon closes the door behind us. I can’t walk fast enough to leave this damn prison. As I was rushing out little things, she said, start to make connections in my mind. We walk back to the packhouse in silence. It’s about a 15-minute walk, but the weather is beautiful, and the fresh air is helping me and Inari think through what Von said and what we already know. Once we are back at our wing of the packhouse, I have a few questions for Gideon.

“Gideon, I think I might have figured out a few things from that confrontation.” I plop down on the sofa.

“OK, good, I think I have to.” He slides in next to me.

“How are Karen and Von related, you think?” I never heard Tate talk about being related to an Alpha family, and why didn’t we live in the Blue Crescent pack if he was?

“My guess is on her mother’s or grandmother’s side. If Tate were an Alpha descendant, it would be known. We will have to try and dig into the Lunas’ of the Blue Crescent pack to be sure.” He pulls out his phone to take notes.

“Alright, I still don’t know how they are doing it, but I’m now sure I was never a fated mate to Tate. I was somehow part of this whole plan. My theory is they wanted to use my child to take over the Ashwood and the Black Hills pack, basically killing my whole family and me and using the child to take control. When James had his heir ceremony, they decided they couldn’t wait any longer and....” I pause just thinking about it makes me sick. Suppose I didn’t fight back what would have happened to me. Tate tried to force himself on me. It could have been so much worse. What was Lacy going through? How many other She-wolves require rescuing or are being tricked and don’t realize it? I drop my head, tears filling my eyes. I feel like all I’ve been doing lately is crying. My heart is breaking for those around me, all the souls that need saving. This burden Selene has placed on Gideon and me is so heavy.

Gideon wraps me in his arms. It’s the only place I feel truly safe these days. “They will never lay a hand on you again, I promise.”

“What are we going to do? Von made it sound like both Councils are compromised!” I look up at him, tears and panic across my face.

Gideon wipes my cheeks with the pad of his thumb, “Your father is the head of the Alpha Council, and I am the Vice Head. We will act to protect the Councils and our kind. It’s an extreme circumstance, but we have more allies with all the Ashwood branches. I would have already killed all the Alphas in this New Moon Alliance if it wasn’t for all the wolves they have captive. They will not get away with it.”

“Gideon, I want the girls to go to my dad’s pack while we are at the Ember Moon Festival. I think all the children should actually.” I sit up and calm my nerves. “I think they will try to attack the Druit Guard territory during the festival.”

“What! Why would you think that?” The look of shock on his face is hard to dismiss.

“It’s what Von said that we would see it was coming, and it was coming soon. I think the ‘It’ is an attack while we are at our weakest. It’s widely known that the Druit Guard acts as security for the national and regional festivals. So that would mean we have the fewest pack members at that time in our territory. It’s never been an issue before because no one posed a threat before.” Gideon’s face palms himself.

“How could I overlook something so obvious!” He groans.



"I remember someone once told me when you are too close. You can't see the forest from the trees." I smile back. I love using his words against him.

"They must have been a genius." He smiles back. That backfired. "I'll have to call John and Logan and make arrangements for a 'Summer Pup Camp' at your father's pack. We will need to adjust our internal assignments as well." He sighs, falling back into the sofa.

"Gideon?" He looks at me with raised brows and wide eyes. "Um, do you think since the non-affiliated wolves responded to me that they would also respond to our other ranked females?" His mouth drops open.

"It's possible! We can ask them if we can test it out. If it works, that's another weapon we can use." He smiles and pulls me into him to steal a kiss. "I did get lucky with you."

## Scars by Jessica Bailey Chapter 75

### Chapter 75

Gideon

"William Carson, please step forward," Tyson announces. He's the last pup of the day.

"William Carson, do you accept the Druit Guard as your pack and promise to uphold your duties as a pack member?" I look down at the young boy who stares back up at me, tall and straight with pride in his eyes.

"Yes, Alpha, I do!" He yells as if he was answering a drill sergeant.

"Do you submit to me Gideon Alois as your Alpha and vow to follow my orders"

"Yes, Alpha, I do!" Again, yelling so the whole pack can hear.

"I Gideon Alois accept you into the Druit Guard Pack. Step forward, William." I reach out for his hand he gives it to me. I extend a claw and prick the tip of his thumb, he doesn't flinch, but I see his eyes are glassy. Every pup who wants to be a warrior one day does the same they hold back the tears and act tough. I always find it funny. I prick my thumb, and I press our thumbs together. I feel him added to the pack, and his eyes get big with wonder as he feels the mind-link for the first time. That look will never get old.

I mind-link him as I do all the pups, "Welcome to the Druit Guard Pack. Look at your arm."

"WOW! That's so cool! Mom, look at my mark! I got my first mark!" William turns back towards me with a partially toothless grin that I see for the first time. "Thank you, Alpha."

"Welcome to the pack William," Amelie says as she hugs the young pup.

“Thank you, Luna. One day I’ll be a great warrior and fight alongside the future Alphas.”

She giggles. “I’m sure you will.” The boy’s mother ushers him off stage as he admires his first mark, a deep green oak tree on his shoulder.

Amelie and I have been inducting all the newly shifted pups into the pack. This is the start of the Ember Moon Festival week. Our pack might be busy and spread out, but that doesn’t mean we don’t gather for the most important event, the pup induction ceremony. Tonight will be our pack’s big celebration before our work truly begins. We have 47 newly shifted pups this year. It’s a lower number this year, but our pack’s birth rate has risen over the years, and more families stay now. Most families went back to one of the parent’s birth packs to raise their pups in my father’s day, but I have tried to change that since I took over. I know now that I have Amelie by my side, our pack will grow. We will always take in others looking for a purpose, but it’s good to have a foundation.

Amelie reaches for my hand, and I’m pulled from my thoughts. “Druit Guard! We welcome these new wolves into our pack. We will teach them to protect our kind and respect our laws. Most importantly, we will stand by their side and be their support. Gather up everyone and prepare for their first pack run!” I yell. Everyone stands to their feet, cheering—parents lifting their newly inducted pups in the air, celebrating.

I jump down from the stage, and everyone who is joining the run follows. Amelie and the ranked females stay behind to finish the party prepping and watch the pups that can’t shift yet. It breaks my heart I will never see Inari. Ulv pines for her daily, but we hide it. We have a fantastic bond, but I know Ulv misses the whole wolf part of the bond. I turn to look up at her on the stage she is two months away from giving birth. She is all belly Alpha already tend to be large but twins on top of that. I still worry. Anything could happen.

“I love you. Enjoy the run, don’t overdo it, and wear out the new pups.” Amelie gives me a wink.

I smile back, chocking down the fear that started to tickle my thoughts, “I have to see what they are made of, don’t I.” I need to shift and let Ulv take control for a bit. I keep thinking about raising all four pups on my own, ever since Amelie and I had our talk about Rose and Daisy. It haunts me. Every day I wait for them to tell me about Amelie’s death. I need to redirect my thoughts. I head off to the tree line Tyson and Marcus are right behind me.

I get to the tree line, “Ulv, you ready to meet our new wolves?”

“It’s my favorite time of year!” I feel Ulv push forward, and my skin tingles as it stretches and jet-black fur sprouts. My bones snap and shift into place until I am on four paws. I walk around and observe the pups shifting. It takes them a little longer since they are newly shifted and growing. The first few shifts are painful until you accept your pack

then the pain subsides. Once everyone has shifted Ulv Howls and takes off the other wolves following behind. He doesn't sprint this run is for the pups to help them adjust to the pack and settle their wolves. Wolves are pack animals and will go crazy without companionship. We run for about 20 minutes before Tyson mind-links me.

"Alpha, some of the pups are starting to lag." Tyson brings up the rear on pack runs, and Marcus stays in the middle. This way, we have our eyes on everyone and keep them safe.

I mind-link the pack, "OK, everyone, let's head back." I turn back toward the packhouse, slowing my pace. Out of nowhere, I hear a howling screech and an alert in the pack-link for one of the new pups. I take off at full speed. Tyson and Marcus are right behind.

Not too far off, I find one of the newly shifted pups caught in a hunter's trap. I take a look in his pain-filled eyes; it's William. His front leg is broken. I shift back, and so do Tyson and Marcus.

"William, look at me. You are going to be OK. We are going to get you out, OK." He's whimpering.

He mind-links me, "Alpha, it hurts so bad."

"I know, but I promise it's going to be OK. Just hold still."

Marcus and Tyson steady the boy as I pull the trap apart. I get it open, and Tyson picks up William. "OK, William, I know this is going to be hard, and it might hurt, but you need to shift back, OK?"

"Alpha, I'm scared." His scared pain-filled voice in my head was breaking my heart.

"William!" I hear a she-wolf scream as she shifts back to her human form. It's Mary. "Alpha, what happened?" She's in a panic.

"We found him in a hunters trap. His front leg is broken, but it should start to mend once he shifts." I wish I could give better news, but this was all I had.

"William, you heard the Alpha you have to shift." She tells her son. He whimpers again but starts to shift. Another wolf comes running up as William is shifting back. I recognize him right away. It's Brendon, one of our warriors and IT security specialists and William's father.

"Mary, what happened?" William is almost shifted at this point, and Mary is in tears at the sight of her son's now broken arm.

“Brendon, we are not sure what happened. We found William caught in a hunter’s trap. We will look into it. For now, you two should get William back to the infirmary.” I say, placing a hand on Brendon’s shoulder. He needed to focus on his family right now.

He nods, “Yes, Alpha.” He picks up his crying son and holds him close.

Before they leave, I say, “William, you are really brave, and I’m happy you are in our pack. I promise that when your arm heals, I’ll go on a run with just you and your dad. How does that sound?”

He snuffles and looks up at his father, “Can we really?”

His dad looks at me and looks at his son with a forced smile. “Yeah, when your arms are all better, we can, OK champ.” Brendon gives me a nod, and the family of three walks back to the infirmary.

I run my hand down my face and look back to the hunter trap. “Well, how in the hell did this thing get here!”

“Alpha, look at this. It’s a letter in a Ziplock bag that’s zip-tied to the chain.” Marcus carefully opens the bag, making sure only to touch the corners so we can dust it for prints later.

He pulls out the letter, and in block lettering, it reads, “She will fall into my trap next.” It takes everything in me not to rip up the letter. How dare he! Threaten my mate! My Luna! The mother of my children! I know who wrote this! It was Tate.

## **Scars by Jessica Bailey Chapter 76**

### **Chapter 76**

Amelie

“I love you. Enjoy the run, don’t overdo it, and wear out the new pups.” I give Gideon a wink. He seems off, a little distant, not cold or dismissive, but like something is on his mind lately, and he doesn’t want to share.

He smiles back. “I have to see what they are made of, don’t I.” It all feels forced, and he rushes away to shift. I’ll have to get him to spill it later. For now, I needed to focus on finishing up prep for our pack celebration.

Tonight we are doing a big outdoor party in what is usually the training field. We don’t have much today since the Packhouse staff has taken care of everything. I’ll have to give Becky a bonus. She’s doing an excellent job of managing the staff. I’m so glad she was mated to Benjamin.

It's extra special because the non-affiliated wolves all decided to join our pack. This is their first-pack event. Bailey is slowly transitioning into her role as a Delta-Female, and I couldn't be prouder of her. She is not letting the horrors she faced stop her from being happy. Matt adores her, and the mate bond is helping her heal. Two of the males wolve also found their mates here as well. Faris, who drew the picture of the tattoo, found his mate at the hospital; she was a nurse. Now he's studying to become one as well. It was a blessing I got to witness it all firsthand as well.

We are watching the children run around and play we I turn to Shay and Jordan, "I've never heard how you both meet your mates?"

They both smile and look at each other. Shay answers, "We met them at the same time during our Durit Guard interviews, actually."

"Oh wow. I didn't know you both had applied to the Druit Guard before meeting our mates. Why did you both want to join?" I knew a lot about them both, but I didn't realize this.

"Well, as you know, I am an Alpha's daughter. What most don't know is I am adopted. My mother found me on the edge of our territory when I was two years old, just wandering around by myself." Her expression changes. She looks a bit sad.

She continues. "They could never find my birth parents, so my mother, the Luna of the Clear Lake Pack near Houston, TX, took me in as hers. She had always wanted a daughter and said the goddess blessed her with me. I was raised as an Alpha's daughter; our pack is small but loving. When my older brother took over, I found myself wanting to find my purpose as well. I trained our warriors, but I wanted more. I talked to my family about it, and they suggested I join the Druit Guard for a few years. My father always felt I held a bigger destiny and didn't want to hold me back. I applied and came here for my interview with Alpha Gideon. When I walked into the room, Tyson was with him, and I stopped in my tracks. He jumped the table losing his cowboy hat in the process. He took me in his arms and gave me the most passionate kiss I had ever been given in my life. That was six years ago, and I still never had my interview." We all laughed; I could see Tyson doing that.

Shay has the biggest smile on her face. "You know it's funny this city girl from Texas came all the way north to find her a cowboy!" We erupt in laughter again. "My family was more than excited to find out I was mated to such a powerful Beta and pack. Easten is the greatest blessing I could ever ask for, and he will be a strong Beta one day. My father was right; I had a greater destiny to be the Beta-Female of the Druit Guard is an honor. I'm so thankful my family encouraged me to find my purpose."

"I'm so thankful they did too. I don't know what I would do without you here." I hug Shay. We have become friends and a team in the short time of my being here. I can honestly say I trust her.

I turn to Jordan, "So what brought you to Druit Guard?" I regret my question as soon as I ask. I see the pain in Jordan's eyes. I know it has to do with her father. "I'm sorry, you don't have to tell me if you don't want to relive it."

"No, it's OK. Knowing what I know now. I'm thankful for the sacrifice my father made for me; otherwise, Ryan wouldn't be here because I would probably have been killed along with him." Her eyes are glassy, and she tries to blink them away.

"We are here for you. If it helps to talk about it, we will lessen." I take her hand and clasp it in both of mine.

Jordan takes a deep breath. "Six years ago, when Alpha Lars Sibley took over as Alpha, he forced my father to step down as Beta and appointed Gavin Bryant as his Beta. I was an only child. My mother died in a car accident when I was four, and my father would not take a chosen mate. Alpha Lars refused to acknowledge me as his Beta because I was female and my father was older, so I guess it was bound to happen. My father blindsided me one day. He had filled out the application for me for the Druit Guard and set up my interview." A single tear rolled down her cheek. She wiped it away and straightened her back, and continued. "We argued over it, but I gave in when he broke down crying that it was the only place he knew I would be safe."

I watch as her eyes wander over to Ryan playing with Rose. A small smile comes across her lips but doesn't reflect in her eyes. "I'm just glad he got to hold his grandson before he was murdered. Knowing what I know now, I would have forced him to come with me. The day I met Marcus saved my life. I was ready to tell Alpha Gideon that I didn't want to join the Druit Guard and walk away, go back to the Death Vally Pack. When I walked into that interview room and felt the mate pull, there was no going back." A laugh and a tear escape from Jordan at the same time.

Finally, her smile reaches her eyes. "Marcus picked me up and threw me over his shoulder and carried me out of the interview room like a caveman. I was in complete shock, but I didn't even fight him. Once outside, he set me down and cupped my face in his hands, and just stared at me for what felt like hours, but it was only minutes. The first words out of his mouth were 'you're real.' Then we kissed for the first time. I have never felt more at peace than I do when I'm with him. Marcus gave me a home again."

I'm launching myself at Jordan, pulling her into the best hug I can give with my belly getting in the way. I'm sobbing, hormones going into overdrive when all of a sudden I feel it! The pack-bond alert. It's something only the Alpha and Luna have. It's one of the pups newly shifted.

I try to bond-link Gideon, "What's going on?"

"One of the new pups got injured. I'll tell you more later." He cut off the link.

I turn to my team, "A pup got hurt on the run."

“Oh no! Who was it? Are they OK?” Shay asks.

“I don’t know the details, but Gideon is handling it, so it should be fine. We better finish everything up. They will be back soon.” I try not to worry but knowing a child was hurt weighs heavy on my heart.

From the treeline, I see a man carrying a young boy and a woman following right behind. I look closer, and I see it’s Mary and her son William, the man holding him must be her mate. I haven’t met him yet. Mary was one of the few I would let watch the twins. I get Shay and Jordan’s attention, and they sprint over. I’m not moving fast these days, so I stay near the pups.

“How is he?” I mind-link Shay.

“He’s got a broken arm. Brendon said he got caught in a hunter’s trap.” She links me back, and I’m floored. How did a hunter’s trap get out there?

“Escote them to the hospital and let me know how they are doing.” I drop my head and pinch my brow. What is going on? We can’t even celebrate in peace.

I can’t take it. I need to know how this happened. How dare someone harms one of my pack! “Gideon, what is going on? How did a hunter’s trap get into our territory?” I’m screaming through the mate-link; Inari is growling. If I could shift, I would have to fight Inari for control not to. It’s not recommended to shift while pregnant. While shifting, your whole body changes, and it can induce labor or miscarriage. Nothing happens sometimes; it doesn’t matter as Inari is sealed, but I know she wants out more than ever.

I know Gideon can feel all that I’m going through, “Am, I’m heading back. I will tell you everything after you calm down. You are going to make the new pack members cry. Inari, pull it in!”

I close my eyes and breath deep in and out, “Inari, we can do this. I know you want to shift, but we couldn’t. Anyways we are pregnant. We need to get our aura under control.”

“Ulv is angry. I can feel it. This is not a simple hunter’s trap in the woods. I know it. He’s in a rage; he wants blood.” Inari snarls, and I can feel her uneasiness, then I feel his too. She’s right. It’s not just Ulv in a rage, Gideon too.

“I’m heading to our wing. You are angry, and I’m feeding off it and cannot calm down. Meet me there. We can join the party after.” I bond-link Gideon. This is pointless. If we are both this upset, we will have the whole pack on its knees instead of celebrating.

“I’ll meet you there.” He cut the link.

I mind-link my team, "Watch the twins Gideon and I need to have a private talk."