

The Edge Of Reason -

Chapter 4 - Ember

Ember

As I step out of the minibus, my gaze is drawn to the front of the pack house.

The Alpha. He stands there, emitting an aura of dominance.

He's not like my old Alpha. Not at all. I feel like I should drop to my knees.

Then the Beta tells us that we need to present ourselves.

I'm glad I didn't take any of the food they offered me because if I had, it would have come straight up.

Relieved that my stomach is empty, I just follow the others to stand in front of him.

Whilst his gaze is on the others, I quickly glance up, then look down. Hoping he doesn't notice.

His eyes are dark brown, almost black. I wonder if his wolf is close to the surface because I've never seen eyes that dark.

His hair is a dark chocolate brown. It covers his shoulders. I imagine the beta's hair is long as well, even though he had it tied back. I wonder if that's a pack thing. Long hair, a bit like the old story of Sampson and Delilah. Only this Alpha doesn't allow anyone near him to cut off his hair, and definitely not a woman. They say he either rejected his mate or killed her.

It's a shame Noah didn't kill me. At least then all my troubles would be over, instead of just beginning.

As much as I hate what Noah did, he's nothing like this Alpha.

Noah's skin is pale compared to the Alpha, and he certainly doesn't have scars and tattoos covering his body. At least he didn't before he left three years ago.

I don't know why I'm comparing them. Probably because deep down I know that they're both cruel and heartless. I know Noah is, and if the rumours are true, so is this Alpha.

I remember my brother's words. 'Keep your head down and do as you're told', so I do.

I look at the earth and try to calm my thundering heart.

That all goes out the window when I hear the next words that come out of his mouth.

"Strip and shift."

My head jolts up, but I quickly lower my gaze as he's staring straight at me.

How stupid can I be? So much for keeping my head down.

My wolf growls in the back of my mind. This isn't going to end well. I barely let my wolf out. It's one of Alpha Conrad's rules.

Women are too weak to control their wolves, so they aren't allowed to run as the males do. We're only allowed to release our wolves on a full moon, and then we have to be escorted by males. If our wolves are too out of control, the males subdue them. Usually biting and nipping at our legs, or pinning us down with their teeth around our necks until our wolves relinquish control.

It's a horrible experience, so I usually choose not to shift.

Now I'm going to have to, and I don't know if I'll be able to control my wolf. She probably thinks the Alpha will try to subdue her. She hates it. Sometimes when we shifted, she would try to nip the males herself, which usually meant we got hurt. Maybe that's why Alpha Conrad decided to get rid of me.

I was always obedient, but my wolf wasn't. She's always been different, always been a little rebellious.

I can feel the Alpha glaring at me, and I realise the others have already stripped and shifted.

I slowly remove my dress and my underwear.

It's been a long time since I shifted. This is going to hurt.

The first half of the shift is hard as I try to control my wolf. When the pain becomes too great, I lose control. Once my wolf is in control, I know I won't be able to get it back until she decides to give it to me, or until someone forces her to.

All I can do is watch like a helpless onlooker.

I'm horrified as she stares at the Alpha. She knows better than this. I try to regain control, but it's a lost cause.

I know what she's doing. She doesn't want to live without her mate, so she's challenging the Alpha in hopes that he'll kill her.

If she dies, so do I. It's like looking at a train wreck just as it's happening. Knowing there is nothing you can do.

Alpha Damon growls.

"Ember James, control your wolf."

He thinks this is my fault. It's not. She's too strong, or I'm too weak.

'Stop it' I scream at her as she curls her lip and growls at the Alpha. I close my eyes and cower in the corner of her mind. I can't stop her, but I don't have to look.

I hear him growl again, but this time it's more animalistic. He's shifted and I can't help but look.

The wolf in front of us is enormous. My wolf doesn't stand a chance, but she didn't want to. She wants him to kill us. I realise that now.

He doesn't though. He picks her up and shakes her like a rag doll, then he tosses her to the ground.

I may be in the back of her mind, but I still feel the pain as we hit the ground hard.

Maybe if I try hard enough now, I can wrest back control.

Before I get a chance, something forces me to the back of her mind. I feel numb. Paralysed.

I feel the burning sensation around my neck.

I've heard of these barbaric punishments, but I didn't think anyone ever used them. I shouldn't be surprised that this Alpha is doing this, though.

A silver collar. It weakens the secondary host, in this case, me. If I was in human form, I would lose contact with my wolf.

It's a horrible feeling to be so weak. I'm like a prisoner in here now. Even if my wolf relinquishes control, I can't get free.

I might be stuck in this form for the rest of my life, a prisoner inside my wolf's body.

Perhaps it's my own fault for not letting her out more often.

My wolf doesn't sleep, therefore neither do I. We are one, even though she is in control. Our breathing is laboured. Each breath we take hurts. I fear something broke when we landed on the ground. We can't heal either because of the silver collar.

She looks up when she hears someone approaching. She whimpers. She thought that we would be dead by now, instead, we're just feeling a world of pain. She wants to give me back control, but she can't.

I'm surprised when I see Crystal approach. I didn't think she would want anything to do with us now.

As she crouches down in front of us, I see a bowl of meat in her hand.

"What were you thinking?" she whispers.

She sighs.

"I don't know if you can hear me, Ember, but you're in a world of trouble. I don't know what the Alpha is going to do. You're only getting this food because the beta plead your case."

I hear a voice in the distance. It belongs to the Beta.

"Hurry up Crystal. Just give her the meat and come back inside."

Crystal tips the meat out of the bowl. It lands on the ground between my wolf's paws.

“At least try to eat something,” she huffs before turning and running back inside.

My wolf sniffs the meat, but she just moves her head slightly away from it. The pain in our belly from lack of food is nothing compared to the pain from the injuries we sustained.

Perhaps this is this Alphas way. Maybe we'll be left here to die. Maybe it's the only way to relieve the pain that we both feel, both physically and emotionally.