

Fated to my Enemy by Diane Doherty Chapter 21-30

Chapter Twenty-One

Ryley

My tummy grumbled at the thought of food. I was starving. I gave Channing one of my cards so he and Aspen could get what they wanted. I didn't have time to go grocery shopping. And I trust Channing not to overspend.

Blake pulled up to a small brick building. The parking lot was empty, which I found odd. The only sign on the outside of the building was a sign to the right of the door. 'Under the full moon'. I didn't know what his place was.

"I know what you are thinking but I swear it's worth it," Blake said.

"Oh, so you're not bringing me here to kill me and dump my body in the mountains?" I looked over at him.

"What?" he stammered, looking confused.

"Oh, that's convincing. I feel so much better," I teased.

"You're joking?" He breathed out and I tapped my nose, twice, smirking.

"I know I could take you," I shrugged, hopping out of my SUV. I could hear him chuckling as I closed the door. Blake exited the SUV and we met at the front of the vehicle.

"Just so you know, I'd rather kidnap you." He leaned in and whispered, causing goosebumps to cover my body. I fought back the urge to shiver. Lily was purring in my head. What the hell is wrong with me? I shouldn't be getting excited about the idea of Blake kidnapping me.

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But here I was, clamping my thighs tight together.

"Ryley, I'm kidding," he laughed. And I felt a little disappointed. I need a new toy.

He placed a hand on the small of my back leading me into the building. The nasty scent of that bi**h hit my nose and my ovaries shriveled back up. I don't know why he smells like her and I'm not going to ask. But I hate it.

Entering, I found a small but intimate restaurant. The atmosphere was very romantic with a single rose and candles on every table. The lighting was low and the place was empty. I looked over at Blake and he was watching me. I didn't get to ask him what was going on as someone yelled out from the back of the restaurant.

"We're closed," a man yelled, stopping in his tracks when he entered the dining room.

“Oh, Alpha Blake. I’m sorry,” he bowed her head.

“Jeremy, it’s fine. I should have called first.” Blake told him. He looks to be a little older than Blake.

“And cut the alpha, b****hit,” Blake said, surprising me. Jeremy came over and they shook hands like old friends.

“And who might you be?” Jeremy asked as I stood beside Blake.

“Jeremy this is Ryley. Ryley, Jeremy” Blake introduced us.

“Nice to me you. This place is beautiful. Are you the owner?” I asked, shaking his hand.

“I’m just the manager and chef. This guy owns it,” Jeremy chuckled.

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“Weird, this place wasn’t on the list of companies?” I gave Blake a pointed look.

“Forward, I like that in a woman,” Jeremy smirked.

“But, in all seriousness. I would never steal from my brother-in-law and my nephew.” He said.

“And I’m more of an investor than an owner. Jeremy runs everything. I just eat here.” Blake told me.

“You’re Mia’s brother?” I asked and he nodded.

“I’m sorry for your loss,” I told him, sincerely. It may have been seventeen years ago, but losing family is never easy.

“I appreciate that, thank you.” He smiled at me.

“Now, I assume you are here for lunch.” He announced.

“If you’re closed, we can go somewhere else,” I told him and he brushed me off.

“Nonsense. Take a seat. Blake, the usual?” He asked him.

“Make it two. And I’ll grab us drinks,”

e answered.

“Make yourselves at home,” Jeremy called out, walking back the way he came.

Blake led me over to the bar where I took a seat and he slipped behind acting like a bartender.

“Now, Miss, what can I get you?” He smirked, playing the part of a hot bartender. I felt a little awkward doing this with his brother-in-law in the same building but I leaned on the bar top and played along.

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“I don’t know, what’s good here?” I purred. The look of shock caused me to giggle.

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“I’ll take a diet soda, Blake. We still need to go grocery shopping have a two-hour drive.” He pouted before pouring me a diet soda. He placed the glass on the bar top.

“Could I get a lime?” I asked biting my lower lip. I caught him watching my lips before he looked away to find me a lime.

Clearly, he didn’t expect me to play along. And if we were alone, I may have kept playing.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Alpha Blake

I probably shouldn’t have brought Ryley to meet Jeremy, but he is one of my favorite chefs. He has also been encouraging me to date. Jeremy is a great guy. Mia had asked me to invest when we were first mated. His restaurant has repaid my investment ten times over but I haven’t taken a penny from him, I also didn’t put the business on the list because the investment was in Mia’s name and now Aspen’s Mia was very passionate about this place and her older brother.

After getting Ryley’s drink, I was thankful when she turned around on the bar stool. I needed a moment to readjust myself. I thought I was playing earlier but she’s a da*n tease. The way she leaned over the bar and played with her lips. The way her voice purred. F*ck me. There’s no way she has ever paid for a drink in her life. Even dressed in her tight jeans and a plain black t-shirt. Then my mood turned sour. Just the thought of another man having her attention angered me. She’s mine and no one touches what’s mine.

“But, she isn’t ours. And unless you do something to prove to her that you are a good mate and alpha, she will leave at the end of the summer.” Gunner reminded me.

I downed my whiskey before filling up my glass again. I wanted Gunner to be wrong.

Ryley sat down at a table beside the stone fireplace. It was Mia’s favorite spot. My heart twisted at the memory as I took a seat across from her.

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Chapter Twenty Two

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“Do you come here often?” She asked, before sipping her soda from a straw. I watched her plump lips wrap around the straw.

“With Aspen or business.” I cleared my throat. If she thought I brought dates here, she was wrong.

“Well, it’s a lovely place. And your brother-in-law seems great,” she smiled.

“He sure is that,” I said, my voice coming out more annoyed than I would have liked. I took a sip of my drink as Ryley watched me.

“Blake, are you okay? You didn’t have to bring me here. Honestly, I thought we hit a drive-thru. If this is overwhelming, we can take our meals to go.” She looked worried. Does she care about my feelings?

“Drive-thru?” I asked instead, raising an eyebrow.

“I

mean, I’m sure Jeremy is a great chef but nothing beats a cheeseburger and fries,” she chuckled.

“I’m going to forget you said that,” she smiled before laughing. The same laugh she laughed with Aspen at his joke. I found myself laughing with her.

“But seriously, if you ordered me a salad, I will stab you,” she chuckled.

“Not salad,” I heard Jeremy and we started laughing again. The tension between us was lifted and it felt good to laugh with her.

I wouldn’t have ordered her a salad. Instead, she gets steak, garlic mashed potatoes, and buttery green beans. And Jeremy’s secret BBQ sauce. Which I would kill for.

“Wow,” Ryley breathed out when Jeremy placed down her plate.

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“This smells amazing, thank you,” she exclaimed.

“You are welcome,” Jeremy told her.

“Not going to join us?” I asked him, surprised he didn’t make himself a plate.

“Nope, I have to get prepping but first paperwork.”

“Thanks, Jeremy,” I gave him a nod.

“Come to my office before you leave,” he said before Ryley let out a small moan.

"This has to be the best sauce I have ever tasted."

"It's a secret," Jeremy smirked.

"Of course it is. But I would drive the four hours just to eat this," she mumbled taking another bite. Jeremy gave me a questioning look.

"Later," I mouthed to him.

He gripped my shoulder, squeezing it before disappearing to the back.

"Better than drive-thru?" I chuckled as Ryley stuffed her face. She just nooded with a smile, her cheeks full. I can see where Channing gets his goofiness from. Under that protective momma wolf, is a playful, goofy woman, with a heart of gold.

After Ryley all but licked her plate clean, she leaned back in her chair.

"That was hands down the best meal I've eaten." She breathed out.

"Now, we have to go grocery shopping," I said and she groaned.

"I just want to nap," I chuckled.

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"And then what would we eat tomorrow?" I asked her.

"I don't care. Let me enjoy my food coma. I only had cheese and cr**kers for dinner last night," she complained.

"What, why?" I questioned.

"First, I have two teenage boys eating and apparently you're starving that poor boy of yours. And second, I was too lazy to go anywhere," she shrugged.

"Why didn't you just come to the pack house?"

"Because last time I almost killed one of your pack members. And as much as that would have satisfied my wolf, I sighed a contract. Also, it wouldn't be setting a good example for Channing." she sighed, before taking a sip of her drink.

"I get it, but next time call me. Also, Aspen should be eating at home." I told her.

"I don't mind feeding him. I enjoy having him around. I just need to double up at the store, which I'll do Monday. And don't worry, I'll send you the bill at the end of the summer," she chuckled. I made a m**tal note to text Luca. If she's feeding my kid, I can at least have the house stocked. And I'll make sure it's stocked up every few days.

"Okay, well, I'm just going to let Jeremy know we are off," I told her, standing up from the table. I downed the rest of my whiskey before heading to the back, where his office is. I had to walk through the kitchen and I jumped, whipping around when I heard dishes hitting the sink. Ryley followed me with

our dishes.

“What are you doing?” I asked, watching her fill up the sink with water.

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“Cleaning up. It’s the least I can do after Jeremy cooked us lunch.”

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Chapter Twenty-Three

Ryley

There was no way I could leave the dirty dishes on the table. Jeremy was nice enough to cook us lunch and I knew Blake wouldn’t let me pay, so I’ll clean up the few dishes we used. I’m also one of those crazy people who enjoy washing dishes. And by the time both men came out of Jeremy’s office, I had cleaned up all our dishes and wiped down the surfaces. I also washed all the pots and pans.

“Ryley, thank you, but you didn’t have to,” Jeremy exclaimed.

“You cooked, and I know Blake would never let me pay, so I cleaned. It’s the least I could do. Everything was perfect.” I told him, smiling.

Jeremy gave Blake a smirk. They seemed to be having a private conversation. I watched as Blake went through a few facial expressions.

“Everything okay?” I asked, pulling their attention. Blake cleared his throat.

“Yes, but we should get going,” he said. I turned to the sink and quickly washed my hands. After I walked across the kitchen to where they were standing.

“It was nice to meet you,” I smiled, looking at Jeremy.

“You too, Ryley. Don’t be a stranger. And don’t put up with this guy’s cr*p,” he chuckled, punching Blake in the arm.

“Not with steak like that I won’t. And don’t worry about me. I know I

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Chapter Twenty Three

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could take him," I giggled.

"You two have fun," he called out as Blake led me out of the kitchen and through the dining room.

We were finally on our way to the grocery store. But all I wanted to do was take a nap. The lack of sleep has finally caught up with me. Blake parked and I covered up my yawn.

"Let's get this done," I mumbled, climbing out of the vehicle, with my list in hand.

"Can you grab a cart?" I asked Blake as we walked across the parking lot to the store.

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"And where would those be?" He asked, looking around.

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"Hold the list and I'll get the cart. Meet me in the produces section. We will start there." I told him. carts were in the section of the store after the first doors but before you enter the store. I grabbed a cart and walked into the store to find Blake waiting for me. He was not in the produce section. I was glad he was so tall, I could spot him from anywhere.

"I couldn't find it, he shrugged, walking beside me as I pushed the cart.

"Have you never been in this store? I asked him as we made our way over to the fresh fruits. This was the closest grocery store to the pack house.

"Uh, no," he confessed. I stopped in front of a section with different kinds of berries.

"But you have been grocery shopping before? I was looking over the containers before placing the ones I wanted in the cart. I looked up to find Blake in thought, his lips pressed together.

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Chapter Twenty-Three

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"You haven't, have you?" I gave him a pointed look.

"No, but in my defense, I never had to," he rushed out.

"I get it. I was seventeen when I first stepped foot into a grocery store. It's no big deal. Even though I find the thought of this being your first time hilarious. Like I popped your cherry," I chuckled.

"You're enjoying this, aren't you?" He sighed.

"So much. I would ask you to find the snacks, but I'm afraid I'd lose you," I teased.

“Funny,” he grumbled.

“Alright Mr. Alpha Grumpy, push the cart and hand me the list. And try not to get lost. I may have to get you a bell.” The look on Blake’s face had me pushing my lips together. I had tears in my eyes as I fought the urge to laugh. “A bell? I’m a grown-a*s man,” he scoffed and I lost it. I had to hold on to the side of the cart, I was laughing so hard. Thank g*d, I wasn’t wearing any mascara. Even Lily was laughing in my head.

“Are you done?” Blake huffed when I was finally calming down, wiping my eyes.

“No, but we need to get going,” I chuckled.

He was grumbling the entire trip around the store. I was about to call him a pouting princess.

After everything on the list and more was in the cart, we went to the checkout. It was then I noticed people were staring at us. I was lost in my time with Blake I didn’t notice anyone else. And then I started to hear the whispers.

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‘Why is she with the alpha? She’s a lone wolf.’

Probably trying to sleep her way into a pack.’

‘She’s so plain, he could do better.’

Their words hurt and they probably didn’t think I could hear as well as an alpha. My heart sank as their words pierced me. Usually, I wouldn’t care. I didn’t care about the b*tch in the dining room. Even though I can smell her on Blake. Not that it’s any of my business. But it still bothers me.

‘Just spending the alpha’s hard-earned money, gold digger.’

I gritted my teeth at that one. I pulled out my card and tapped it after the cashier gave us the total. Blake was loading the bags into the cart and I beat him to it.

“Ryley?” Blake questioned, raising an eyebrow. I took the receipt from the cashier and thanked her.

“This weekend is my treat.”

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Chapter Twenty-Four

Alpha Blake

Ryley’s mood changed as we stood in line to pay. I could hear the whispers of

my pack about the woman I was with. I gritted my teeth and held my tongue. I didn't want to embarrass Ryley. But I had a feeling she could hear them. And when she paid the bill, I was angry, not at her but at my pack who said she was a gold digger. The total was over eight hundred dollars and that was nothing to me. I may be an alpha but I am also a smart businessman. We walked out to the vehicle in silence, the opposite of how we were in the store. She teased me about getting lost and I may have been grumbling but I loved every minute of it. And I already missed the carefree Ryley. After everything was packed away in the back of her SUV, I beat her to the driver's side.

"Blake, I'm driving," she scoffed.

"Nope," was all I said, hopping in. I chuckled when I heard her growl before she stormed over to the passenger side. She slammed the door after she climbed in.

"You alright?" I asked her.

"Yep," she answered, typing an address into her GPS.

"We can get fuel here," she pointed at the map.

"Then, I'll drive to the cabin." She told me.

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"Sounds like a plan," I said before backing out of the parking stall.

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Chapter Twenty Four

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We were out of the city and my territory before I decided to question her. I knew she was upset. I could feel the tension coming off her in waves.

"Ryley, what's bothering you?" I reached over and placed a hand on her thigh.

"Yeah. It's just been a while since I've been called a gold digger," she sighed.

I kept my hand on her thigh and I was surprised she didn't remove it.

"You heard that? Is that why you paid? Because you didn't have to." I told her, glancing over at her. Our eyes met before I turned mine back to the road.

"That and others. But I am not a gold digger. I have paid back every cent that was given to me, with interest," she scuffed. I could tell money is a sore spot for her.

"And the other stuff?" I questioned. I was surprised she heard anything. I barely heard it.

"I'm used to hearing whispers from guys. Some women saying cr*p about me being too pretty or that I'm a stuck-up b**ch. Blah. I guess it's just easier living among humans. At least then, I wouldn't be called a gold-digging w**re,

sleeping her way to the Luna position.” I looked over at her quickly. She shrugged, looking out the window.

“You don’t seem like the kind of person to care what other people think?” I asked her.

“I don’t. I don’t know.” She stammered, not knowing what to say.

We went back to being silent. I understand her feelings, but I wonder if Channing’s father had anything to do with her hatred of alphas. There has to be more to it.

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Chapter Twenty Four

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“Maybe, she cares because she doesn’t want you to think of her that way. That’s why she paid. She doesn’t want you to think that she only invited you so you would pay,” Gunner commented.

“Does she think I would believe them? That I would think that?”

“They are members of our pack. And she isn’t. If it came down to it, we would have to believe them over her. That could be why she was so hesitant to be here with Channing,” I sighed because I knew he was right. But I would command my pack members if anything were to happen. Ryley isn’t a liar. She’ll tell you straight out that she’s not answering your questions.

“Gwen tried to lie, even after you told her about the video,” Gunner growled. I glanced over at Ryley, she was looking out the window. My hand was still resting on her thigh. I smiled, squeezing it to get her attention. She looked at my hand before meeting my eyes.

“Whatever they said was bu***hit and I should have put them in their place,” I told her.

“They are your pack members, Blake. You can’t be protecting a lone wolf over your members. To them, I’ll always be an outsider, and I prefer it that way,” she sighed.

“I hope one day, you’ll trust me enough to tell me your story. I know you were young when you had Channing. I can do the math. But whatever happened, I won’t judge.” I told her truthfully as I pulled into a fueling station.

We were about forty-five minutes from the cabin now. I parked before turning to face her. She seemed lost in thought as she bit her bottom lip. She let out a breath before looking at me.

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Chapter Twenty Four

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“My story isn’t a happy one. Frankly, it’s downright heartbreaking. The best thing in my life is Channing. Everything else can’t be changed.” I could see the pain in her eyes. Whatever she has gone through was life-changing. I didn’t push her for more. When she is ready, she’ll confide in me. I nodded before exiting the vehicle to pump the fuel.

I heard her exit the vehicle as I was paying at the pumps. I wasn’t going to let her pay. We were no longer in my pack, not that I cared. The pack has no right to pass judgment. And I’m the alpha. Who I spend my money on, is none of their business.

“Would you like anything?” She asked. I smiled as I started to fill the tank.

“I’m sure you have great-taste in snacks,” I told her and she chuckled.

“It’s the reason I have to run,” I chuckled as I watched her walk to the store.

F*ck, her a*s looks great in those jeans.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Ryley

I was well aware of Blake’s hand on my thigh. Oddly, I found it comforting. I know I shouldn’t let what the others say about me bother me, but it’s not them I’m worried about. I don’t want Blake to think I’m like that. I didn’t sleep my way to anywhere. I earned my job and everything I have. Walter has helped me financially but I paid him back for everything he has ever given me.

It’s a weird feeling. I never cared before. Not even about all the gossip around the office. But with Blake, I don’t want him to think I’m here for a position in his pack or to be his Luna. I’m here to work. And Channing just happens to be friends with the alpha’s son. And I’m not going to tell Channing who he can and can’t be friends with. Frankly, Aspen is a good kid. And Channing has a good judge of character.

“F*ck, them,” Lily growled in my head. I let out a sigh.

“Even Blake, Ryley. If that’s how he thinks of us, then f*ck him. You don’t need people like that in your life. You are a wonderful, caring person. You work hard, raise Channing alone and you still find time to help single moms. If he can’t see how amazing you are then he’s more st**id than he looks,” she ranted.

“Thank you,” my heart swelling with love.

“You’re welcome. Now I would like some chocolate.”

“I’ll go get you some,” I told my wolf.

I asked Blake if he wanted anything before heading inside. I almost

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Chapter Twenty Five

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complained about him paying for the fuel but I kept my mouth shut about it.

I entered the store, and a bell chimed above the door. I giggled as I remembered telling Blake he needed a bell, so I wouldn’t lose him in the store.

I moved around the store on a mission to find chips, sodas, and chocolate. I wasn’t paying attention to the other people in the store as I walked down a small aisle filled with candy and chocolate bars. I picked up a few bars before I heard a cat call whistle. I looked over to find three guys standing at the end of the aisle, watching me. I furrowed my brow before turning back to my mission.

“You’re a pretty, little thing, aren’t you?” One purred, moving closer.

“Not interested.” I said before walking over to a cooler to grab a couple of bottles of soda.

“Oh, don’t be like that honey. You don’t even know me. I could be the best thing that’s ever happened to you.” He followed me while I paid him no attention. This isn’t the first time this has happened and it won’t be the last.

“I doubt that,” I told him before grabbing a bag of chips. I then walked over to the cashier to pay.

“Why don’t I take you out back and show you how good it can be?” He whispered in my ear as I waited for the person in front of me to pay for their items. I felt dirty with his breath on my neck.

“Oh, how romantic? How could a girl refuse that,” I said sarcastically, rolling my eyes. The guy growled. The bell above the door rang and I heard Blake.

“Baby, there you are,” he came over to me. I stepped forward to put my

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Chapter Twenty Five

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items on the counter and Blake quickly stepped behind me, wrapping an arm around my waist. I could hear the guy grumbling behind me.

“Sorry, babe. I couldn’t decide what kind of chocolate I wanted,” I shrugged.

Blake rested his chin on my shoulder. The guy behind the counter was watching us and then he would look at the guys behind us. Blake was bigger

than all three of them and they were human. They didn't stand a chance, not that I needed Blake protecting me.

When the cashier said the total, Blake whipped out his black card and tapped it before I could tap mine. I looked over at him.

"My treat, baby." He kissed the side of my mouth. His lips barely touched mine but it was enough to cause my insides to tighten.

"Aren't you just the sweetest," I purred, kissing his cheek as he leaned over and grabbed the bag. His other hand interlaced with mine and he pulled me out of the store. I let out a breath when I was finally outside.

Men like that suck. Only stepping back when a big, strong man steps in. I could have killed all three of them without breaking a sweat.

"You okay?" Blake asked, squeezing my hand.

"Yeah. I'm used to sh*t like that," I told him and he growled.

"You shouldn't have to be used to that sh*t," his voice was low and threatening.

"You're right, but I could have taken them. But thank you for your help," I told him, squeezing his hand. He looked down at our interlaced hands before looking at me with a smile on his handsome face.

"Anytime."

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Chapter Twenty Five

"Oh that was so exciting," Lily purred.

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Posted by **Admin-U**, 1869 Views, Released on August 24, 2023

Chapter Twenty-Six

Alpha Blake

I entered the store ready to kill. I watched Ryley through the windows of the store as I pumped the fuel. And those f**kers were following her around, harassing her. It was a good thing they were human and they backed off as soon as I stepped between her and them. I smiled as they all were whispering s*it about me.

I could smell one of them on her neck and discreetly rubbed my cheek against her to cover up his scent with my own. Her smelling like another male, infuriated me.

"How do you think she felt with you smelling like Gwen when you told her

nothing was going on with you two?” Gunner growled.

“I should have changed,” I told him, frustrated with myself.

I wasn’t surprised when Ryley told me things like that happen often. She’s gorgeous. But she shouldn’t have to put up with it. No means no. And I instantly knew she was too good for any of them. These guys walked out behind us and I pulled her close. The game was over but I didn’t want to let her go.

“I’ll drive and you give me directions,” I leaned in and whispered. My eyes darted behind us to see those guys still watching.

I pulled back, and Ryley locked her eyes on mine. She let go of my hand and placed it on my chest. My heart rate increased under her touch. Every place Ryley touched was on fire.

“I’m not some passenger princess,” she smirked as she ran her hand over my chest. I fought the shiver that ran down my spine. Her eyes

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Chapter Twenty-Six

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never leave mine.

I could still feel their eyes on us. Too bad they were oblivious to the danger they were in. One quick move and the three of them would be lying dead in a pool of blood.

“How about just for today?” I leaned down and mumbled against her cheek.

Her breathing became harsh, as her heart rate increased. I was enjoying having this effort of her. She may not want me but her body sure does.

“Fine,” she sighed. I pulled her into my side, wrapping an arm-around her waist. I lead her over to the vehicle with her pulled against my side. I opened the passenger side door and helped her in before closing the door for her. Gunner scuffed when I noticed the guys still watching from a beat-up old pickup truck. If they follow, it would be my pleasure to rip those f**kers apart. I climbed behind the wheel and passed the bag to Ryley.

“Thanks for that,” she smiled as she placed the soda bottles in the cup holders between us.

“There’s no need to thank me. If they were wolves I would have ripped them apart,” I growled and she chuckled. I looked over at her after I started the vehicle.

“What?” I asked her, unsure about her reaction.

“Nothing. But that could have started a war,” she answered, shaking her head.

“Well, then they would learn not to do s*it like that again. Regardless, they

shouldn't be treating anyone like that. And an alpha who would defend their actions doesn't deserve to be alpha," I told her, her stormy grey eyes locked with mine.

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"I may have pegged you all wrong," she shrugged.

"How so?" I asked, turning my focus to the road ahead. I pulled out of the fuel station, Ryley pointing to make a left turn back onto the main road.

"You're not as stu**d as you look," she smirked.

"I'll take that as a compliment, coming from you," I chuckled.

"It was meant as one, Blake. For an alpha, you're a pretty decent one," she said.

"I hope one day, you'll enlighten me on your hatred for alphas," I shrugged before glancing at her for a moment.

"I don't hate all alphas. I just don't trust them. And I have my reasons. My biggest is Channing." She sighed. She grabbed the bag of chips. Opening the bag, she offered me the first hand full.

"And you trust me?" I questioned, eating the chips.

"I guess I do. I don't have a reason not to trust you. Do I? It's just hard to let people in when you've been on your own for so long. Every wolf I meet tries to push me to join a pack, but I haven't felt the need for one since I had Channing. It's better if it's just me and Channing."

"But what if you could stay in a pack, but not join?" I asked her, I could feel her eyes burning a hole in the side of my head.

"I don't understand. No alpha would risk his pack for a lone wolf and her son. And then I would always be an outcast. Living with the humans, at least no one knows I'm different. No one knows Channing is different. It's easier to hide within the cities of humans." She answered. She changed the subject to directions, as I turned down a dirt road. She's hiding from someone. That's why she won't join a

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pack. She's afraid her ex will find her and Channing

We sat in silence as we ate the chips. The road, if you could call it that was bumpy and we were bouncing around in our seats. The forest was dense, and the road became more of a path the further we ventured forward.

"I can see why you didn't want Channing to drive his car." I grumbled. my teeth chattering from the bumps.

“Yeah, it’s a little rough.” She giggled.
“A little? I’m fearful for my truck,” I chuckled.
“Is that not what a truck is for?”
“You clearly haven’t seen my son drive.”

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Riley

When I told Blake I didn’t hate all alphas, I wasn’t lying. There’s something different about Blake. Maybe my opinion will change when I see him running his pack. But personally, he seems like a good guy. And I like Aspen. He’s a sweet, respectful, young man and I enjoy having him around the house. Even when Channing is in his room doing schoolwork, we keep each other company.

When the cabin came into view, I was in awe. Every time I come out here, it’s like coming home. This place feels like home. And if we didn’t have so much in the city, I would have moved us out here.

Walter had everything updated a few years ago, so we have wifi, a new hot water tank, and a well drilled for water. The cabin was mostly gutted and everything was upgraded. The outside is made of large cedar logs, that are at least fifty years old and solid. There are two bedrooms and one bathroom. The kitchen, living room, and dining room are one room and the bedrooms are located at the back. A large covered porch wraps around the entire cabin with a great view of the lake behind the house.

Walter not only owns the cabin but forty acres of land surrounding it. The land that borders with the pack is fenced. It’s the real reason the pack doesn’t bother us.

“This place is beautiful,” Blake breathed out, parking in front of the cabin.

“It’s my favorite place. I spend as much time as I can up here. It’s even more beautiful at night under the stars.” I told him.

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Chapter Twenty Seven

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“We’ll have to stay up so you can show me,” he said and I looked at him.

“I could keep you up for days with stories of the constellations.” I chuckled.

“Is that bad?” He asked, confused.

“I guess that depends on you,” I said, shaking my head.

“Let’s get everything unpacked,” I chuckled, climbing out of the vehicle. I

closed the door and took in a deep breath. The air just smells different around here. The weight of my responsibilities doesn't feel overwhelming.

"You okay?" Blake called out. He was looking at me from around the back of the SUV. He was gathering some of the bags.

"Just enjoying the fresh air," I told him.

"Can

you get the door? Then you can go back to the fresh air and I'll bring everything inside," he said.

"I could probably get the door but you have my keys," before I got the words out, he had tossed the keys to me and I barely caught them.

"A heads up would have been nice," I scoffed, walking to the front door.

"Just keeping you on your toes," he chuckled, following behind me. He was carrying most of the bags, from our grocery shopping.

"Trying to make one trip?" I furrowed my brow as he shrugged. I unlocked the door and pushed it open for him.

"I tried but I couldn't carry the cooler and the bags," he huffed, causing

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Chapter Twenty Seven

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me to giggle.

"I'll grab the rest of the bags and you get the cooler."

When everything was put away and I had texted the boys. Blake and I were sitting out back on the porch watching the sun dip behind the tree line. We both had a mug of coffee, a cool breeze blowing, despite it being summer. The weather was always cooler up here.

We sat in comfortable silence. I've only ever had Channing with me. This having a male friend was new to me. I have work friends, but never someone I would hang out with over a weekend. I would rather spend my time with Channing. I missed more of his childhood than I would like to admit.

"But that kiss? Can he be more like a friend with benefits?" Lily purred.

"It was a peck at most, Lily. Don't get ahead of yourself," I told her.

"Then why did he scent you?" She questioned.

"Scent me? What are you talking about? We were playing, acting if you will."

"Ryley, Blake rubbed his scent over the other guy's scent. He didn't like us smelling like another male." She giggled, excitedly and I rolled my eyes.

"Then why was he smelling like someone else? I'm sorry, Lily, but you are reading this all wrong. And I don't play that game. I won't be with someone who is out playing the field." I sighed and she let out a whimper. Guilt twisted my stomach.

“I know you crave a mate, Lily. And I’m sorry. I’m sorry I can never be with the wolf you were destined to be with. Maybe we can find

Chapter Twenty-Seven

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someone after Channing is in college. But I can never be a Luna. And I’m sorry, you’re stuck with me.” I told her.

“Okay,” she whispered, retreating.

I know the years without her mate has been weighing on her. But he has already claimed another. It took him a week to get over me and claim someone else. She wasn’t his fated because I was. And even if he hadn’t claimed another, I would never be able to forgive him for what he did to me. What he put me through. He broke me and it almost cost me my life. It should have. And being with anyone scares me. This time I have more to lose than before. I have Channing. And I don’t know if I could ever give myself over to another again.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

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Chapter Twenty-Eight

Alpha Blake

Sitting outside with Ryley, watching the sunset, felt right. It felt natural. Like it’s always been us. Nothing was awkward as we sat in silence, sipping our coffees. The only thing that would make this better, is if she was sitting in my lap, wrapped in my arms. And our boys were here.

“How would you play with Ryley if the boys were here?” Gunner questioned.

“Not everything is about sex, Gunner. Yes, I want that, but with the boys here it would feel like we are a family.” I explained.

“Family? That’s a nice idea, Blake. We were only a family for a few days after Aspen was born. And Aspen deserves to have a family. But how are you going to convince Ryley to join our pack? Whoever Channing’s father is, she is terrified to have him find them,” Gunner pointed out.

I knew all of this. I wish she would trust me enough to keep her safe. To keep them both safe. I don’t just want Ryley for a night. I would make her my Luna tomorrow if she would allow it. The thought of anything happening to either of them has my heart twisting painfully. And I can’t keep them safe if they leave at the end of the summer.

“Blake, can I ask you something?” Ryley’s voice pulled me from my thoughts. I looked over at her, her eyes on the sky. The stars were slowly coming out.

“Sure,” I breathed out.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

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"Can you tell me about Luna Mia? Aspen likes to tell me stories he has heard about her," she asked. A small smile on her lips, when she turned to look at me.

"I met Mia when Luca and I went to a party one night. She had just turned eighteen. She wasn't from an alpha family but I didn't care. She was kind and loving. We were mated for almost three years when she finally conceived. I didn't know about her blood disorder until she was almost due to give birth. If I had known, I never would have allowed her to become pregnant." I stopped to take a deep breath. Replaying the day she told me was devastating. I was so excited to be a father until it could cost me, my mate. I jumped when Ryley placed her hand on mine.

"She wanted you to always have a piece of her. She knew how important it was for an alpha to have an heir. It wasn't about the cost of her life, it was about making you happy." She gave me a small smile.

"After she gave birth to Aspen. We thought she was in the clear. I was so thankful to have both of them alive," my voice cracked, as emotions from that day came rushing back. I looked up at the sky.

"What I didn't know was she was bleeding internally. It was slow and the doctors overlooked it until it was too late. Aspen was three days old," I finished, taking deep breaths to calm my racing heart.

"I'm sorry, Blake. Truly." She whispered. I looked over at her, her eyes were glossy with unshed tears.

"Aspen told me some of the wonderful things Mia did for the pack. She was an amazing Luna and you should be proud. She didn't have to be a Luna wolf to be a great leader and mother." She told me and I almost broke. Ryley cares about my mate and Aspen's mother. It's strange to me. Most women don't want to hear about that part of my life. About me loving another woman.

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Chapter Twenty-Eight

"Did your mate die?" I asked her and it was her turn to sigh.

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"No, he claimed another. Not that it matters. He never knew I was his mate. And I was s**pid enough to believe his lies. He doesn't know about Channing and I'm sure he thinks I'm dead." She shrugged.

"I don't understand. Did you leave your pack because he claimed another?" I asked her.

"No. I was forced to leave-before-that. I was already pregnant with Channing but didn't know. But I would have left anyways. There was no way I could stay after his betrayal." She confessed.

“Is that why you won’t join a pack? You’re afraid he will find you and Channing?” I questioned.

“I’m not afraid of him. I could kill him. I do worry about Channing. No matter how much I think he is a complete waste of a wolf, he is still Channing’s father. I didn’t join a pack because I don’t want to be told what I can and cannot do with my life. My entire life was mapped out for me and then it was gone. I did everything almost all alone and I’m not willing to give up that freedom. I can’t afford to be weak and Channing will always come first.” Ryley said.

“For the record, Ryley, you aren’t weak. And this guy may have been your mate but he was an idiot to think he could replace a woman like you. I may not know the details, but I do know that. And you raising a child on your own at seventeen, makes you the strongest person I know.” I told her and every word I spoke was the truth. I could see in her stormy grey eyes, how much he broke her. Talking about him hurts.

I stood up from my chair and walked back into the cabin. I could hear Ryley mumbling under her breath. But I wasn’t leaving. I came back with a blanket over my arm and I held my hand out for hers. She

Chapter Twenty-Eight

furrowed her brow before placing her hand in mine.

“I think it’s dark enough for my first constellation lesson.”

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Chapter Twenty-Nine

Alpha Blake

When I opened my eyes, the morning light was just starting to peek through the curtains. We did get to bed late and no amount of persistence would change Ryley’s mind about me taking her room. She insisted that she was smaller so she would take a smaller bed. Maybe I could have convinced her to share her bed with me if the boys were here. We did share a blanket under the stairs. And I honestly could have listened to her talk all night. The way she spoke about something so passionate was se*y as hell. And I could never tire of hearing her voice.

I knew it was early but I couldn’t go back to sleep. I wanted Ryley. There’s no doubt about that. She gives me this peace I haven’t felt since I found Mia. Being around her just feels right.

I got out of bed to go for a run. I needed to wear off some of this energy. I listened before exiting the bedroom, wearing a pair of shorts. Ryley must not be up yet. I walked over to the dining table and picked up my phone. Luca had

texted me to let me know the boys had made it to training. Even if they were both a little hung over. They just had to get through training the younger kids and then they would be on their way here. I was excited to go with them fishing. I didn't know this Walter but I'm sure if Ryley trusts him, he has to be a decent man.

I grabbed Ryley's keys, locking the door behind me. The cool morning air was crisp and goosebumps covered my body as I started my jog at the back of the cabin. This was the kind of peace I needed this morning. The forest was just waking as the sun rises above the trees. I can see why this was Ryley's favorite place. The orange sun hitting the lake looked magical. It was almost as good as the stars last night.

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Chapter Twenty-Nine

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"The stars would have been better with Ryley snuggled into us." Gunner purred. He's been purring like a kitten since last night.

"It would have been but I don't want to push her. I was lucky she opened up as much as she did. Now we know that her ex isn't dead and he claimed another." I told him:

"F**ken m**on. Clearly, he didn't have eyes." Gunner scoffed and I chuckled.

"No kidding. Ryley walks into a room and demands everyone's attention. And he used her and threw her away like she was nothing." I growled. The thought of her mate of all people doing that to her, makes my blood boil.

"Maybe we can track him down. If she's a powerful wolf, he would be as well. She can resist our command being a lone wolf and we have one of the most powerful packs. We are one of the most powerful alphas and she can fight us. She can beat our beta. There's no doubt she was raised by alphas." Gunner said.

"I agree. But I can't track down that f*cker, I will kill him. I will kill him for hurting her and abandoning Channing." I told him.

I ran faster as I tried to rid my body of the anger I was feeling. I wanted blood for what he did to her. For what he put Channing through.

I came to a halt when a chained link fence crossed my path. As soon as I stopped and sniffed the air, I knew it lined the border of the Shadow Moon pack. I couldn't see wolves but I could smell them. I wonder if this is why they never bothered her and Channing, the fence. Before the wolves on patrol could scent me, I turned around and ran back to the cabin. I'm glad the fence was there but it wouldn't stop the wolves from attacking. Having Ryley and Channing this close to a pack, unprotected, makes me nervous. I'm going to

have to call the alpha and

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Chapter Twenty-Nine

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make it clear that this land is under my protection.

“And how do you think Ryley will react to having you silently protecting her?”

Gunner chuckled.

“I know, but if it protects Channing then I think she’ll accept it. And I want them both safe. Channing would be devastated if anything happened to his mother.”

I told him.

“I think the way to Ryley’s heart is through Channing. You win him over and she will soon follow. And then we can be a family,” Gunner purred. A family seems foreign to me. I grew up with wonderful parents but the family I craved to have with Mia was stolen. And When I thought I could have something like that again, I realized all they wanted was to be Luna. They didn’t love me or Aspen.

Ryley already puts Aspen above me. She welcomed him into her life without question. She could be the one we need to make a whole family possible. To become a blended family. Most alphas would never raise another man’s child but Channing made Ryley who she is today. He is a part of her and I want all of her.

I unlocked the door to the cabin. I was drenched in sweat and my mind was racing with the possibility of us being a family. Ryley was still asleep when I turned the coffee on before having a quick shower. The possibility of us being a family made me more determined than ever to win Ryley’s heart.

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Posted by **Admin-U**, ? Views, Released on August 25, 2023

Chapter Thirty

Ryley

I awake to the birds chirping, after leaving the window open last night. I always preferred sleeping when it was cooler. And the fresh cool air helps me sleep more soundly. I was sleeping in Channing’s room after finally convincing Blake to take my bed. I realized with the boys growing, I will have to get bigger beds. I may also need to talk with Walter about the extension we always talked about. Another bed and bathroom would be nice. When the boys come back from fishing this evening. I’ll have to talk to him about it.

I stretched before throwing back the blanket. I shivered as the cool air hit my skin, causing goosebumps to cover my body. I quickly pulled on a sweatshirt

and a pair of leggings before pulling on a warm pair of socks. By mid-morning I'll be changing into something cooler but the mornings are always so crisp. I walked out of the room to find Blake drinking his coffee. His still-damp hair told me he had showered. I shivered at his lack of clothing, just in shorts and a tee. It's too cold in here for that. He was looking down at his phone when I approached the counter to pour myself a coffee.

"Good morning," I sang out.

"Good morning, Ryley. Luca informed me the boys made it to training. Even though he said they were a little hung over." Blake said and I chuckled,

"Good. Maybe they will learn." I sat down across from him.

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Chapter Thirty

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"They are boys. They are not going to learn." He chuckled.

"That's true. I'm sure you still get drunk, even though you feel like s*it the next day." I smirked and he laughed.

"That's true. We really don't learn." And that made me laugh.

"At least you own it." I chuckled before taking a sip of my coffee. I let out a small moan as the coffee touched my tongue.

"Good?" He chuckled.

"So, good." I breathed out.

"Did I earn my keep?" He smirked.

"I guess so, but I wouldn't say no to pancakes." I shrugged.

"And bacon?"

"Oh, and bacon," I exclaimed.

After breakfast, and the kitchen was cleaned up it was time to relax before the boys arrived. Channing had texted me to let me know they were leaving the pack. They should be here soon and so will Walter. He's excited to take the boys out fishing. Then I'll have the afternoon to myself.

Former Beta Walter

I pulled my truck up to the front of my cabin. Being here is bittersweet. This was my mate's favorite place. I built this place for her when we were first mated. But ever since her death, our boys don't like to come out here. The three of them were grown when their mother was killed. But they still refuse to have anything to do with things she once loved. They grew up coming here and now they are always too busy. Or

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Chapter Thirty

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maybe it's their resentment towards me that keeps them away. They made it clear they don't like my relationship with Ryley. But I wasn't just going to let her die. My mate, their mother, wouldn't have let her die. She would have taken her in with open arms.

They never saw it that way. Always believing she was playing me for money. But if they would get to know Ryley, they would know that's not the case. She needed my help and I gave it. She's the daughter I never had. And Channing is my grandson. Blood doesn't matter. I was there when that boy was born. My own blood may have shut me out, but Ryley never would.

She was the light I needed just like I was hers. We were both broken and we managed to come together. And now I was nervous about meeting the man Ryley was bringing up here this weekend. Ryley isn't my blood but I'd kill anyone who hurts her and Channing. She has never brought anyone up here before. I knew she was working in a pack for her firm but I know Ryley has a hard time trusting wolves. With good reason.

I exited my truck just as one was pulling up. Looking through the windshield, I could see Channing in the passenger seat. But it was the driver of the truck that confused me. Future Alpha Aspen of the Orion pack. Was Ryley getting involved with an alpha?

"Grandad," Channing exclaimed, exiting the truck.

"Channing. Look how much you've grown." I told him, hugging my not-so-small grandson. I knew his father was an alpha and it shows. He's as big as Aspen.

"Grandad, I'd like you to meet Aspen," Channing said.

"Beta Walter, it's good to see you again," Aspen said shaking my hand.

"Wait, you know each other?" Channing questioned.

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"I know most of the alphas and future alphas." I chuckled.

"That makes sense. Sometimes I forgot you used to run a pack," Channing shrugged.

"Is Alpha Blake here?" I asked.

"He drove up with Mom yesterday," Channing told me. Yep, I'm going to have to kill an alpha today, I thought as we approached the house. I threw my arm out and stopped the boys when I heard a commotion coming from the inside of the house.

"Grandad?" I shushed them.

“F*ck, Ryley, at least give me a chance to recover!” I heard a male voice. Both the boys started to snicker as I let out a low growl.

“Have to be faster than that, alpha,” I heard Ryley. I heard a few pops and Ryley laughing.

“How the hell did you get all the balls?” The male yelled.

“Oh g*d d**mit,” he growled before the front door bust open and Ryley ran out. She was laughing as she ran off the porch and hid down low. She didn’t notice we were watching. She had one of those foam ball air guns. She and Channing used to play with them.

“Ryley, I swear,” Alpha Blake growled coming out of the cabin. He stopped in the doorway when he spotted us.

“Beta Walter,” he said and his distraction cost him a foam ball to the forehead. The boys started laughing, as I held in my snickers. Ryley has always had good aim.

Alpha Blake held up a finger, indicating to give him a second. He also had an air gun as he stalked over to look over the railing of the porch.

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Chapter Thirty

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He let out a growl but before he could jump over the railing onto the ground, Ryley squealed before running to the back of the cabin. The alpha took off after her and I just shook my head. Ryley let out a yip and I knew he got her.

“F*ck, Blake. That was my a*s check.” She yelled and the boys were crying from laughter beside me.

“Come on, you two. Let’s get ready to go fishing.”

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