

Chapter Six

Future Beta Nate

As soon as Ayla mentioned getting on her knees, I couldn't hold Duke back any longer. Rushing out of the house, I barely made it to the bottom of the stairs of the porch before Duke forced me to shift. I couldn't focus on anything as Duke ran at speeds I'd never experienced before.

We were both furious at what our mate was telling us. How the hell could our alpha, her father, let her go through all of that? To not even claim her as his. I understand she doesn't have a wolf and it would be a lot to explain, but she had no one and he left her. I couldn't wrap my head around any of it.

It wasn't until we saw our alpha's wolf did Duke let out a murderous growl. He was ready to kill his alpha for the suffering of our mate.

There was nothing I could do to stop Duke as he slammed into the alpha, biting into his shoulder. I couldn't believe this was actually happening as Duke had the alpha pinned down, his mouth lling up with the alpha's blood.

"Nate, let go!" The alpha demanded through the link, but Duke just bit down harder. I could feel his aura pushing against me, but Duke refused to submit to this alpha any longer.

"I understand you're pissed, Nate, but do you really want to kill me?" Atlas' voice was in my head.

Duke huffed, shaking his head. He let go of the alpha. Killing the alpha would hurt the luna, their daughter and their unborn child. I wanted to challenge him, but I didn't want to kill him. And he was still my father's best friend, and Ayla's father.

We both shifted, and I could now see the damage I inflicted on my alpha. Guilt churned my stomach as I helped him to stand. I knew Duke, and I was pissed, but he was still my alpha.

"Don't feel guilty. I would have done the same." Alpha Atlas winced.

"Why the hell would you abandon her?" I growled, and he sighed.

"I thought she would be safer there than here. And I also didn't want to have to explain all of this to Thea." He told me.

"Then explain this to me, because I don't understand how you could just leave your family. Did you not love her mother?" I asked him. He was still bleeding, and we were in the middle of the forest in our pack. We found a log and sat down. He seemed uncaring of the bite Duke had just given him.

"Of course, I loved her mother. Her death devastated me. But how was I going to bring Ayla into this world when she belongs to another? I thought I was protecting her." He told me.

"Why didn't you claim her mother and bring her here as your luna?" I asked him.

"Because she was in hiding. After Ayla was born, I wanted to bring them both here, but Melody refused. She believed her family would find her and force her to leave Ayla behind," he explained.

"Then why do you hate Ayla so much?" I asked him and he let out a breath.

"Over the years, I grew resentful of her. I wanted to be with Melody, but she always refused, her excuse was always Ayla. And then, when she didn't develop a wolf, it grew worse. I thought pushing her away was the best for both of us. We could both move on after her mother's death." He told me.

"You need to speak to her and explain everything. Including being a wolf. With or without a wolf, she is still your daughter and my mate. And Duke will never reject her," I told him.

"I'm not forcing her to stay or to accept you. I won't stand in your way if you want to leave to be with her, but she can't stay here." He told me, standing up. He shifted and took off, leaving me sitting on the log.

"What the f**k?" I said out loud. Duke shifted, and we ran for home.

"I'm not rejecting her," Duke growled.

"What the f**k do you want to do, then? Give up everything? Move to another pack or become a lone wolf?" I growled out, frustrated with this entire situation.

It wasn't until we got home did my heart break. Ayla's SUV was no longer in the driveway. Shifting back, I ran into the house to find my parents and the former alpha and luna talking with Luna Thea.

"Where is she?" I yelled out, uncaring that I was naked.

"Son, why are you covered in blood?" My father asked me, throwing me a blanket from the couch and I wrapped it around my waist.

"Duke bit the alpha. Now where is she?" I asked again.

"Nate, Ayla headed back to the city," Luna Thea said.

"Why?" I breathed out.

"Nate, honey, Ayla has been through so much, and she needs some time to process all of this." My mother told me.

"But she doesn't know. What if she never comes back?" I yelled.

"Do you believe she didn't feel the bond?" Luna Thea asked, and I shrugged.

"I believe she did." My mother answered.

"Wait, what?" I breathed out.

"Nate, I have eyes. I could see how she was looking at you. She will reach out when she is ready to face all of this again. She just lost her home that she worked so hard for. Give her some space and she will be back." My mother said.

"It's true, Nate. Even on the porch, I could see how she was looking at you." Former Luna Claire said.

"Nate, she thinks you're hot. She'll be back to get a piece." Ruby called out from the kitchen. I pushed my lips in a line and headed up the stairs to shower.

I was feeling anxious about being away from my mate and not being able to protect her. She has already been through so much, and I just want to hold her and take all her pain away. I don't think I'll ever understand why the alpha did what he did. Even if the child was the reason I couldn't be with their mother, I would never abandon my child. I'm not sure how I would have handled that situation, but I know I would never abandon my child.

Sighing, I rushed my shower. When I was done, I wrapped a towel around my waist before heading into my room. Without even drying off, I just opped on the bed, staring up at the ceiling.

"Duke, what are we going to do?" I asked him.

"We could go to the city and hunt her down." He whined, and I sighed.

"The city is massive and we know she won't be at her house. We don't even know where she works," I told him.

A knock on my door pulled me from my conversation with my wolf. Fixing my towel and sitting up, I called out for the person to enter. My mom entered and sat beside me on the bed.

"Nate, I know this is hard. But I have faith that she will come back." She told me.

"I just never thought that meeting my mate would be this hard." I told her.

"Those worth fighting for are never easy, Nate. But I know she will be back to claim you. And in the meantime, you can always call her." My mother said, and I looked at her. She handed me a piece of paper, and opening it, I found a number.

"Jim has her number. We all want you to be happy, even if it means you leave the pack," she said. She kissed my forehead before leaving my room.

Getting up, I pulled on a pair of boxers before finding my phone. I didn't really need to have it on me before because I could just mindlink with the pack. I would only take it with me if we went into the city. Finding it, it was dead, and I plugged it in before getting dressed.

"Dude, get the f**k out here!" Mitch was in my head.

"What do you want?" I asked him.

"Max and I are waiting outside. Get out here!" He said before closing the link.

Cursing, I rushed getting dressed and made my way downstairs. I don't want to see or speak with anyone right now. Walking outside, I found them sitting on the porch, waiting for me. It felt like a lifetime ago I was sitting here with Ayla, even though it had only been a few hours.

"Nate, did you challenge the alpha?" Mitch rushed out, standing from his seat.

"Not a challenge." I answered, leaning against the railing. He came over to stand beside me.

"What is going on with your mate? Have you claimed her?" Max asked me and I sighed.

"I'm waiting for my phone to charge so I can call her. She left before Duke and I returned from our run," I told them.

"Why did you go for a run?" Mitch asked me.

"She was talking about the abuse she suffered in foster care and Duke lost it." I answered them.

"f**k, man. That sucks." Mitch said.

"What did the alpha say?" Max asked me.

"He said that I could leave and claim her, but she isn't welcome here." I answered, and they both cursed.

"So, are you going to leave?" Mitch asked me, and I sighed.

"I want to be with her, but I don't know about leaving. I don't know what I'm going to do. I just want to see her." I told them, sounding defeated. I wanted my mate, but now that I would have to leave the pack, I wasn't sure what I was going to do.

The former Alpha, Jim, came out of the house and sat down in the chair beside Max. Unprepared for what he had to tell me.

"Nate, my oldest son, has a pack. He took over for his father-in-law and I handed my pack to Atlas. It's a coastal pack and has already agreed to take in you and his niece."

"What?" I stuttered out.

"I'm just giving you the option. I'm not sure why Atlas doesn't want to have her here, but Claire and I want to know our granddaughter." He told me.

"Nate, you would give up your position?" Mitch said, and I sighed.

"I don't care what position I'm in, as long as Ayla is there." I told them.

"Nate, you are ready to throw away everything that you have worked for, for a mate who can never claim you?" Mitch exclaimed, and I almost punched him in the face. I was holding Duke back, trying not to let him shift.

"I was born into the position of beta. I never earned it." I growled out, storming into the house and up to my room.

Finding my phone, it charged enough to be turned on. Waiting for it to power up, I was feeling anxious about speaking with her. How was I going to explain any of this to her? How was I going to even introduce her to Duke?

"She likes dogs. I'm more worried about her loving you than about me. I'm cute and uffy." Duke snickered in my head.

"Thanks, I'm so glad we are a team." I told him, rolling my eyes.

"What, you know it's true?" He exclaimed as I typed her number into my phone. I texted her. I'm not sure why, but I was feeling even more anxious about hearing her voice.

Me: Hi Ayla, it's Nate. Jim gave me your number. How are you?

"Really, Nate? That was lame. At least send her a d**k pic." Duke said in my head.

"Oh, now who needs me?" I asked him and he growled.

"Just your d**k. I'm enough on my own." He huffed.

"So, how are you going to call her or text her? You need me, asshole." I huffed, shaking my head.

"Fine, but if you f**k this up, I'll kill you myself." He growled, retreating to the back of my mind.

What the hell did I do to deserve such a supportive wolf?

Watching and waiting for her to text back, the message nally said read. I was growing anxious as I waited for her to respond. I was going over everything in my head. Did I overstep? Was I too forward with her? Maybe she wasn't ready? She had just broken up with her boyfriend.

She never messaged back, so I sent her another text.

Me: can you at least let me know you are alright?

As soon as I sent the text, the message read undelivered. Did she block my number? I tried calling her and it said that the person I was trying to reach was no longer available.

"What the f**k?" I growled out, throwing my phone across my room.

I can't believe she would block my number without saying anything. Whatever my mom and Luna Claire saw must have been nothing. She didn't feel the bond and I just let her go.

"Nate, rogues to the north again. Go find them." Alpha Atlas said in my head.

The distraction and the chance to rip something apart made me happy. I was furious and I don't know if it was at her or myself. I should never have let her leave.

"On it, Alpha." I answered him. Leaving the house, I was on a mission to kill something. I didn't even care about my clothes. As soon as I stepped out of the house, Duke shifted.

Duke let out a howl before taking off to find his kill. Finding the others first, we took off to the area where I first saw Ayla. The memory of her angered me and Duke took away from the group.

"Nate, what's wrong?" Max said in my mind.

"I don't want to fucken talk about it. Just find the rogues." I growled at him.

How the f**k can this be happening?