

Tereshan

I'm not surprised Alpha Keegan punched me, I slept with his mate. Neither of us knew that we'd find our mates and in truth, it took three timelines for Keegan to find his second chance mate. If it hadn't been for everything that had happened, I'd be dead and he most likely would never have found Zoey.

From the corner of my eye, I see both Dane and Jesiah start to stand, the rest of the pack on alert, ready to fight.

What does surprise me is Damara's instant response.

She snarls and even though he doesn't move, Claire smacks him open-handed on his chest.

"Touch MY mate again, Alpha and I'll kill YOU." She says and it's a vicious growl that echoes around the room. Of course, the pack loves drama and wants to see what's going to happen.

I pull Claire back, secretly pleased that she's claiming me as her mate so publicly. But I need to make sure that Keegan has no intention of retaliating against her assault. Instead, he scrubs his hands over his face.

"Is there somewhere we can talk? Privately?" He asks.

"Follow me, Alpha." I say, taking Claire's hand and walking back to the library that is no longer a library. I sigh. Everywhere I turn, we have work to do all over again.

"We'll rebuild it, Tereshan." Claire says quietly. I look down at her.

'Can you hear my thoughts, Claire?' I ask her. I hadn't opened my mind link to her.

'Your emotions are very strong. It probably makes it easier for me to hear your thoughts.' She says as we enter the library, or what is currently a messy storage room.

I gesture Alpha Keegan to enter ahead of us and just as I'm about to enter the room, Feena comes running up with a bowl of water and a washcloth.

"Thank you, Feena." Claire says, walking into the room and gesturing for me to sit.

"Alpha Keegan, have a seat." Claire says to him.

"I can't. Don't you understand? After she told me how she woke up yesterday morning, after the night she had..." He grits his teeth, clenching his fists. I know he's angry. I would be too. The thought of Claire having been with another man makes me not only want to punch someone, it makes me want to kill them.

"I understand very well, Alpha. Have a seat." My mate says, and there is no room for argument in her tone. She's in Alpha mode. She may not have the aura back yet, but she will.

'Her aura is stronger than it was yesterday.' Magnor says.

'Yes. Imagine what it will be when we finally mark her.'

Keegan's eyes go wide. He felt the difference in her aura from last night to today. He looks at her neck, then at mine.

"She marked me, but I need to gain her trust, just as I'm sure you and your mate have to earn each other's trust." I say to him, pulling my shirt from my neck to show him my mark.

"You marked him? Knowing what happened?" Keegan asks Claire.

I sit, resetting my broken nose back into position. It has already stopped bleeding, but I have blood drying on my nose and mouth.

Claire looks at Keegan a long moment. "I gave your mate sanctuary, a safe place to live, knowing what happened. I'm pretty sure that if I can look past what happened, you can too." She says, staring him down until he sits.

When he does, she comes to me and begins cleaning the blood off my face.

"I can do that." I say quietly, reaching to take the washcloth from her hand.

"Sit still." She says, scolding me. So, I sit back and let her take care of me.

Keegan scrubs his face, his hands going into his hair, making it stand on end. The man has had a rough night.

"All I ever wanted was my mate. It took several years, but when I found her, she was worth the wait. I thought I was on top of the world. I was an arrogant, cocky bastard." He looks up at me. "A lot like you, actually."

I frown at that, it's not the image I have of Keegan.

He looks up at us. "We got pregnant almost immediately and I knew I was blessed by the Moon Goddess. I had my mate, I had my heir. I was special, I was the King of Alphas. No one had a better life than me. I had everything."

He leans forward, sliding his hands into his hair and gripping it tightly. Claire stops cleaning my face to look at him.

"And then, she died in childbirth. I lost my mate and my son all at one time. I barely had her in my life for six months and she was gone. And I knew, the Moon Goddess was teaching me a lesson. A lesson in humility. She brought me to my knees and then watched to see if I would pick myself up and become a better Alpha."

Well, fuck if this story doesn't sound familiar.

"And so, I changed my ways. I changed how I treated my pack members. I even changed the pack from a group of warriors to a group of farmers. And I waited and I hoped that the Moon Goddess would see that I was a better man, deserving of a mate."

He looks up at me, pain in his eyes. "And imagine when I finally find her, nearly a decade later, she was in the bed of another Alpha, one nearly half my age, that morning." He says, his eyes closing, fighting the anger and hurt of that knowledge.

"Alpha Keegan, I know you probably won't believe me, but I have to tell you, when it comes to being humbled by the Moon Goddess, I definitely understand." I say to him as

Claire finishes wiping the blood off my face.

"How could you?" He asks me and I look at Claire. She nods her head softly.

"Alpha, I'm going to tell you an incredible story. It won't sound real, but believe me, it is."

I tell him about the last two years. I tell him that Magnor made a deal with the Moon Goddess and then Claire speaks up to say that Damara did the same.

"It's the only reason I'm alive. And in truth Alpha, I didn't know enough to ask the right questions in the first two timelines. To my knowledge, you never met your second chance mate in those timelines. It's only because Claire and I have finally come together, or are at least coming together in this timeline, that I have a chance with my mate, and you now have a chance with yours."

I pull Claire to my side, hugging her to me. "I would suggest that you not waste this year, Alpha. I have no idea if we'll survive it again. I plan to. I plan to fight with everything in me to make sure that both Claire and I survive. But if we don't, I don't know what that means for you and Zoey."

Keegan assesses me for a moment. He's about to say something to me when the door bursts open.

"Keegan! What are you doing?" Zoey exclaims.